**Summary of the 1st Action Planning Network call under URBACT IV.**

**DEADLINE**

* The call is open between 09 January 2023 – 31 March 2023 (15.00 CET)
* According to the website 30 networks will be selected (starting on 1 June 2023)

**GENERAL GOAL OF APN NETWORKS**

* 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.

**URBACT IV PROGRAMME AREA**

* The 27 EU Member States
* Partner States Norway and Switzerland. They can be co-financed at 50% by a national fund (no ERDF funding). Partners from Norway may participate in Action Planning Networks with Norwegian national funds covering up to 50% of the costs.
* 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

**SPECIFIC ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED AS IMPORTANT**

* There is no limit of population size for cities wishing to participate in URBACT activities.
* Cities with no previous URBACT experience are particularly invited to apply.
* Proposals should demonstrate added value compared to the networks already financed by URBACT in the past.

**THEMATIC SCOPE**

* 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.
* 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; 2. greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe; 3. 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.

**TWO TYPES OF PARTNERS:**

* **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.
* A limited number of other eligible beneficiaries (**non-city partners**): 1. Provincial, regional and national authorities, as far as urban issues are concerned; 2. Universities and research centres, as far as urban issues are concerned; 3. Managing Authorities of Cohesion Policy and EU Solidarity Funds. In order to be eligible, non-city partners must be public authorities or Equivalent Public Bodies.

**PARTNERSHIP COMPOSITION**

* 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.
* Only cities from the 27 EU Member States can be Lead Partners of Action Planning Networks.
* 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.
* 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.
* The partnership may include 2 “non-city partners” maximum.
* A beneficiary (city and non-city partners) may not be a partner in more than two approved Action Planning Networks at the time.

**GEOGRAPHICAL BALANCE**

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.
* MAP of regions: <https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/graph/poster2021/eu27.png>
* Regions eligible for funding from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) under the less developed regions category: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021D1130&from=EN>

**HORIZONTAL THEMES**

* 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.
* Partners also have to reflect on how their activities and action plans address the cross-cutting principles of green transition, digital transformation, and gender equality. URBACT invites to take the extra mile and consider how these holistic themes can be part of the analysed challenges and solutions.
* In addition, applicants are encouraged to take into consideration, when relevant, how the network can link to other major EU policies such as the Urban Agenda for the European Union, 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, New European Bauhaus, etc.

**DURATION AND PROJECT STRUCTURE**

* 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 (Activation, 7 months), 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.
* Stage 1 is dedicated to developing detailed network activities and ensuring a well-balanced and coherent partnership: two meetings, consolidation of the partnership, setting up local groups, Network Roadmap (Baseline Study), Communication Plan. .
* 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

**BUDGET**

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

**EXPERTISE**

* 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.
* 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.
* Travel and accommodation costs for Lead and Ad-Hoc Experts MUST be covered by the network budget.
* 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.
* 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.

**COMPULSORY MEETINGS (FOR APPROVED PROJECTS)**

* 20 June 2023 with LPs and LEs and 22 June with all LEs, LPs and network partners.
* URBACT Summer University 2023: 28-31 August 2023