

STUDY ON NATIONAL URBACT POINTS TERMS OF REFERENCE

Summary

The URBACT Programme is seeking external expert support in relation to its National URBACT Points operation. The successful candidate or team, will evaluate the existing experience of National URBACT Points (what works, what does not work), explore conditions and factors of success, and make recommendations for a better implementation of national activity for URBACT under the new programming period (2021-2027).

Background

National URBACT Points (NUP) communicate and support URBACT-related activities in their countries and in their national languages.

More especially, they are responsible for:

- Communicating on URBACT calls for networks, knowledge and practices. To this end, National URBACT Points organise infodays to present calls for networks, and promote URBACT cities' work through their URBACT national webpages, social media, newsletters, publications, videos, and other channels. Each NUP has a dedicated national page on the URBACT website (<https://urbact.eu/country>) and a dedicated twitter account @URBACT_abbreviation of the country
- Strengthening the links between local, regional, national and EU levels on integrated urban development. National URBACT Points can organise closed and open meetings for URBACT cities to allow national networking and exchange of ideas, actions and results; but also meetings between different government levels like ministries, associations of cities and local authorities to influence public policies and to promote URBACT's work.
- Supporting the URBACT Joint Secretariat in activities aiming to increase the capacity and skills of local authorities in designing and implementing integrated and participative urban policies.

Since 2016, URBACT has set up 24 National URBACT Points operating in 27 EU countries.

A National URBACT Point is either appointed by the Member of the Monitoring Committee or chosen and contracted following a competitive call for service providers. A National URBACT Point can be a person or a team of people usually working in ministries, associations of cities, universities, or consultant agencies.

Objective

This assignment will take stock of the existing NUP state of play and look forward to provide insights and recommendations about how national activity can look like in the new programming period. In particular, the expert should give insights about:

- If there are/What are the new activities to carry out at national level in the future in comparison to activities under URBACT III
 - What are the conditions for NUP to implement communication services to the full potential
 - Setting an adequate “results framework”, with expected results and performance indicators for NUP
 - Useful lessons learnt from URBACT III on the coordination with other European urban activities at national level
- More precise questions to be raised with beneficiaries and users should also be considered (see annex). Identification of success factors and barriers for their future role should also take place.

Proposed methodology

The methodology proposed below is subject to adjustments following the kick-off meeting between the successful candidate and the URBACT Secretariat.

Deskwork (reading and analysis of the following resources):

- Operational programme and Programme Manual on National URBACT Points
- NUP evaluation reference document
- Interim implementation report (part on the NUP)
- Results of EU surveys 2016 and 2018 (individual and collective reports- part on NUP)
- Notes of the workshop between NUP and Secretariat on the future of NUP (22 October 2020)
- Concept note on national activity for URBACT IV
- Closure reports of 1st call APN (feedback on NUP work)
- NUP workplan template

Questionnaires

The successful candidate should be able to prepare questionnaires and analyse the results. When relevant, the questionnaires should include identical or interlinked questions to compare the results coming from different respondents (beneficiaries, NUP and Members of the Monitoring Committee).

Questionnaires should be sent to:

- URBACT network beneficiaries: all Transfer Network and Action Planning network cities
- Members of the URBACT Monitoring Committee
- National URBACT Points

Focus group

It would be also useful to organise an online meeting with National URBACT Points to discuss some of the findings of the questionnaires and gather suggestions for the future.

Expected outputs

The findings from the fieldwork should be structured in an appropriate way to feed into the programme development process. This is likely to take the format of a report, possibly supported by a slide deck to be used in meetings and events (i.e. presentation at the URBACT Monitoring Committee).

This report should be readable and engaging. It should include an executive summary for circulation to a wider, non-specialist audience. It should contain both research findings and recommendations. An interim report should be shared with the URBACT Secretariat before the submission of the final version.

Profile of the candidate

The successful candidate should have experience with studies, evaluations, and formulating recommendations.

Any experience in interregional cooperation programmes, any work about or with national contact points, and understanding of the URBACT programme will be a plus.

An experience on defining a “results framework” with expected results, output and performance indicators is desirable.

Working methods

The assignment involves a close working relationship between the incumbent and members of the URBACT Secretariat, in particular with Jenny Koutsomarkou, Partnership Officer, Nuala Morgan, Head of Unit Communication & Capitalisation, and Thierry Picquart, Head of Unit Administration.

Once the candidate is chosen, a meeting (online or physical) will be scheduled by the URBACT Secretariat to kick-off the work. During these meeting, participants will agree on the steps to be followed, main questions to explore, and outputs to be produced. Other meetings (online or physical) should also be scheduled during and at the end of the assignment.

Incomplete or unsatisfying outputs from the successful candidates will be subject to revision.

Timeline

The work will start as soon as possible. It should be completed by June 2021, with the objective to present some first findings (interim report) during the Monitoring Committee of URBACT on 9 or 10 March 2021 in Portugal if there are no COVID 19 restrictions at that time.

Estimated budget

Around EUR 25 000, VAT included. Candidates should submit a budget proposal.

How and when to apply

To apply for this contract please send:

- a letter of motivation, including experience relevant to this assignment and methodological approach
- a budget proposal breaking down the costs
- an up-to-date CV

The deadline for submission is 7 December 2020. Applications should be addressed to Jenny Koutsomarkou - j.koutsomarkou@urbact.eu and Thierry Picquart - t.picquart@urbact.eu

Annex: some research questions to be considered

Result indicators and contribution to URBACT's specific objective 4 “*To ensure that practitioners and decision makers at all levels have access to knowledge and share know-how on all aspects of sustainable urban development*”

1. How far are NUPs collectively contributing to achieving Specific Objective 4?
2. Is the existing “results framework” for NUP the right one? If not, which results and output indicators should be set?
3. How to better measure the performance of NUP? Should a similar Specific Objective be designed for a future programme period or is it better to have performance targets at operational level?

NUP activities

4. What are the common factors that make the existing NUP missions successful? Why? (organizational structure, individual VS team, budget, etc)
5. What are the common barriers/challenges for the NUP missions? Why? (organizational structure, individual VS team, budget, etc)
6. Are NUP pages effective/useful in communicating at national level?
7. What common factors can be found in successful national infodays organized by NUP?
8. What would be needed to better communicate on URBACT at national level?
9. How can NUP better accompany URBACT city beneficiaries in delivering their activities through their URBACT networks? How would URBACT city beneficiaries like to be supported by NUP?
10. How well do URBACT beneficiaries know NUP roles and activities?
11. How close is the link between the National URBACT Point with the local level- to fill the gap if any between the ULG and URB Secretariat?
12. What is the capacity of NUP in liaising with /supporting other EU urban initiatives? If negative, why? How could a greater link with other EU initiatives be established?
13. Can NUP play a role to influence national urban policies? If so, how?
14. Can NUP be the right people for organising capacity-building at national level? If so, under what conditions? (profile, support, budget, etc)

Contractual aspects

Do the different contractual ways impact the work of the NUP? (appointment VS call for tender?)

Organisational structure

1. Is there a structure more adequate than others for implementing NUP activities? (association of cities, ministries, consultancies, universities, etc) How can this be measured?
2. Is there a best size or shape for the NUP: one-headed NUP or multidisciplinary team?

Budget

1. Would more budget, national-tailored, would have a better impact on NUP work (i.e would NUP carry out more activities if more budget?)
2. What are the causes of undespending in some NUP?

Coordination with the Secretariat

How is the coordination with the secretariat? Do NUP get adequate trainings/tools to achieve the work of NUP? Would more assistance be needed to better deliver their activities at national level?

Next period

1. What activities should be kept at national level?
2. What activities should be added at national level?
3. What activities should be removed from national points? Should they be allocated to another delivery mechanism or removed altogether?