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Call for Proposals for the creation of up to 30 Action Planning Networks under URBACT IV

Terms of Reference

**Call for Proposals open between
09 January 2023 – 31 March 2023**

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Apply to the URBACT call by 31 March 2023!

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INTRODUCTION – CALL FOR PROPOSALS

The URBACT IV Cooperation Programme (CCI 2021TC16FFIR001) was officially adopted on 19 September 2022 by Commission Implementing Decision C (2022) 6771 final. The adopted Cooperation Programme can be found on the URBACT website¹.

This official document foresees that URBACT IV shall facilitate the sharing of knowledge and good practice between cities and other levels of government. The purpose is to promote integrated sustainable urban development, improve cities' policies and the effectiveness of Cohesion Policy in cities.

In this context, the “Agence nationale de la cohésion des territoires” (ANCT) (France), Managing Authority of the URBACT IV Operational programme, issues a CALL FOR PROPOSALS FOR THE CREATION OF UP TO 30 ACTION PLANNING NETWORKS.

The terms of reference of the present call for proposals have been approved by the URBACT IV Monitoring Committee on 29th November 2022.

[This Call for Proposals is open from 09 January 2023 until 31 March 2023, 15:00 CET².](#)

SECTION 1 - ABOUT URBACT IV & TRANSNATIONAL NETWORKS

1.1. The URBACT IV programme

The URBACT IV Programme is part of the European Territorial Cooperation Objective of the Structural Fund policies for the period 2021-2027. The URBACT IV Programme is financed through the European Regional Development Fund, whose principles and regulations are laid down in Regulations (EU) N° 2021/1058, 2021/1059, and 2021/1060 as well as IPA III, whose principles and regulations are laid down in Regulation (EU) 2021/1529.

URBACT's mission is to enable cities to work together and develop integrated solutions to common urban challenges, by networking, learning from one another's experiences, drawing lessons and identifying good practices to improve urban policies.

As stated in the Cooperation Programme, as URBACT IV will build the institutional capacity of cities needed to implement territorial strategies, it directly contributes to Policy Objective PO5 in particular: a Europe closer to citizens, by supporting locally-led development strategies and sustainable urban development across the EU.

To reach this objective URBACT IV has three aims:

- 1) Use transnational networks to improve the capacity of European cities;
- 2) 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;

¹ The URBACT IV Cooperation Programme is available [here](#)

² The online tool for submitting Proposals, SYNERGIE-CTE, will close at 15:00 pm CET on 31 March 2023. More details on the submission procedure for proposals are provided in the sections 7 and 8 of the present Call for Proposals.

3) 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.

1.2. Transnational exchange and learning networks in URBACT IV

The core strand of activities of the URBACT IV Programme is composed of transnational exchange and learning networks. URBACT transnational networks aim to impact local policies and practices by supporting the design and implementation of sustainable and integrated urban policies. There are 3 different types of networks (please refer to the Cooperation Programme and Programme Manual for more details):

- Action Planning Networks
- Transfer Networks
- Innovation Transfer Mechanism

The focus of this particular call is on Action Planning Networks. It is the first call for proposals for Action Planning Networks under URBACT IV. Action Planning Networks allow cities to work together to find solutions to common urban challenges and exchange about the opportunities of sustainable urban development. Through exchange and learning with European peers, cities can develop and test solutions to the challenges they have identified. Using the URBACT Method of transnational exchange, integrated and participatory approach and co-creation, the cities will develop strong Integrated Action Plans at local level to include concrete actions to deal with the challenge identified. Ultimately, the cities will improve their integrated urban policies and the delivery of these policies on the ground.

The principles and regulations for transnational exchange and learning networks to be implemented within the programme are laid down in the URBACT IV Cooperation Programme. In addition to the Cooperation Programme, the URBACT IV Programme Manual includes specific sections outlining how the different tools and actions shall be implemented and shall operate³. In particular, Action Planning Networks' applicants are invited to refer to the following sections:

- Book 1 – Section A. PRESENTATION OF THE URBACT NETWORKS
- Book 1 – Section B. CREATING AN URBACT NETWORK
- Book 1 – Section C. MANAGING AN URBACT NETWORK
- Book 1 – Section D. MANAGING COSTS AND REPORTING PROGRESS
- Book 1 – Section F. COMMUNICATION AT NETWORK LEVEL

1.3. What is in it for cities?

By taking part in an URBACT Action Planning Network it is possible to make real sustainable change in cities. Through peer exchange and learning, more informed, coordinated and successful local policies can be developed to tackle local challenges, harness potential opportunities and deal with common problems. By applying the URBACT Method cities can develop a participatory culture in policy-making which includes all relevant stakeholders and increases transparency and opportunities for successful implementation.

With transnational exchange and learning networks, the URBACT programme provides cities and urban practitioners with opportunities to:

- share and learn from peers in cities across the European Union, Switzerland, Norway and IPA countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia)

³ The URBACT IV Programme Manual is available [here](#).

- work with other cities around a specific policy challenge, to design innovative local solutions in the format of Integrated Action Plans
- test new ideas and solutions during the network's lifetime
- benefit from tools and training in the field of integrated and participatory approaches to urban challenges and policies
- access expertise to support the development and delivery of integrated and participatory policy-making, as well as thematic expertise to feed into local policies and practices
- obtain financial support to work with other cities around Europe and develop Integrated Action Plans
- create networks of cities for further cooperation and exchange of best practices to improve and elaborate innovative solutions.

More detailed information on how cities can benefit from taking part in an URBACT network, feedback from previous partners, information about the URBACT Method and more about what is expected from partners is available in the Guide to Action Planning Networks⁴ published alongside the present Call for Proposals.

⁴ The Guide to Action Planning Networks is available [here](#).

SECTION 2 – ABOUT ACTION PLANNING NETWORKS & BENEFICIARIES

2.1. Main objectives of Action Planning Networks

The main objective of Action Planning Networks is to improve the capacity of cities to manage sustainable urban policies, and more specifically, to improve the capacity to design integrated urban action plans in cities.

Action Planning Networks are expected to support an organised process of exchange and learning among peers, with a view to improving local policies through concrete action planning.

By taking part in an Action Planning Network, cities exchange on specific policy challenges and share experiences, problems and possible solutions, generating new ideas to address challenges related to integrated sustainable urban development.

As a starting point, cities willing to get involved in Action Planning Networks shall identify a policy challenge they want to address at local level. Then, they shall commit to develop an Integrated Action Plan that will address this challenge. This Integrated Action Plan will be both a driver of the transnational exchange and learning activities and a key concrete output of their participation in the Action Planning Network.

Cities interested in participating in an Action Planning Network shall also commit to work on their policy challenges with a participatory approach involving all relevant local stakeholders (from within the local administration and beyond, civil society, private sector, associations, etc.) in the action-planning process. These key stakeholders will be gathered in an URBACT Local Group. They will be actively involved in the transnational exchange activities and in the co-production of the Integrated Action Plan to be produced by the city. The participatory approach shall improve the action-planning process and the subsequent delivery of the local policies (strengthening the evidence base, ensuring understanding and ownership of the problems identified and of the solutions / policies developed, creating the conditions for a successful delivery, etc.).

Throughout the network duration, cities will be communicating to an external audience about their work and results. The URBACT Secretariat will provide specific tools and guidance for this purpose.

2.2. Eligible beneficiaries

For transnational exchange and learning activities (and thus for Action Planning Networks), the URBACT IV Cooperation Programme identifies the Programme area and defines two categories of beneficiaries: the main beneficiaries (city partners) and other beneficiaries (non-city partners).

The URBACT IV **programme area** consists of:

- The 27 EU Member States
- 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 fund⁵. Partners from Norway may participate in Action Planning Networks with Norwegian national funds covering up to 50% of the costs⁶.

⁵ Swiss participants are asked to contact the Federal Office for Spatial Development (ARE) to receive information on the available funds under this call.

⁶ 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.

- The Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia. Partners from IPA countries can participate in operations using IPA funding, without receiving ERDF co-financing.
- Other countries. Partners from other countries, anywhere in the world, can participate with their own funding.

The **main beneficiaries** for Action Planning Networks shall be **cities** from 27 EU Member States, Norway, Switzerland, as well as IPA countries willing to develop integrated strategies and action plans for sustainable urban development. The beneficiary type “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 organised 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.

There is no limit of population size for cities wishing to participate in URBACT activities. URBACT specifically supports urban authorities from neighbourhood to functional urban area level depending on the topic covered and the impact that can be made. This includes urban-rural linkages and cross-border functional urban areas.

Cities with no previous URBACT experience are particularly invited to apply.

A balance between cities from EU’s more developed, less developed and transition regions will be ensured and monitored using the eligibility criteria of this call for proposals.

All URBACT networks will link to the European Urban Initiative (EUI)⁷. Specifically, the work of the Action Planning Networks 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 Article 11 of the ERDF Regulation⁸. **The involvement of Article 11 cities and other cities benefiting from Cohesion policy funds will be sought for, as well as the alignment with Cohesion policy characteristics.**

In addition to city partners, Action Planning Networks can also include a limited number of **other eligible beneficiaries (non-city partners)**. In the case of Action Planning Networks, the list of other eligible beneficiaries is defined as follows:

- Provincial, regional and national authorities, as far as urban issues are concerned;

⁷ More detailed information is presented under section 3.3 of the present Call for Proposals.

⁸ 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.

- Universities and research centres, as far as urban issues are concerned;
- Managing Authorities of Cohesion Policy and EU Solidarity Funds.

In order to be eligible, non-city partners must be public authorities or Equivalent Public Bodies⁹. Please refer to Section 4 for further specific details about eligible beneficiaries for this call.

SECTION 3 - THEMATIC COVERAGE FOR ACTION PLANNING NETWORKS

3.1. URBACT cross-thematic objective

The overall objective of URBACT IV according to Article 3 EU Regulation 2021/1059 is to reinforce the effectiveness of Cohesion Policy by promoting exchange of experiences, innovative approaches and capacity building. 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. This approach aims to support cities to comply with Article 29 EU regulation 2021/1060. This is primarily a challenge of a cross-thematic nature that URBACT wants to tackle through transnational networking, capacity-building activities and knowledge sharing.

Given that the needs and solutions are cross-thematic, URBACT IV will have one cross-thematic objective. URBACT will not directly support implementation actions but aims to build the governance capacity of cities so they, in turn, can effectively implement sustainable urban development strategies under the different policy objectives of Cohesion Policy. Therefore, URBACT activities are programmed under the Interreg Specific Objective (ISO) 1: A better cooperation governance.

URBACT supports networks in any thematic issues on better cooperation governance. The present Call for Proposals for Action Planning networks is open to any specific urban challenge or topic that is relevant to the candidate cities.

The programme structure around one single cross-cutting priority means that beneficiaries can potentially cooperate on any topics of shared relevance in line with their local needs, as long as this falls within the scope of Cohesion Policy. When considering the thematic coverage of the Action Planning Networks, this scope includes **the five policy objectives** as defined in Article 3 of the ERDF regulation (EU) 2021/1058:

- 1. a more competitive and smarter Europe** by promoting innovative and smart economic transformation and regional ICT connectivity;
- 2. a greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe** by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation, risk prevention and management, and sustainable urban mobility;

⁹ Based on EU Public Procurement Law, **equivalent public body** refers to any legal body governed by public or private law:

1. established for the specific purpose of meeting needs in the general interest, not having an industrial or commercial character (which does not exclude bodies partly having an industrial or commercial character), and
2. having legal personality, and
3. a) either financed, for the most part, by the State, or regional or local authorities, or other bodies governed by public law, b) or subject to management supervision by those bodies, c) or having an administrative, managerial or supervisory board, more than half of whose members are appointed by the State, regional or local authorities or by other bodies governed by public law."

3. **a more connected Europe** by enhancing mobility;
4. **a more social and inclusive Europe** implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights;
5. **a Europe closer to citizens** by fostering the sustainable and integrated development of all types of territories and local initiatives.

From a thematic perspective, this scope includes the topics defined by the policy objectives and specific objectives of Cohesion Policy as presented in Article 5 of the Common Provisions Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 and Article 3 of the ERDF regulation (EU) 2021/1058. Despite the selection of one single priority, the actions of the programme are still organised according to the different specific objectives of the Cohesion Policy. This allows a coherent clustering of the activities supported. This also means that projects need to explain how their proposal links to the Cohesion Policy Objectives referred to in Article 5(1) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 in their application form.

While addressing the main topic the URBACT networks will choose to work on, they will also have to reflect on how their activities and action plans address the **cross-cutting principles of green transition, digital transformation, and gender equality**. Whether cities aim to address mobility issues, cultural heritage, financial engineering, energy transition or any other topic, URBACT invites to take the extra mile and consider how these holistic themes can be part of the analysed challenges and solutions.

Proposals should demonstrate added value compared to the networks already financed by URBACT in the past. The details of the topics tackled under previous networks can be found on the URBACT website: <https://urbact.eu/networks>

The knowledge exchange and learning activities undertaken by the networks shall ensure a more integrated approach to the urban challenges addressed and produce up-to-date analysis of city policy and practice to be shared beyond URBACT, in particular through the European Urban Initiative (EUI) and through contributions to the Urban Agenda for the EU (UAEU).

3.2. Other considerations within and beyond the new EU regulatory framework

Within and beyond what is specifically foreseen within the new EU regulatory framework, notable policy strategic initiatives and programmes aimed at cities can be noted, in particular:

3.2.1. Urban Agenda for the European Union

Since the 2016 Pact of Amsterdam¹⁰, the European Commission, EU Member States, cities and other stakeholders have been working together in multi-level partnerships for the Urban Agenda for the EU. The Urban Agenda focuses specifically on three pillars of EU policy-making and implementation, namely better regulation, better funding and better knowledge. Fourteen thematic partnerships linked to sustainable urban development policies in the EU were launched from 2016 to 2019 and have produced action plans tackling specific issues within the three pillars.

The full list of the 14 UAEU topics can be found below:

¹⁰ <https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/content/pact-amsterdam>

- Air quality
- Circular economy
- Climate adaptation
- Culture and cultural heritage
- Digital transition
- Energy transition
- Housing
- Inclusion of migrants & refugees
- Innovative & responsible public procurement
- Jobs & skills in the local economy
- Sustainable use of land & nature-based solutions
- Urban mobility
- Urban poverty
- Security in public spaces

The New Leipzig Charter “The transformative power of cities for the common good”¹¹ adopted in November 2020 provides a European policy framework for sustainable urban development. It considers the Urban Agenda for the EU as the key vehicle for its implementation. In 2021, the renewal process of the Urban Agenda for the EU started, in line with the directions provided by the New Leipzig Charter and its implementing document.

On 26 November 2021, EU Ministers responsible for Urban Matters adopted the [Ljubljana Agreement and its Multiannual Working Programme](#) that materialise the start of a new phase of the Urban Agenda for the EU, including its operational parameters, work method and steps. The agreement also comprises the addition of four new themes: Greening cities, Sustainable tourism, Food and Cities of equality. Two new thematic partnerships on Greening Cities and Sustainable Tourism have been launched in 2022.

Applicants are encouraged to take into consideration, when relevant, how the network can link to the partnerships developed for the Urban Agenda for the European Union, for example by tackling one of the actions signposted in the Partnership Action Plans. More information about the Urban Agenda for the EU, and the detailed action plans, can be found on the dedicated website for the Urban Agenda for the EU: <https://www.urbanagenda.urban-initiative.eu/>

In the 2021–2027 period, support to the Urban Agenda for the EU is provided under the European Urban Initiative.

3.2.2. European Urban Initiative

URBACT IV shall complement the actions being delivered by the European Urban Initiative under Article 12 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1058 as part of the urban dimension of Cohesion policy.

Transnational networking of cities will remain the focus of the URBACT IV programme in the 2021-2027 period, and the core of such activity will be the 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 development¹². Therefore, the intervention logic of the EUI includes a work stream ‘Networks of cities supported by URBACT IV’ under its sub-strand (b.1) Capacity building. The specific objective of this work stream is to create a strong interconnection between the EUI and URBACT IV, and in particular, between the EUI and the URBACT IV transnational networks of cities.

3.2.3. Others

Other considerations can include:

¹¹ <https://futurium.ec.europa.eu/en/urban-agenda/library/new-leipzig-charter-and-implementing-document>

¹² Article 3(3)b of the ETC Regulation (EU) 2021/1059

- Relevant EU initiatives and programmes such as the European Innovation Partnership on smart cities and communities, the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, the EU Mission on 100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities, the Intelligent Cities Challenge, the Digital Europe Programme and Connecting Europe Facility Digital Programme.
- The New European Bauhaus (NEB) shares many key principles with the URBACT programme including cross-disciplinary working, participation, sustainability and inclusiveness. Through its activities, the URBACT programme shall also be able to contribute to the NEB initiative.
- The New Leipzig Charter, and to the extent possible its Implementing document adopted in November 2020. The Charter puts forward a revised vision for sustainable urban development in Europe and considers the Urban Agenda for the EU as a key vehicle for its implementation. The Charter places the emphasis on the transformative power of cities for the common good. This is to be achieved through actions taken within the three thematic dimensions - 'Just, Green and Productive Cities' - as well as through one cross-sectoral dimension 'Digitalisation' that are implemented in a format of multi-level governance. The Charter enshrines the five EU principles of good urban governance that comprise "policy for the common good", "integrated approaches", "multi-level governance", "place-based approaches" and "participation and co-creation".
- The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda¹³, and in particular, the Goal 11 "Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable". In line with the Article 12 of the ERDF/CF Regulation, special attention will be given to the challenges of 'localising' the SDGs on the ground across EU cities and regions, in particular, regarding capacity building and strategic correlations between Cohesion Policy, SDGs and the key principles laid out by the New Urban Agenda¹⁴.

Applicants are encouraged to take into consideration, when relevant, how the network can link to these initiatives.

¹³ <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

¹⁴ <https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2019/05/nua-english.pdf>

SECTION 4 - PARTNERSHIPS FOR ACTION PLANNING NETWORKS

4.1. General framework

Transnational partnerships are cornerstones of URBACT Action Planning Networks. The rules defined below shall apply to all partnerships involved in Action Planning Network proposals. These rules translate into eligibility criteria (see section 8.3.) and shall therefore be respected. Eligibility criteria are requirements, which must be all fulfilled for a proposal to be declared eligible. Only eligible proposals shall be considered for further assessment and approval.

4.2. Lead Partners

All Lead Partners in Action Planning Networks **MUST** be cities according to the description provided in section 2.2 above. Each network has to appoint a **Lead Partner**. Lead Partners are key actors of transnational partnerships for Action Planning Networks. They have full responsibility for network management, coordination of activities among the transnational partners, communication at network and EU levels, 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.

Only cities (according to the definition provided under section 2.2) from the 27 EU Member States¹⁵ can be Lead Partners of Action Planning Networks¹⁶.

The candidate Lead Partner SHALL be candidate Lead Partner in one URBACT proposal only under this call.

Further information on the roles and responsibilities of Lead Partners and Project Partners is available in the Programme Manual, Book 1 – Section MANAGING AN URBACT NETWORK and Section F. COMMUNICATION AT NETWORK LEVEL.

4.3. Action Planning Network Partnership

A **full partnership** shall be set up for the submission of the application.

The **partnership** to be proposed **must include a minimum of 8 and a maximum of 10 partners from eligible countries**.

One city (as defined under section 2.2) will be designated as Lead Partner (as defined under section 4.2 above).

4.3.1 Eligible partners to funding

ERDF PARTNERS

The project partners that are located in the 27 EU Member States (see section 2.2) are co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). They can be involved as full Project Partners under this call for proposals, provided all eligibility criteria are respected. Compliance with the eligibility criteria will be confirmed during the eligibility check.

¹⁵ Since a Norwegian or a Swiss Lead Partner would not have financial responsibility regarding ERDF funding, cities from Norway and Switzerland cannot currently be Lead Partners of Action Planning Networks.

¹⁶ Cities from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia (IPA countries) cannot currently be Lead Partners of Action Planning Networks. Cities from these countries will be able to lead future networks once the legal framework is in place.

IPA PARTNERS

Countries concerned by the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA fund) within the URBACT Programme are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia.

IPA cities cannot act as Lead Partners.

IPA 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 countries. The conditions to participate will have to be checked with the national authorities concerned.

More detailed information and contact details are available upon request.

4.3.2 Partnership composition

Partnerships shall respect the following rules:

- The partnership may include 2 “non-city partners” maximum (as defined under section 2.2);
- A beneficiary (city and non-city partners) may not be a partner in more than two approved Action Planning Networks at the time;
- A candidate city can be candidate Lead Partner of one Action Planning Network proposal only but can be also a Project Partner in another network at the time.

A 70% balance of cities from EU regions is necessary as follows:

- a minimum of 6 partners from Less Developed and Transition Regions where the total number of partners is 8 to 9.
- a minimum of 7 partners from Less Developed and Transition Regions where the total number of partners is 10.

In case of partners from Norway, Switzerland or IPA countries, they should not be counted in that balance. For example, for a partnership with a total number of 10 partners including 1 city from an IPA country, the balance will apply on the total number of 9 partners from EU regions.

The map showing the categorisation of EU Regions for 2021-2027 can be found [here](#). The full list of regions eligible for funding from the ERDF and the ESF Plus and of Member States eligible for funding from the Cohesion Fund for the period 2021-2027 is available at this link [here](#).

SECTION 5 - ACTIVITIES AND WORK PACKAGES

Action Planning Networks shall operate and implement the network activities **structured into four stages around three work packages:**

- Work package 1 (WP1) – Network management
- Work package 2 (WP2) – Network Level Activities
- Work package 3 (WP3) – Local Level Activities

Communication activities shall be conceived and implemented as part of the three work packages.

The activities to be implemented by Action Planning Networks, in each of the stages, are organised around work packages. Work packages allow partners to develop a shared understanding about the project’s structure. Each work package has specific objectives, defined activities and related expected deliverables.

More detailed information about the Action Planning Network journey is available in the Guide to Action Planning Networks.

Under this call, networks are approved for a total duration of 31 months and shall NOT submit a new application for assessment before entering into Stage 2.

At the end of Stage 1, the Network Roadmap (Baseline Study) will be reviewed by the External Assessment Panel to ensure sufficient quality to proceed into Stage 2.

The passage from Stage 1 to Stage 2 is NOT automatic. No official approval will be needed to proceed into Stage 2 but projects can be stopped if they are considered to be of poor quality.

5.1. Stage 1 of Action Planning Networks

The duration of Stage 1 – Activation is 7 months, starting from 1st June 2023. Stage 1 is dedicated to developing detailed network activities and ensuring a well-balanced and coherent partnership.

During Stage 1 partners involved in approved networks will work, with the support of an URBACT validated Lead Expert, on the development of the project workplan, the identification of relevant local stakeholders to be involved in the URBACT Local Groups, refining the network topic to meet the needs of the cities involved, completing a Network Roadmap (Baseline Study) and working on the communication strategy and plan for the network.

The main deliverables of Stage 1 shall include:

- To organise two transnational meetings gathering all partners (a kick-off and one meeting towards the end of this stage)
- To consolidate the partnership
- To set-up an URBACT Local Group in each partner city
- To complete and submit a Network Roadmap (Baseline Study) presenting the theme of the network and the relevance to all the partners. This document will also outline the methodological framework for the Action Planning Network activities (further detailed guidelines will be available to approved projects at the start of Stage 1)
- To develop and produce a Communication Plan for their network.

5.2. Stages 2 to 4 of Action Planning Networks

Networks considered to be of sufficient good quality to continue for Stage 2 and beyond shall be devoted to the implementation of the activities foreseen in the application form, at transnational and local level, aimed at designing Integrated Action Plans in each partner city that use the transnational exchange and learning activities/outputs to inform and detail concrete actions to address the challenge locally.

The duration of Stages 2 to 4 is 24 months, starting from 1st January 2024. These 24 months are dedicated to the implementation of network activities spread across:

Stage 2 – Planning Actions: 12 months

Stage 3 – Preparing/Getting ready for Implementation: 9 months

Stage 4 – Finale: 3 last months

Main activities and deliverables of Stages 2 to 4 shall include:

- Transnational exchange and learning meetings, events and activities to identify and share

- ideas about solutions to the network thematic challenge,
- The co-design of Integrated Action Plans by stakeholders gathered in an URBACT Local Group in each partner city
 - Integrated Action Plans delivery and testing with Small Scale Actions
 - Quarterly Network Reports
 - Communication and outreach activities like maintaining a network webpage on the URBACT website, communicating on social media, organisation of dissemination events, etc.
 - Network Result Product that captures the learning from all cities and provides clear recommendations to other cities, policy-makers and European organisations on the theme of the network.

Detailed information concerning specific objectives, activities and expected outputs under each Stage and Work Package is provided in the Book 1, Section A. of the URBACT IV Programme Manual and in the Guide to Action Planning Networks.

In order to support the implementation of the activities of Action Planning Networks, the URBACT Programme provides each approved Action Planning Network with an additional specific budget for the **appointment of experts** (see section 6.3 for expertise resources).

SECTION 6 – BUDGETARY ELEMENTS AND EXPERTISE RESOURCES

6.1. URBACT IV Eligible Intervention rates

The ERDF's co-financing rate for an Action Planning Network is calculated at network level on the basis of the different co-financing rates for each partner.¹⁷

- Partners from “more developed regions” are co-financed up to 65% by ERDF.
- Partners from “transition regions” are co-financed up to 70% by ERDF.
- Partners from “less developed regions” are co-financed up to 80% by ERDF.
- Switzerland is a Partner State of the URBACT programme. Partners from Switzerland are co-financed up to 50% by a Swiss national fund.¹⁸
- 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 costs¹⁹.
- Partners from IPA countries are co-financed by up to 95% by IPA Funds.²⁰
- Partners from other countries may participate in Action Planning Networks at their own cost for this call.

6.2. Action Planning Network Budgets

The maximum total eligible budget for an Action Planning Network shall be EUR 850 000 (including ERDF, IPA funds and local co-financing).

Action Planning Networks shall be financed using European Regional Development Fund or IPA Fund and local, regional or national contributions from city partners according to the rates outlined in section 6.1 above.

Considering the foreseen workload required in the first 7 months to ensure a well-balanced and coherent partnership, the set-up of the URBACT Local Groups and a high-quality baseline study, the costs incurred for this first Stage of work shall be considered eligible for refund regardless of the passage of the network into Stage 2.

The budget shall be presented using five budget categories as follows:

- i) Staff Costs**
Expenditure on staff members employed by the partner organisation, who are formally engaged to work on the project.
- ii) Office and Administration Costs**
General office and administration expenditures of the partner organisation that supports delivery of project activities.
- iii) Travel and Accommodation Costs**

¹⁷ The map showing the categorisation of EU Regions for 2021-2027 can be found [here](#). The full list of regions eligible for funding is available at this link here: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32021D1130>.

¹⁸ Swiss participants are asked to contact the Federal Office for Spatial Development (ARE) to receive information on the available funds under this call.

¹⁹ 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.

²⁰ IPA 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 countries. The conditions to participate will have to be checked with the national authorities concerned. More detailed information and contact details are available upon request.

Expenditures on travel and accommodation costs of partner organisations' staff that are related to delivery of the project. This category includes travel costs, accommodation costs, costs of meals, visa costs, and/or daily allowances/per diems.

iv) **External expertise and service Costs**

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 to external experts (e.g. travel and accommodation expenses for external experts) should be recorded under this budget category. This category also includes all costs linked to the organisation of meetings.

v) **Equipment**

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

Detailed information about the eligibility of costs, the methods for calculation and programme specific rules is available in the URBACT IV Programme Manual, Book 1, Section D.2. - Eligibility of expenditure per budget category, as well as in the Guide for Action Planning Networks linked to this call.

6.3. Expertise

In order to support the implementation of the activities of Action Planning Networks, the URBACT Programme provides each approved network with an additional specific budget for the **appointment of experts**. Experts support partners in implementing their network activities with both thematic content and methods for exchange and learning.

More specifically, the expertise budget should provide all partners with a package of services including:

- Expertise for the production of a Network Roadmap (Baseline Study)
- Support the Lead Partner with the development of the network methodology
- Support for setting up URBACT Local Groups in each partner city
- Expertise for the design and delivery of transnational exchange and learning activities in collaboration with partners
- Thematic expertise related to the policy challenge being addressed
- Support partners in applying integrated and participatory approaches
- Support partners with the design and peer review of the Integrated Action Plans
- Production of key network outputs and contribution to programme-level activities on relevant topics.

6.3.1 Expertise budget

Each network shall have a specific expertise budget of EUR 144 500 to cover the costs of expertise support over the entire lifetime of the project. This expertise budget is in addition to the network budget and without the co-funding rates applied. The daily expertise fee for URBACT network experts is set at EUR 850 per day all taxes included, therefore a maximum of 170 days of expertise is available for each network regardless of the number of partners.

Networks shall appoint a Lead Expert, as well as at least two Ad-Hoc Experts throughout the network lifetime for support with the delivery of all planned activities and expected deliverables. Specific expertise support framework provided by URBACT Secretariat at the start of the project shall be followed for designing network experts' work plans. The allocation of days to the Lead Expert shall not exceed 82% of the total budget (max. 140 days). Therefore, a minimum of 18% of

the expertise budget (min. 30 days) shall be allocated to Ad-Hoc Experts supporting the network. Please refer to the guide for detailed information about the framework for the use of expertise in Action Planning Networks.

The available budget shall cover days of expertise only. **Travel and accommodation costs for Lead and Ad-Hoc Experts MUST be covered by the network budget.**

Action Planning Network partners can contract additional experts for specific local tasks (e.g. coordination of the URBACT Local Group, local facilitation, project management support, etc.) through the network budget under the budget category “External expertise and services”.

6.3.2 Appointing experts

Appointed experts to be funded from the dedicated expertise budget shall be selected from the pool of Validated URBACT Experts. New experts can apply to join the pool at any time²¹.

Three potential URBACT Validated Lead Experts shall be proposed by the Lead Partner after the network approval.

All approved networks will be requested (with e-mail notification letter) to propose 3 Lead Expert candidates based on the principles and the selection criteria for the use of expertise defined in the application form.

Experts coming from (at least) two different countries of residence or nationalities shall be proposed among the 3 proposed Lead Experts. The proposal shall as well include at least one female expert.

Letters of intent (the template will be provided by the URBACT Secretariat) duly signed by proposed Lead Experts shall be attached to the request.

All Lead Partner candidates are encouraged to consult the pool of URBACT Validated Experts already during the open call for networks and make contacts in order to assess their relevance to the proposed network theme and seek in-principle an agreement from them. It is strongly suggested to have the shortlist of experts you would like to work with ready before the network approval. Approved Networks will have limited time after the approval to find adequate experts. (For exact time frames, please see Section 11 – Important dates for applicants).

URBACT Secretariat will check all the proposed Lead Expert candidates in order to identify any overlaps with other approved networks. The coherence with the selection criteria defined in the application form will be performed before the confirmation of the “1st option Lead Experts”. Immediately after the confirmation, several dates for the interview with the proposed Lead Expert, Lead Partner and URBACT Secretariat are foreseen in order to ensure the suitability of the expert. Interviews with several Lead Expert candidates can be organised depending on the result of the initial interviews. A mutual agreement between the Lead Partner and the URBACT Secretariat is essential for the final selection of the Lead Expert.

The contract with standard workplans will be signed between URBACT Secretariat and the appointed expert for the first stage of Action Planning Networks. A clear evaluation procedure verifying the quality of outputs and contributions will be set out to assess the work carried out during the first stage. New contracts with Lead Experts will be issued based on the expertise request form submitted by Lead Partners at the end of the first stage with customised work plans for the remaining duration of the network.

²¹ The call for Experts will remain open over the entire duration of URBACT IV programme. The call and online application form will open in January 2023 and be accessible via this link: <https://urbact.eu/expert-form> (available from January 2023 onwards)

In order to be considered as an URBACT Lead Expert for this call the expert application should be submitted before the end of April 2023 in order to ensure the visibility of the expert profile within the URBACT pool of Validated Experts.

It should be noted that only experts who have not been directly involved in developing the network application can be proposed. A strict conflict of interest procedure will be followed.

SECTION 7 - THE CREATION OF ACTION PLANNING NETWORKS

In order to improve the quality of networks approved for funding, the URBACT IV Programme foresees a two-stage process for Action Planning Networks. The process includes:

- **Stage 1:** Approved Action Planning Networks enter the seven-month Stage 1. The main aim of Stage 1 is to provide partners of Action Planning Networks with the time and resources to ensure:
 - the development of a common understanding of the challenge identified,
 - the consolidation of the partnership by exploring the specific needs of all partners,
 - the elaboration of a shared methodology for exchange and learning activities
 - the development of a communication plan.

These elements shall be explored in the Network Roadmap (Baseline Study) exercise, the results of which shall be submitted at the end of Stage 1.

- **Stages 2 to 4:** Action Planning Networks considered as of sufficient quality to proceed further enter the 24-month Stages 2 to 4 for the implementation of the activities at transnational and local level as foreseen in the network proposals. Some small-scale testing of actions planned in the Integrated Action Plan may be carried out at these stages.

As a consequence of the stage approach, the creation of Action Planning Networks in URBACT IV is a step-by-step process as described below.

7.1. Submission of Applications

The submission of Applications is the first step. Its purpose is to select and approve projects that will be funded. Information to be provided by candidate networks in the Applications is introduced under Section 10 of the present Call for Proposals and detailed in the “Guide to Action Planning Networks”. Annex 1 presents an outline of the main headings of the application form.

Applications will be checked against the eligibility criteria by the URBACT Joint Secretariat and assessed against the assessment criteria by the External Assessment Panel (EAP). The EAP is made up of independent experts specifically appointed to assess the quality of the proposed networks based on the published assessment criteria. Eligible applications, along with EAP assessment results and recommendations, will be submitted by the URBACT Managing Authority to the URBACT Monitoring Committee (national representatives of EU Member and Partner States and IPA countries) for approval. Only Action Planning Networks’ proposals approved by the Monitoring Committee will receive funding to implement the activities planned in accordance with the submitted applications.

Eligibility and assessment criteria for the selection of Action Planning Networks are presented under Section 8 of the present Call for Proposals.

7.2. Passage to Stage 2 and beyond

The purpose of passage to Stage 2 is to assess the quality and relevance of network proposals, along with the Network Roadmap (Baseline Study) to be submitted at the end of Stage 1. Entering Stage 2 is not a competitive process as is the case for Stage 1. Assessment for Stage 2 is about the quality of the proposed network and the coherence of the proposed activities and expected results.

The External Assessment Panel (EAP) may organise hearings of Lead Partners and Lead Experts as part of the assessment process. Only Action Planning Networks proposed by the EAP and approved by the Monitoring Committee will receive funding to implement the activities planned for Stages 2 to 4. Quality assurance criteria for passage to Stage 2 will be available for approved projects at the start of their Stage 1.

Projects not approved for Stage 2 will be refunded for the costs incurred during Stage 1 up to a maximum total eligible budget for an Action Planning Network of EUR 150.000²².

SECTION 8 – DETAILED PROCEDURE FOR THE CREATION OF ACTION PLANNING NETWORKS IN THE FRAME OF THE CALL FOR PROPOSALS

8.1. General overview

Projects applying to this Call for Proposals are required to follow a structured application procedure and will be subject to a selection process.

Decisions by the Monitoring Committee shall be final. May the decision be appealed against by a project's Lead Partner, the complaint procedure shall apply (see section 9).

The different steps of the application procedure can be summarised as follows:

1. APPLICATION	
<u>Step 1</u>	Lead Partners complete and submit the Application form and all requested documents to the URBACT Joint Secretariat by 31 March 2023 ²³
<u>Step 2</u>	URBACT Joint Secretariat performs eligibility check by 7 April 2023 (estimated date).
<u>Step 3</u>	External Assessment Panel carries out assessment of eligible project proposals and issues recommendations by 21 April 2023 (estimated date).
<u>Step 4</u>	URBACT Managing Authority submits a proposal for the approval of up to 30 Action Planning Networks to the Monitoring Committee. The Monitoring Committee decides on networks' approval – by end of May 2023 (estimated date). The approved Action Planning Networks shall receive a subsidy contract that marks the final stage of the approval of the project.
SEVEN-MONTH STAGE 1 FOR APPROVED ACTION PLANNING NETWORKS (1 June 2023 – 31 December 2023)	
2. APPLICATION QUALITY ASSURANCE	
<u>Step 5</u>	External Assessment Panel carries out the assessment of project applications as a result of Stage 1 activities (building on the baseline study and partnership consolidation) to ensure sufficient quality to proceed into Stage 2. No official approval needed but projects can be stopped if of poor quality – December 2023

²² This does not include the URBACT expertise fees that are paid with an additional specific budget envelope for the appointment of experts (see section 6.3 for expertise resources).

²³ More detailed information about the fixed deadline and requested documents is presented under section 8.2 of the present Call for Proposals.

24-MONTH STAGES 2 TO 4 FOR APPROVED QUALITY NETWORKS (1 January 2024 – 31 December 2025)

8.2. Step 1 – Procedure for the submission of Applications

The submission of the Application package is paper-free. The application is submitted through the online system SYNERGIE-CTE. Detailed information on how to create and submit Applications through the online system SYNERGIE-CTE is provided in the Practical guide to SYNERGIE application.

To submit a network proposal, applicants shall complete the following steps:

- 1) Complete and submit their Application through SYNERGIE-CTE in English. Only applications submitted using SYNERGIE-CTE will be accepted.

The deadline for the online submission of the Applications is 31 March 2023, 15:00 CET.

After this deadline, the SYNERGIE-CTE system will be closed.

- 2) Send the application package composed of the scan of the signed PDF document of the Application generated through SYNERGIE-CTE and all additional requested documents (*a list of additional documents is provided below*) by email to APN@urbact.eu.

The e-mail shall be received by the URBACT Joint Secretariat no later than 3 April 2023, 15:00 CET.

Applicants shall send by email **all** of the following documents:

- Scanned signed PDF version of the submitted Application generated through SYNERGIE-CTE. It must be duly signed by the Project Coordinator in the Lead Partner city;
- Letters of commitment in English for ALL partners included in the partnership (one letter for the Lead Partner plus one letter for each Project Partner) using the templates provided in annexes 2 and 3 of this Call for Proposals. Letters of Commitment shall be signed by an elected representative of the partner institution;²⁴
- CV of the Project Coordinator at the Lead Partner.

8.3. Step 2 – Eligibility check of Applications

The URBACT Joint Secretariat will check all received applications against the eligibility criteria. Eligibility criteria for applications are minimum requirements, all of which must be fulfilled before a project can be declared eligible for further assessment. They cover organisational, administrative and commitment requirements. Only eligible projects can be submitted by the Managing Authority to the Monitoring Committee for approval.

²⁴ The signing person has to be an elected representative with authority to sign for the Project Partner. In case the Project Partner institution has no elected representatives, the signing person must be in the position of committing the institution's resources to be engaged in the project (staff, budget, etc.)."

The proposals submitted to the URBACT Joint Secretariat within the deadline and respecting the procedure outlined in the call will be checked for compliance with the eligibility criteria listed below:

Eligibility Criteria

- The application package is submitted in English, respecting the procedure outlined in the Terms of Reference and within the notified deadline.
- The application package is complete including the required documents set out in the Terms of Reference.
- The proposal is complete in terms of information and data required in the documents (Application Form and letters of commitment from partners have been properly filled in and signed, are correctly completed; and all letters use the official templates according to the instructions).
- The proposal fulfils the partnership requirements bringing together between 8 and 10 candidate partners including the Lead Partner.
- The proposed partnership includes no more than 2 non-city partners.
- The proposed partnership respects the minimum 70% of partners from Transition and Less Developed Regions.
- The candidate Lead Partner is a candidate Lead Partner in one URBACT proposal only under this call.
- All candidate partners are eligible according to the URBACT Programme rules.
- The partners in the application cover a minimum of 7 countries.
- The maximum budget for Action Planning Networks (EUR 850.000 total eligible budget) has been respected.

8.4. Step 3 – Assessment of eligible Applications

Eligible Applications shall be assessed by an External Assessment Panel. The EAP is made up of independent experts specifically appointed to assess the quality of the proposed networks based on the published assessment criteria. The assessment criteria for project proposals are outlined below:

Assessment Criteria

Criterion 1: Relevance of the topic/theme/policy issue addressed (10%)
<p>For this criterion, assessors will more especially consider the following dimensions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The proposal contributes to the objectives of the Cohesion Policy 2021-2027 2) The proposal is relevant in the current European urban policy context (in particular the Cohesion Policy objectives and scope) 3) The policy challenge is relevant to the URBACT Programme and complements previous projects
Criterion 2: Proposal to address URBACT cross-cutting objectives (equality (including gender), green transition and digital transition) (10%)
<p>For this criterion, assessors will more especially consider the following dimensions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The proposal demonstrates a good understanding of the cross-cutting objectives of the URBACT programme

- 2) The proposal provides concrete examples of the implementation of the cross-cutting objectives of the URBACT programme

Criterion 3: Quality and Relevance of Partnership (35%)

For this criterion, assessors will more especially consider the following dimensions:

- 1) The policy challenge proposed is relevant for all of the cities in the partnership
- 2) The proposed partnership covers an appropriate mix of EU Member States (for example ensuring adequate coverage of Central and Eastern Europe, Northern, Western and Southern Europe). In cases where the geographical coverage is limited, this is clearly justified.
- 3) The strategic environment of partner cities is relevant to address the challenges identified
- 4) The partners have understood the urban dimension of Cohesion Policy and have explained how it links to their involvement in this network
- 5) The partner cities demonstrate a willingness and ability to undertake the activities (e.g. having appropriate competence, resources, political support and motivation and a clear understanding of the work necessary to produce an Integrated Action Plan)
- 6) The partner cities have clearly identified the added value of benefitting from the URBACT Programme and the potential for change
- 7) The types of stakeholders identified in all the URBACT Local Groups are relevant and comprehensive
- 8) The potential to fund the actions developed by the network is considered high based on the information provided
- 9) The appointed local project and URBACT Local Group coordinators have the relevant profile and position to contribute to the delivery of foreseen activities and outputs
- 10) Overall, the partnership is coherent and it is clear why these cities should work together

Criterion 4: Quality of the proposed methodology and activities (25%)

For this criterion, assessors will more especially consider the following dimensions:

- 1) The proposal demonstrates a good understanding of the objectives of an URBACT Action Planning Network using the URBACT Method
- 2) The proposed work plan is clearly presented and shows a good understanding of what is expected in terms of activities and outputs from Action Planning Networks, in all work packages
- 3) Work packages are clearly explained with sufficient detail. The proposed methodology and activities are creative, coherent, logical and appropriate for the partnership. Activities are logically sequenced linking local and transnational level
- 4) The proposed outputs are clearly explained with details about how they will be developed and used during the network lifetime
- 5) The proposed tools, content and methodology respond to the theme and the needs of the partner cities
- 6) The communication approach of the network and cities seems feasible and relevant to the network methodology
- 7) The proposal presents some innovative and interesting approaches to transnational exchange and learning

Criterion 5: Project Management and Expertise (10%)

For this criterion, assessors will more especially consider the following dimensions:

- 1) The Lead Partner demonstrates competency in managing EU co-financed projects or can ensure adequate measures for management support

- 2) The named person to act for the Lead Partner (project coordinator) has experience (from the attached CV) of this type of work
- 3) The project coordination at the Lead Partner's is well organised and clearly presented (who will perform concrete tasks). Sufficient resources are indicated for the Lead Partner tasks
- 4) The proposal demonstrates a clear understanding of the role of the Lead Expert and explains clearly what the network expects from the appointed expert
- 5) The proposal demonstrates a clear understanding of the role of the Ad-Hoc Experts and explains clearly what the network expects from the appointed experts

Criterion 6: Budget Proposal (10%)

For this criterion, assessors will more especially consider the following dimensions:

- 1) The project budget is coherent with the work plan and the main outputs in the proposal
- 2) The total partner budgets reflect real partners' involvement (are balanced and realistic)
- 3) The project budget is justified, clear and realistic

8.5. Step 4 – Submission to the Monitoring Committee and approval

Building on the report provided by the External Assessment Panel, the Monitoring Committee shall decide on the approval of projects to be funded. Decisions by the Monitoring Committee shall be final.

After approval by the Monitoring Committee, the information on approved projects shall be published on the URBACT website.

Approved applications shall receive a subsidy contract which marks the final stage of approval of the project. Additional information on the subsidy contract is available in Book 1, Section B. of the URBACT IV Programme Manual. The project shall then be fully operational and can start working on planned activities.

All successful networks will be invited to a dedicated online Network launch meeting where Lead/Project Partners and Lead Experts can learn about expectations and activities to be delivered.

SECTION 9 – COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Lead Partners of rejected project proposals are informed in writing about the reasons why an application was not eligible or not approved. Questions in relation to the assessments will be examined and answered by the URBACT Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat. Projects that have not been selected for funding have the right to file a formal complaint about the decision of the Monitoring Committee.

In principle, complaints can only be lodged against the following criteria: (1) the assessment does not take into consideration information supplied in the application and (2) the project assessment and selection process failed to comply with the specific procedures laid down in the call publication and Programme Manual, which as a consequence may have affected the decision.

Only the project's Lead Partner can file a complaint. Potential Project Partner complaints have to be passed through the Lead Partner. Complaints should be submitted electronically to the URBACT Joint Secretariat within 3 weeks after the official notification of the non-selection of the project by the Managing Authority. This deadline shall not prejudice the start of the other projects approved by the Monitoring Committee.

The complaints will be examined and answered by a complaint panel involving the Chair of the URBACT Monitoring Committee, the URBACT Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat and the Chair

of the External Assessment Panel. If deemed necessary, the complaint panel may decide to submit a complaint to the Monitoring Committee of the Programme for review.

SECTION 10 - CONTENT OF APPLICATION

Projects wishing to apply for funding within the frame of this Call for Proposals shall fill in and submit their Application through the online SYNERGIE-CTE platform. All applications shall be completed in English.

Here below is the list of the main sections to be completed in order to submit a proposal:

- **Presentation of the network theme:** applicants shall define the main issue/policy challenge to be addressed by the network, highlighting the link to European urban policy context 2021-2027 (in particular the Cohesion Policy objectives and scope). The proposal should also explain how the network will contribute to the specific objective for Action Planning Networks, i.e. Interreg Specific Objective 1 (ISO 1): a better cooperation governance, in particular Europe Closer to Citizens (PO5).
- **Description of how the networks address cross-cutting considerations such as green transition, digital transformation and gender inclusive approach in their working methods:** Concrete examples of how equal opportunities (especially gender), environmentally sustainable actions and digitalisation have been integrated into the working of the network should be outlined.
- **Presentation of the proposed partnership:** In the framework of the Application form, applicants are requested to present all partners included in the partnership. More especially applicants are requested to highlight:
 - The local situation of partners in relation to the policy issue/topic addressed by the network
 - The experience of partners in dealing with the policy issue/topic addressed by the network and their potential contribution to the exchange and learning activities
 - The specific needs and expected results of partners and how URBACT can respond to these needs
- **Description of the main activities to be implemented:** applicants shall describe how the main activities included under the Work Packages will be implemented. More especially applicants are requested to detail the proposed approach for the production of the Network Roadmap (Baseline Study) and to present their communication approach at local and network levels.
- **Description of the Network Team:** applicants shall describe the experience of the proposed Lead Partner and Project Coordinator. Applicants shall indicate the needs identified by the network for the use of URBACT Lead Experts and Ad-Hoc Experts to assist the network.
- **Budget:** applicants shall provide information about the budget required to deliver the activities proposed based on 5 budget categories. An individual Project Partner budget shall also be provided. More detailed information on budgetary issues can be found in section 6 of this document and in the Guide for Action Planning Networks.

For the preparation of high-quality network proposals applicants are strongly advised to refer as well to the explanations and suggestions provided in the Guide to Action Planning Networks.

SECTION 11 - IMPORTANT DATES FOR APPLICANTS

Applicants are invited to take note of the following five milestones:

- **URBACT Secretariat webinars on the call in 2023: save the dates!**
 - 17 January, 10:00 - 11:00 CET: The call in a nutshell and its features: Q&A
 - 19 January, 10:00 - 11:00 CET: How to build a strong partnership for an Action Planning Network
 - 7 February, 10:00 - 11:00 CET: Exchange and learning during the network journey
 - 7 March, 10:00 - 11:00 CET: Time to submit your application: tech & troubleshooting
 - 16-17 March: Q&A at the Cities Forum, Torino (IT)

- **Submission of proposals**

Applications shall be submitted online by **31 March 2023²⁵ - 15.00 CET at the latest** following the procedure outlined above in section 8. **The application package should be also sent by e-mail by 3rd April 2023 - 15.00 CET at the latest.**

- **Approval**

Eligible project proposals will be submitted to the URBACT Monitoring Committee for approval of funding in May 2023. Approved networks will start working officially in June 2023.

- **Selection and appointment of Lead experts:**

Notification e-mails shall be sent to the approved networks by 23 May 2023.

Approved networks will be requested to send three Lead Expert letters of intent by 31 May 2023.

Interviews with shortlisted Lead Experts shall take place the week of 5 June 2023. Several time slots will be proposed.

Lead Expert contracts with standard work plans for the first stage of networks shall be issued the week of 12 June 2023.

- **Network launch meeting**

Lead Partners (LPs) and URBACT Validated Lead Experts (LEs) of approved projects **MUST** attend the Network launch meeting organised online shortly after the start of the networks. **The dates of this meeting are set for late June 2023: 20 June with LPs and LEs and 22 June will all LEs, LPs and network partners.**

As this is considered a capacity-building event, attendance is compulsory.

- **URBACT Summer University 2023**

Cities and Lead Experts of approved projects **MUST** attend the URBACT University 2023. This University will last three days and it is planned to take place within 28-31 August 2023.

URBACT Universities are large transnational trainings, with around 450 participants from Action Planning Networks' cities, usually organised over 3 days aiming to provide URBACT networks' partners and their local stakeholders with tools and methods to develop integrated and participatory approaches for the design and implementation of urban policies.

²⁵ The online tool for submitting Proposals, SYNERGIE-CTE, will close at 15:00 CET on 31 March 2023. More detailed information about the submission procedure, list of required documents and deadline is provided in section 8 of the present Call for Proposals.



As this is a major capacity-building event, attendance of all Lead Partners, Lead Experts and Project Partners is compulsory.

SECTION 12 - USEFUL RESOURCES

12.1. URBACT Joint Secretariat

Applicants may contact members of the URBACT Joint Secretariat for clarification related to the submission of applications. For all questions concerning the Call for Proposals for Action Planning Networks, applicants are invited to contact the URBACT Joint Secretariat at the following dedicated e-mail address: apn@urbact.eu.

12.2. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

A Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section is available on the URBACT website: <https://urbact.eu/get-involved>

12.3. Useful Documents

In preparing their Application, applicants are invited to refer to the following documents in addition to the Terms of Reference:

- Guide to Action Planning Networks (necessary for a quality application submission)
- URBACT IV Cooperation Programme
- URBACT IV Programme Manual – Book 1
- SYNERGIE-CTE Practical Guide for the creation and submission of applications of Action Planning Networks

Key documents are available on the [webpage here](#).

12.4. Finding an Expert

The call for the URBACT IV pool of Validated Experts will open in January 2023 and will remain open for the entire duration of URBACT IV. The first expert profiles are expected to be published on the URBACT website in February 2023. Applicants are invited to check the [pool of URBACT Validated Experts](#) regularly for newly added validated experts in order to identify most relevant network Lead Expert candidates to be proposed after networks' approval.

12.5. Partner Search Tool

A specific tool dedicated to assisting with the partner search has been developed on the URBACT website. It can be accessed at this address: <http://urbact.eu/partnersearchtool>

12.6. National URBACT Points

National URBACT Points are in charge of communicating to cities and urban professionals in their respective countries in native languages. They also provide support to URBACT beneficiary cities in terms of communication, capacity-building, sharing of knowledge, and connection with other EU and national funds.

They are represented by national ministries, city associations, universities or other private agencies. As of March 2021, 24 National URBACT Points operate in 27 countries (Austria & Germany, France & Luxembourg, Greece & Cyprus having a joint National URBACT Point).

For this call of Action Planning Networks, most of the National URBACT Points will organise info sessions from January to early March 2023.

More information and contact details about National URBACT Points can be found at this link: <https://urbact.eu/how-find-us>.

ANNEX 1 – OUTLINE OF MAIN COMPONENTS OF THE APPLICATION FORM

1. PROJECT SYNTHESIS
1.1. Project identity (incl. title and duration)
1.2. Summarised description of the issue to be addressed by the network
1.3. Proposed partnership
1.4. Links to the Cohesion Policy Objectives
1.5. Total budget
2. PRESENTATION OF PROJECT PROPOSAL
2.1. Thematic Content
2.1.1. Definition of the issue / policy challenge to be addressed (<i>word limit to apply</i>)
2.1.2. Link to European urban policy context 2021-2027 (in particular the Cohesion Policy objectives and scope) (<i>word limit to apply</i>)
2.2. Shall the proposal contribute to the URBACT Specific Objective 2 (related to Action Planning Networks)?
2.3. How will gender-equal policy making be addressed by the network? (<i>word limit to apply</i>)
2.4. How will green transition be addressed by the network? (<i>word limit to apply</i>)
2.5. How will digital transformation be addressed by the network? (<i>word limit to apply</i>)
2.6. What is the added value of this network related to the theme proposed? (<i>word limit to apply</i>)
3. RATIONALE OF PROPOSED PARTNERSHIP
3.1. Profile of the Partner Cities (<i>Repeated for each Project Partner City (up to PP10)</i>)
3.1.1. Local challenges of city partners specific to the network theme
3.1.2. Local strategic framework of the city specific to the network theme
3.1.3. Local links to Sustainable Urban Development through Cohesion Policy (through IPA flagships and priorities where relevant)
3.1.4. Motivation and commitment of each city to join the network
3.1.5. Local Stakeholders to be involved in the URBACT Local Group
3.1.6. Potential for actions to be funded/ implemented
3.2. Why does it make sense for these cities to work together? What added value will be created? (<i>word limit to apply</i>)
4. ACTIVITIES AND EXPECTED OUTPUTS
4.1. Description of Work Package 1- Network management
4.1.1. Organisation of the project coordination
4.1.2. Activities to be implemented under WP1
4.2. Description of Work Package 2 – Network Level Activities
4.2.1. General framework for Network Level Activities
4.2.2. Proposed approach to network communication
4.2.3. Proposed content, tools and methods for the transnational exchange and learning activities
4.2.4. Expected outputs under WP2
4.3 Description of Work Package 3 – Local Level Activities

4.3.1	General framework for Local Level Activities
4.3.2	Short description of the principles for linking transnational activities under WP 2 and local activities under WP3
4.3.3	Proposed approach to local level communication
4.3.4	Expected outputs under WP3
5. PROJECT WORK PLAN	
6. PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP	
6.1.	Lead partner experience (highlights of city's experience)
6.2.	Experience of proposed project coordinator
6.3.	Presentation of the Lead Partner's project team (roles and responsibilities)
7. USE OF EXPERTISE	
7.1.	Proposed use of expertise resources allocated by the Programme
7.1.1.	Proposed use of URBACT Lead Experts
7.1.2.	Proposed use of URBACT Ad-Hoc Expert(s)
8. BUDGETARY PROPOSAL	
8.1.	Financial contribution by Partner and source (incl. ERDF, IPA III funds and local contribution)
8.2.	ERDF/IPA per year
8.3.	Expenditure per Partner, per year and budget subcategory
8.4.	Expenditure per year and budget category
8.5.	Project cost per budget line
8.6.	Project costs per budget category - Justification/Explanation
9. SIGNATURE	
Signature of the Lead Partner/project coordinator	

ANNEX 2 - TEMPLATE LETTER OF COMMITMENT FOR THE LEAD PARTNER

The text shall be inserted in the Lead Partner's headed paper with the relevant project data.

URBACT IV Managing Authority
20, Avenue de Ségur
TSA 10717
75334 Paris Cedex 07
France

Dear Madam, Sir,

The city of [... *name of the institution*...] confirms its commitment to be the Lead Partner in the activities of the URBACT *Action Planning Network* proposal entitled [...*project title* ...]. The specific challenge we wish to address as a Lead Partner in this *Action Planning Network* is [...*brief description of the theme*.....].

We are convinced that by working through this URBACT network, we will be able to better address these challenges. In this context, if the proposal is approved within the framework of the URBACT IV Programme, we will ensure the overall coordination of the network, take on roles and implement activities as indicated in the application work programme. More especially, we commit to organise transnational meetings, to consolidate the partnership, to coordinate the production of the Network Roadmap (Baseline Study), to identify key local stakeholders to be involved and to produce a communication plan.

To this end we also formally commit to engage the funds needed to co-finance the ERDF²⁶. The details of this contribution are outlined within the application.

Yours sincerely²⁷

Name in capital letters:

Function

Official stamp

²⁶ Only ERDF as cities from Norway, Switzerland and IPA countries cannot be Lead Partners of Action Planning Networks under this call.

²⁷ The signing person has to be an elected representative with authority to sign for the Lead Partner. In case the Lead Partner institution has no elected representatives, the signing person must be in the position of committing the institution's resources to be engaged in the project (staff, budget, etc.).

ANNEX 3 – TEMPLATE LETTER OF COMMITMENT FOR A PROJECT PARTNER

The text shall be inserted in the Partner's headed paper with the relevant project data.

URBACT IV Managing Authority
20, Avenue de Ségur
TSA 10717
75334 Paris Cedex 07
France

Dear Madam, Sir,

The city of [.....*name of partner institution*.....] confirms its commitment to be Project Partner in the activities of the URBACT Action planning network proposal entitled [.....*title of project*.....] led by [.....*name of Lead partner institution*.....].

The specific challenge we wish to address in this Action planning network as a Project Partner is [.....*brief description of theme addressed*.....].

We are convinced that by working through this URBACT network, we will be able to better address these challenges. In this context, if the proposal is approved within the framework of the URBACT IV Programme, we will participate in the project, take on roles and implement activities as indicated in the application work programme. More especially, we commit to participate in the transnational meetings planned, to contribute to the production of the Network roadmap (Baseline study), to identify key stakeholders to be involved and to contribute to the production of the communication plan.

To this end we also formally commit to engaging the funds needed to co-finance [...*ERDF or CH/NO or IPA funds project*...] ²⁸. The details of this contribution are outlined within the application.

Yours sincerely²⁹

Name in capital letters:

Function

Official stamp

²⁸ For project partners, to be chosen according to the relevant fund concerned.

²⁹ The signing person has to be an elected representative with authority to sign for the Project Partner. In case the Project Partner institution has no elected representatives, the signing person must be in the position of committing the institution's resources to be engaged in the project (staff, budget, etc.).