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URBACT IV

Action Planning Networks

2023 - 2025

Guide for applicants

Join [u]s!

Apply to the URBACT call by 31 March 2023!

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Introduction

URBACT offers cities a unique opportunity to learn from other peers in Europe in order to improve the way cities are managed. URBACT networks foster the exchange of experience and good practice across cities, building urban stakeholders' capacity to develop efficient solutions. One could say that URBACT is an accelerator of sustainable integrated urban development in Europe enabling cities to benefit from the tried and tested [URBACT Method](#).

URBACT IV (2021 - 2027) continues to bring cities together with its first call for Action Planning Networks, open from 9 January to 31 March 2023.

This guide will introduce you to the URBACT networking framework. It will give you a better understanding of what you can expect by joining an URBACT Action Planning Network. It also clarifies the commitment and contributions expected from you as well as the added value you will get from being a partner in an URBACT network.

It contains detailed information on designing a proposal for the Action Planning Network, including how to define the thematic focus, set up a partnership, and shape your network exchange and learning programme of activities. It provides useful tips for high-quality network proposals.

This guide should be read alongside the [Terms of Reference for the Call for Proposals](#) for the creation of Action Planning Networks. In addition, the [URBACT Programme Manual](#) shall be used as the main reference document for detailed information around management of networks – links are provided in the guide where relevant. In case you wish to be a Lead Partner it also outlines the main URBACT rules and procedures, as well as the network budget development.

We hope that this Guide to Action Planning Networks will provide you with useful advice on building a successful proposal as the (future) Lead or Project Partner.

Join us! Together, we drive change for better cities!

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Why join an URBACT Action planning network?

Since 2002 (from URBACT I to URBACT III), nearly 1 000 EU cities involved in URBACT have experienced the added value of transnational cooperation, the exchange of knowledge beyond national borders, and support around participatory and integrated approaches to policy-making.

Joining an URBACT Action Planning Network will allow your city to benefit from a structured and organised process of exchange and learning with peers across Europe. Your city can benefit from the tried and tested URBACT Method which uses integrated and participatory approaches to develop an Integrated Action Plan for your city.

URBACT Action planning network is the right place for your city if you:

- ✓ want to be empowered to tackle an urban policy challenge by exploring pertinent solutions through the production of an integrated action plan
- ✓ want to make a difference in your city and ensure the sustainable transformation through concrete actions
- ✓ wish to improve or change local policies by sharing experiences and exchanging knowledge with other European cities working on similar challenges
- ✓ are eager to involve relevant key stakeholders and practice participatory culture by learning new tools and methods for effective policy-making
- ✓ need a safe space for experimentation of innovative approaches for integrated city management processes and organisational impact

Action Planning Networks build upon the successful established action learning model used by more than 400 cities in URBACT III programme period (2014 to 2021). This includes:

- ✓ Being open to all themes – policy challenges ensuring a true bottom up approach
- ✓ Focus and support around crosscutting policy challenges – gender equality, green transition, and digital transformation.
- ✓ Simplified administrative process with unique contractual phase and justification of local activities with results-based approach.
- ✓ Promoting values of carbon footprint reductions by minimising and streamlining the network activities and the production of outputs.
- ✓ Enhanced guidance for co-production of Integrated Actions Plans and testing actions.
- ✓ URBACT University and other targeted and tailor-made programme capacity building activities for network partners.
- ✓ Support with networking, communication of results and policy advocacy at EU and national level.

What is the offer?

Key expected result

Integrated Action Plan (IAP)

An IAP offers cities a concrete response to their policy challenge. The IAP follows an intervention logic which aims to design and implement actions based on testing. The IAP will link the cities actions to the broader Cohesion Policy funds to support long term implementation and lasting change.

This will be achieved through:

- ✓ **Transnational exchange & inspiration:** Connecting cities' experiences and learning from peers across Europe
- ✓ **Method and guidance on how to develop integrated local policies** based on co-creative design process, experimentation and active engagement of relevant stakeholders
- Tailor-made expertise support for enhancing capacity in policy-making** for sustainable urban development: through Network experts and Programme Capacity Building activities
- ✓ **Communication, knowledge and visibility activities for URBACT beneficiaries:** Through the URBACT website, digital communication channels, events, social media, URBACT City Festivals, policy labs and National URBACT Points.

) **Transnational exchange & inspiration:**

Europe's cities often face similar challenges. Yet, although there are many solutions, it can be difficult to share these in a structured way. URBACT enables the learning environment, innovative approaches and the know-how to help cities co-design solutions to urban challenges. By bringing together cities from diverse backgrounds URBACT widens the scope of shared experiences and approaches. Through peer review with partners across Europe and exposure to different perspectives and practices you will generate new ideas for your own city as well as support other local authorities to build better solutions to their local challenges.

Transnational exchange and learning activities include site visits showing concrete examples of cities dealing with their local challenges. While exchanging with the host city staff and stakeholders questioning their approach, partner cities often reconsider their own approaches to similar issues. By participating in the transnational activities organised by the networks, you will also have the opportunity to benefit from the thematic inputs provided by European urban experts, academics and researchers as well as practitioners and policy and decision makers at different levels.

"Thanks to the plurality of ideas and experiences we offered each other, out-of-the box thinking and the use of unconventional methods to work on our SUMP, we all grew richer in terms of knowledge and capacities and became friends by our joint work."

LEAD PARTNER COORDINATOR FOR CITYMOBILNET

) Method and guidance on how to develop integrated local policies

As a partner you will have the opportunity to practice integrated and participatory approaches within the framework of the URBACT Local Group to be created in each partner city. This includes experimentation by testing actions for possible upscaling, applying the integrated approach - considering different policy areas and governance levels at the same time, and ensure active engagement of relevant stakeholders by practicing effective participatory methods & tools.

URBACT offers wide assortment of [tools](#) to co-design integrated policies with citizens, NGOs, public partners, businesses to co-produce an Integrated Action Plan (IAP) for specific policy challenge. Each partner in the Action Planning Network will undertake this work. URBACT Local group offers safe space for learning by doing and networking with relevant partners and decision makers.

"It will be remembered as an opportunity to experiment and explore. Communities will remember the fun events that brought people together. Institutions will be effected by changes in ways of working."

PARTNER IN RESILIENT EUROPE

) Tailor-made expertise support for enhancing capacity in policy-making

The Programme provides each Action Planning Network with a specific budget for the appointment of validated URBACT Experts to support the exchange and learning process. Each Action Planning Network will appoint a network Lead expert who will assist the network over its entire duration in order to maximise the impact of exchange and learning activities. Ad hoc network experts will also be recruited to provide support on specific needs identified by networks such as support with the design of exchange and learning activities, specific thematic expertise and support with methods & tools for integrated and participatory approaches.

In addition to the network activities, the URBACT Programme offers regular support to partners over the entire duration of the networks. This includes targeted guidance for specific outputs and activities and effective learning. Various "short & sweet" guidance materials related to the "art of networking in URBACT" notably for the newcomers.

Partners in Action planning networks will benefit from exclusive training and capacity-building activities, notably:

- tailor-made [capacity-building events like the URBACT Summer University](#) designed exclusively for partners in Action Planning Networks;
- support on cross-cutting themes – Digital transformation, Gender equality, Green transition;
- targeted training schemes for specific stakeholder groups, including elected representatives, local practitioners, among others.

Through these training sessions, URBACT aims to achieve sustained impact by improving the way cities work with their communities beyond the life span of the URBACT network.

"URBACT is offering concrete tools to work with on local level - very useful. Also inviting & sharing the experiences of networks and cities with good practices is highly useful - a good example is the best way to learn."

PARTNER IN SIBDEV

) Communication, knowledge and visibility activities for URBACT beneficiaries.

Over the years, URBACT has developed different communication channels and tools to communicate on the work of URBACT networks and cities.

At EU level, the URBACT website, www.urbact.eu, gives visibility to all approved URBACT networks through dedicated network pages where networks can upload articles, videos and materials produced by the cities for an external audience. In addition, the work of URBACT networks and cities is promoted to a wide EU audience through URBACT newsletters, social media, reports, publications, infographics and videos.

The URBACT programme also puts forward the work and outputs of cities involved in URBACT networks during EU events like the URBACT City Festivals, the European Week for Cities and Regions, the EU Cities Forum, UN-HABITAT events like World Urban Forums, and makes connections between URBACT networks and other institutions/organisations working on sustainable urban development (European Commission, European Urban Initiative, Urban Agenda for the EU, Council of European Municipalities and Cities, European Investment Bank, and others).

Finally, the [URBACT Knowledge Hub](#) brings together, analyses, and synthesises content and good practices coming from URBACT networks and other organisations when necessary. Currently, this Knowledge Hub has been collecting and sharing content around [gender equality](#), [housing](#), and [renewing the Leipzig Charter](#), [Food](#) and [Strategic Procurement](#).

At national level, National URBACT Points (national ministries, city associations, universities or not for profit organisations). are in charge of communicating about URBACT and the work of URBACT cities to their countries in their native languages. URBACT cities are therefore regularly invited to national events to present their work within URBACT and benefit from visibility through the webpages and communication channels of the National URBACT Points.

"Being part of the URBACT community gave us the opportunity to meet with and learn from many like-minded cities across Europe. It also raised the profile of Preston as a medium-sized city and enabled us to share our experience of progressive procurement in a way that would not have been possible without our participation in the URBACT programme."

LEAD PARTNER IN PROCURE AND MAKING SPEND MATTER



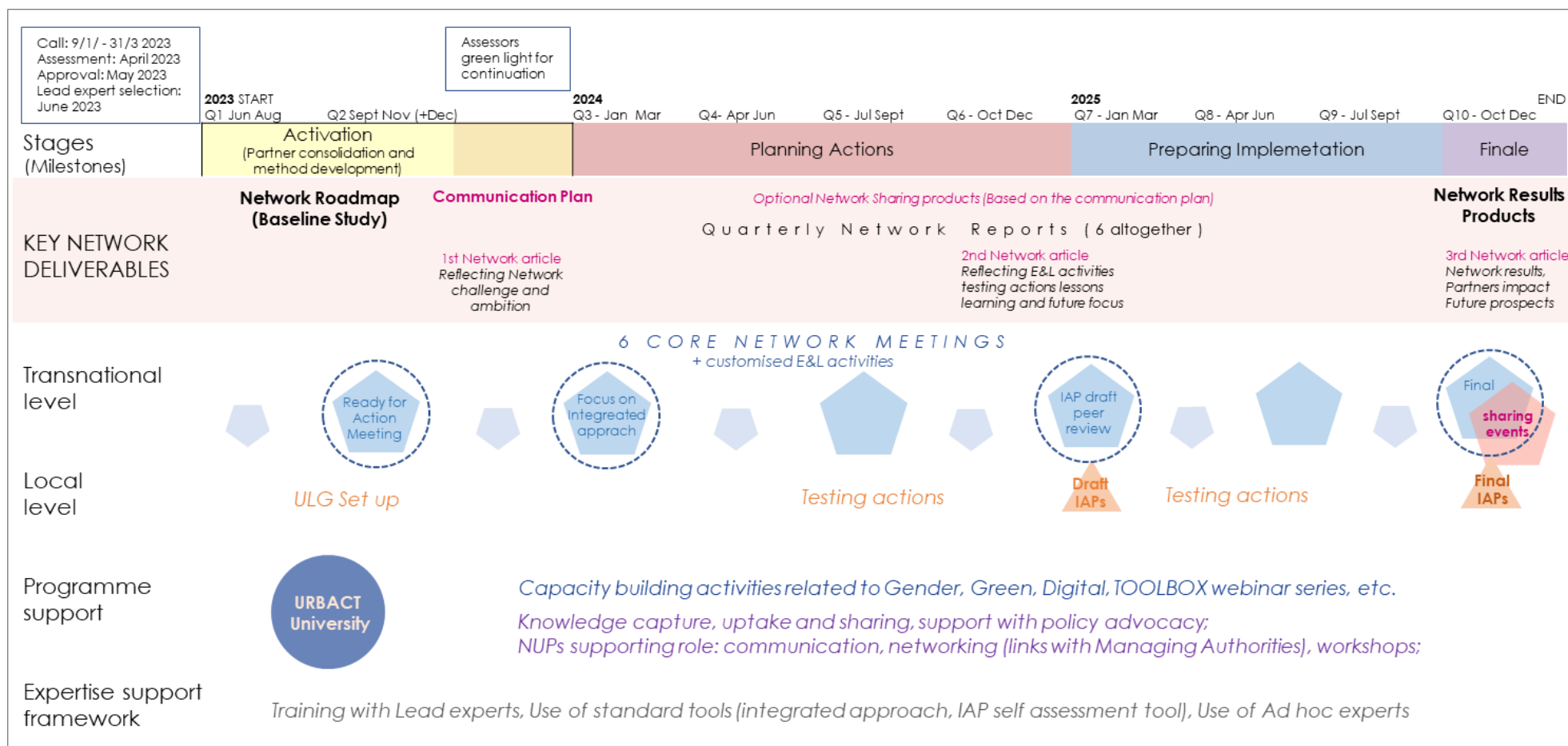
PART I

Action Planning Networks Journey

This section provides essentials around the URBACT networking framework. It shall give a better understanding of what one can expect by joining an URBACT Action Planning Network. It clarifies the commitment and contributions expected as well as the added value of being a partner in an URBACT network.

The Action Planning networks journey in a nutshell (infographic)

Action planning networks will have a duration of 31 months which will be organised around 10 quarters. The journey will be composed of 4 distinct stages with related milestones. All networks will have a minimum set of standard activities and benefiting from bespoke support from network experts. Networks are expected to organise at least 6 core transnational network meetings and propose additional customised set of exchange and learning activities. These will feed the co-production of Integrated Action Plans (IAPs) at local level. A menu of tailor-made capacity building activities at programme level i.e. URBACT University will provide a targeted offer for strengthening the capacity for practice of tools designing and preparing implementation of respective IAPs. The programme-led knowledge and communication activities will also accompany the networks throughout their URBACT journey.



What is expected from you as network partner?

The essentials

URBACT Action Planning Network is an exchange and learning tool for cities where one should:

- ✓ have identified a specific challenge in order to explore and share ideas about possible solutions,
- ✓ be interested in finding integrated and sustainable solutions to urban challenges,
- ✓ be willing to work in a transnational learning environment with peers and experts,
- ✓ accept to work with local stakeholders to design an Integrated Action Plan focusing on addressing the policy challenge locally,
- ✓ agree to apply the URBACT Method of co-creation and action learning throughout the network lifetime.
- ✓ ensure that your administration can commit to this network all the necessary resources – financial and staff over the network lifetime.

A successful participation in an Action Planning Network requires that all partners commit to the following core activities:

Transnational activities

Commitment to take an active part in the transnational exchange and learning activities is mandatory. The active contribution of all partners in the transnational activities is a key condition for a rich and effective exchange and learning process for all partners.

The tasks to be performed:

- ✓ preparation and active contribution to the transnational exchange and learning network activities around specific policy content requiring professional proficiency in English,
- ✓ possible hosting of a transnational event,
- ✓ ensuring a proper administrative management related to transnational activities.

Transnational activities are conceived as a logical sequence of exchange and learning moments that will feed into partner activities at local level, and more especially into the production of the local Integrated Action Plan. Continuity in terms of participation to transnational meetings is crucial. Although clearly you may consider bringing in new participants, depending on the themes being covered during each meeting, it is recommended that the officer in charge of the Action Planning Network at local level (“the local coordinator”) is always on board.

Local activities

The co-production of an Integrated Action Plan by the URBACT Local Group is a compulsory requirement for all partners involved in Action Planning Networks. This is a co-creation process which requires ongoing work over the whole lifetime of the network. Partners should link the local work to what is happening in transnational meetings and should record key learnings throughout the duration of the network.

You will commit to set up and run an URBACT Local Group that will bring together representatives of different departments within the local administration (in order to ensure horizontal integration), including elected representatives, decision-makers, in charge of the policy areas addressed by the Integrated Action Plan. This participatory process should involve representatives of communities, residents, beneficiaries linked to the policy you intend to deal with, as well as representatives of delivery agencies, third sector and private interests when relevant. The requirement to develop a participatory approach through the URBACT Local Group should not lead to duplication, and partners can build on existing local partnerships when appropriate.

URBACT Local group can be used also as a platform for networking in order to strengthen the links with EU cohesion policy funds and build relationship with key local decision-makers notably the relevant managing authorities in charge of operational programmes.

All partners must be committed to engaging with local stakeholders and to mobilising the resources needed (in terms of human, time and financial resources). This includes identifying as soon as possible the “right” local coordinator for the network.

Communication

If no one talks about it, it is as if it did not happen. This is why communicating about ongoing activities and final results is crucial. Besides meeting the necessary EU publicity and visibility rules (as described in the [URBACT Programme Manual “Communication at network level”](#)), the network’s findings and lessons learnt should be shared more widely, with all urban practitioners who may be facing similar policy challenges across Europe. This can be done in various ways, for instance reports and articles shall capture and reflect network exchange and learning activities, the uptake of thematic knowledge and progress in partner cities.

Most of the sharing outputs will be produced by network experts, nevertheless, partners active contribution will be essential for making these sharing materials meaningful for wider audience. These shall be published on the respective network webpages on the URBACT website and promoted via social media, newsletter or during events. Bear in mind that producing the right content through suitable channels – with a target audience in mind – will be of great help when seeking mindset changes and getting more people on board for your cause.

Active participation in programme activities

The URBACT Programme Secretariat organises a variety of training and capacity-building sessions for partners and local stakeholders involved in approved networks. Attendance and active participation of partners in these activities is expected. Programme will also facilitate various knowledge sharing activities where partners can be invited to share their experience with wider audience.

Specific training sessions will be organised for the Lead Partner’s team on topics which can help deliver the project successfully. Examples include general project management, public procurement issues, reporting costs, being audited and network communications. These sessions are often organised as virtual meetings.

In addition, all network partners as well as network Lead experts will be invited to attend general information and guidance sessions as well specific practical working sessions in order to share and exchange together about the learning experience in different networks.

The overview of Action Planning networks - The journey with 4 stages

Each of the Action planning journey stages has a distinctive purpose with related objectives and milestones (see also infographic page 9).

Stage 1 – Activation (quarter 1 and 2 – from June to December 2023)

During the activation stage networks will consolidate their partnership and develop a customised methodology for the work plan of networking activities at transnational and local level for the following stages. This will be done within the framework of the well-established URBACT Baseline Study process to be carried out by the network Lead expert. It includes the state-of-the-art analysis for the policy challenges being tackled by the network, partner visits for understanding specific local policy contexts and the identification of common denominators as the basis for designing and defining the focus and types of activities for effective action learning. The latter will be presented in the key deliverable of the activation stage - the Network Roadmaps.

During the first quarter of activation stage (June-August 2023), URBACT Secretariat will organise a launch meeting for all approved Action Planning networks. Several sessions around essential information and guidance materials for proper start of the network journey will be organised online for Lead partners and Lead experts as well as all network partners. The dates of this meeting are already set - 21 June 2023 with Lead Partners and Lead Experts and 22 June 2023 with all partners. The attendance at these sessions is compulsory. After these initiation sessions all networks are invited to organise the proper network kick off meetings to discuss details arounds organisation of different activities taking place in activation stage. Online format is suggested for these meetings.

An URBACT Summer University will take place in the week of 28 August 2023 and will gather all partners of the Action Planning Networks to build their capacities in carrying out their activities at network and local levels. The entire URBACT action planning community will be able to meet and discover the URBACT universe and get ready for setting-up of URBACT local groups (ULG). More information about this event will be shared in the coming months.

During this stage all networks will set up their respective network pages on the urbact.eu website. For this purpose, networks will have to produce and share with the URBACT Secretariat the network logo files, the official tagline/one-liner, a boilerplate (short paragraph) explaining the network and funding, as well as other EU requirements (detailed on the Programme Manual – Book 1).

During the second quarter of activation stage (September - December 2023), the first Core Network meeting gathering the entire partnership shall be organised (in-person) by all networks. The focus of this “Ready for Action” core network meeting will be around the results of the Baseline Study process. The outcome of this meeting shall be a mutual agreement around the itinerary and focus of network exchange and leaning activities as well as the methodological framework for local activities and the desired impact to take place during the following stages of the journey.

At the end of this quarter networks are expected to submit to the URBACT Secretariat a communication plan, outlining the common objectives, messages, intended target audiences, agreed channels and operational communication activities. This document will complement the Network roadmap and define the networks’ ambitions for sharing results.

KEY OUTPUTS:

- ✓ Network Roadmap (based on the Baseline Study process)
- ✓ 1st Core network meeting (in-person)
- ✓ URBACT Local Groups set up (8-10 per network, depending on number of partners in the network)
- ✓ Network's communication plan
- ✓ First Network article presenting network challenges and ambition

At the end of activation stage, the Network Roadmap (based on the Baseline study process) will be reviewed by the External Assessment Panel to ensure sufficient quality to proceed into the following stages of the journey. The passage to the following stages is therefore NOT automatic, projects can be stopped if the quality of the network is considered insufficient.

Stage 2 – Planning Actions (quarter 3 to 6 - from January to December 2024)

It is the longest and most significant part of the action planning journey during which each network follows its own customised Network Roadmap - action learning activities. This stage is mainly structured around core network meetings, the set up and meetings of URBACT Local Groups in each partner city. It concludes with the network Mid-Term Reflection process (MTR) and draft Integrated Action Plans (IAPs) produced by all partners.

The transnational activities in this stage focus on the thematic inputs related to the policy challenges tackled by exploring solutions, practices, case studies and providing inspiration for partners to take away. A core Network meeting focusing on Integrated approaches (with tailored exercises, methods and tools) shall be organised by all networks at the beginning of this stage. The objective of this core meeting is to reinforce the holistic approach to the IAP co-production process with possible upcoming testing activities. Additional methodological guidance for organisation of this particular meeting will be provided during the journey. At least one more core network meeting in-person with no pre-defined focus should be foreseen by the network later in this stage.

Other customised activities in this stage can include staff exchanges, bi-tri lateral meetings, online masterclasses, thematic sessions, as defined in the Network Roadmap. The combination of online and/ or in-person formats for these activities shall be well thought through by taking in consideration the related carbon footprint.

The use of Ad hoc experts is strongly encouraged during this period for enriching the overall learning experience around the specific thematic areas or support with the use of specific methods & tools.

Testing activities will be an integral part of the IAP co-production process in respective ULGs being a tool for triggering the stakeholders' engagement and try out the coherence and operationalisation of specific actions for the potential upscaling and definition in the Integrated Action Plans.

Quarterly network reports (six altogether), starting in quarter 3 are suggested for a standardised process of interim updates on network progress – transnational and local activities. These reports, produced by the Lead Expert of each network, should aim to capture learning for the network as well as to have an adequate format for network communication activities – sharing knowledge with wider audience. These reports shall be published on network webpages and can feed the production of the Final Network Results Product/s to be delivered at end of the journey.

During this stage the capacity- building activities organised by the URBACT Secretariat will focus on supporting the consideration of the cross-cutting thematic dimensions - Digital transformation, Gender equality, Green transition, in partners' local activities. In addition, the use of the URBACT Toolbox will be strongly encouraged with possible live tutorials around various tools.

Knowledge Hub and communication activities initiated by the URBACT Secretariat will focus on identifying relevant content coming from different networks or partner cities, in order to create or reinforce synergies and contributions among different parties and external partners.

The Mid-term reflection process at the end of Planning actions stage to be carried out by all networks will enable to pause and reflect on the progress being made at the mid-point of the network journey. It will be a well-structured and guided process which should be useful for the network partners and of minimal administrative burden for all concerned. Based on the results of the MTR, networks will have the possibility to adjust and reprogram network activities. Further guidance will be provided on this point following approval of networks.

KEY OUTPUTS:

- ✓ 1 Core network meeting focusing on Integrated approach (in-person)
- ✓ 1 Core network meeting – focus to be defined by network (in-person)
- ✓ Customised set of exchange and learning activities (in-person or online)
- ✓ 3 quarterly network reports
- ✓ Network article summarising key network activities taking place in planning actions stage including the insights from testing activities and key learning insights.

Stage 3 – Preparing Implementation (quarter 7 to 9 – from January to September 2025)

During this stage all partners are expected to make further progress on their respective IAPs by focusing on operationalisation aspects. In this regard the exchange and learning activities during this stage shall focus on:

- Drawing lessons from testing activities for definition of actions and possible upscaling
- Identifying the necessary and possible resources for specific actions (funding, staff)
- Defining responsibilities of key stakeholders for implementation of actions
- Incorporating the framework for monitoring of actions for ensuring the effectiveness of IAP
- Analysing the risks or obstacles related to implementation (contracts, key actors, partnerships)
- Outlining the implementation process

Targeted and tailor-made programme capacity building activities will complement the network activities with further support in all the key aspects related to integrated and participatory implementation.

A core Network meeting focusing on the peer-review of draft IAPs shall be incorporated in network workplans at the beginning of this stage. This meeting shall have the following aim:

- To compare partners' draft IAPs and review for final improvements related to definition of actions also by taking in consideration the experience from testing and define attention points for further possible testing of actions.
- To define priority target groups and adjust the formats of Integrated Action Plans (i.e. decision makers, financiers, and citizens).

- To explore challenges related to communication and policy advocacy of the respective IAPs i.e. pitching, negotiations, lobbying etc.

An additional round of testing actions activities can take place during this period to confirm the suitability of specific actions defined in respective IAPs notably with the particular target groups. This will depend on the needs and ambition in respective URBACT Local groups.

Upon request from URBACT beneficiaries, National URBACT Points can have an emphasised supporting role at local level during this stage. They will act as enablers for networking with key local stakeholders and decision-makers (notably the relevant managing authorities in charge of operational programmes) by organising relevant networking events and providing communication support to partners.

KEY OUTPUTS:

- ✓ 1 Core network meeting focusing on peer-review of draft IAPs (in-person)
- ✓ 1 Core network meeting – focus to be defined by the network (in-person)
- ✓ Customised set of exchange and learning activities (in-person or online)
- ✓ 3 quarterly network reports

Stage 4 – Network Finale (quarter 10 – from October to December 2025)

The last quarter of the URBACT IV Action planning journey could be described as “Back to the future”. This is where the network journey and results will be captured in Network Results Product/s reflecting:

- The motivation and ambition of partners at the start of the journey
- The key features of the Integrated Action Plans
- The added value of the URBACT experience
- The highlights of the journey and the learning points from partners
- The future prospects

Each network will be able to organise the final core network meeting with optional back to back final event will be about celebrating the success (and failures) and look forward to the future endeavours with “Ready to implement” Integrated Action plans.

But not only, it is also about “cleaning up after the party”. In this final stage, main network management and coordination activities relate to the network formal closure.

KEY OUTPUTS:

- ✓ Network Results Product/s
- ✓ Final Core network meeting (in-person) back to back with optional final event (hybrid)
- ✓ Final network article
- ✓ An Integrated Action Plan (1 per partner)
- ✓ Network article reflecting network results, impact at local level, as well as future prospects

The organisation of key activities and outputs

The activities in URBACT networks are always structured around 3 Work Packages (WPs).

- > WP1 — Network Management
- > WP2 — Network Level (Transnational) Activities
- > WP3 — Local Level Activities

Each work package has its own aim. Work package 1 focuses on network management and coordination and is crucial to ensure the correct functioning of the network. Work Package 2 and Work Package 3 are intertwined and shall feed each other - a continuous flow of knowledge between the transnational and the local level activities should therefore exist, for effective results.

Communication and dissemination activities are spread throughout all Work Packages.

Each work package outlines activities that shall take place in order to achieve the desired outcomes. Regardless of uniqueness of network work programmes all networks shall follow the same framework for shaping the network activities.

Moreover, Work Package 2 and 3 define a set of standard outputs that should be produced by all networks. Programme aims to increase the impact and effectiveness of the exchange and learning in networks by focusing on the process and avoid unnecessary production of outputs. By analysing our various types of outputs and activities in past projects we have been able to identify the most useful elements in order to improve the overall URBACT experience for partners.

All proposed standard outputs shall be considered in network proposals. Proposed standardised outputs allow plenty of space for diversification and creativity within the given frames. A menu of possibilities and guidelines around what works best in any specific context are provided in the following sections of the guide.

All applicants are invited to propose as well customised network activities/ outputs in addition to standard expected outputs. Based on the principles and ideas defined in the application form these will be further developed and elaborated during the Activation stage based on the Baseline Study process. The Network Roadmap (key network output of Activation stage) will provide detailed description of different network activities which will respond to specific network needs for maximising the impact of exchange and learning in URBACT.

Work Package 1 - Network Management

The activities to be developed under Work Package 1 aim to ensure the sound management and coordination of the network concerning both the overall project management and all aspects of administrative and financial management. These also include organisation of responsibilities between the partners by building a strong collaborative relationship and ensuring the effective communication flows within the network and external audience.

) Key activities include:

- To sign all the contractual documents at Programme and network level
- Recruiting, if necessary, appropriate staff to ensure efficient project management and communication

- Regular coordination meetings to ensure strong communication between partners concerning project coordination
- Appointment and coordination of network Lead and Ad hoc experts in line with expertise framework provided by the programme
- Submission of official reporting documents by all partners – every 12 months
- Organise the Mid-term reflection process at the end of Planning actions stage
- Regular network management ‘health checks’ with the URBACT Joint Secretariat
- Final closure documents (end of the project) to be submitted by all partners
- To receive and transfer ERDF funds to partners (Lead Partner’s responsibility)
- Ensuring communication on the network’s activities and results with contribution from all project partners in compliance with EU publicity guidelines. It should take place on ongoing basis with regular updates of the project mini-site on the URBACT website.
- Delivering operational actions to implement the network communication plan (producing and publishing content on the network website and other channels), in addition to monitoring, evaluating and adapting the communication plan.
- Lead partners providing assistance and guidance to all project partners for external communication activities
- Attending information and training sessions and other relevant events organised by the URBACT Programme (based on the invitation)

A dedicated Networking space will be enabled for all APN partners on Basecamp in order to facilitate the coordination and flow of information. It will be used as a central channel for communication with the entire URBACT community. It enables an effective management of information, content, processes and outputs. This includes:

- A repository of key URBACT guidance and reference materials for different activities gathered in a dedicated “One stop support shop” suitcase/ folder.
- The targeted message boards for sharing news and key announcements
- The collaborative Calendar of all network and programme activities
- Automatic check-ins for gathering feedback around key deliverables
- Campfire for quick peer Q&A support
- Network folders with key outputs produced on the way
- Private network basecamp spaces managed by Lead partners

Further details and information about different elements related to functioning and management of URBACT networks including all aspects of administrative and financial management is provided in the [URBACT IV Programme Manual – BOOK ONE – The URBACT Networks](#).

Work Package 2 - Network level (transnational) Activities

The aim of (transnational) network level activities is to support partners in improving their local policies in relation to the policy challenge. Including:

- > Sharing: To explore solutions and foster the exchange of experiences among partners
- > Learning: To strengthen the practical knowledge and skills of partners in the policy area related to the respective policy challenge
- > Applying: To draw lessons from the transnational exchange on an ongoing basis and to apply them at local level, especially through the production of an Integrated Action Plan

) Key activities include:

- **Organisation of transnational exchange and learning activities.** These activities should be a combination of different components including network meetings with specific thematic inputs, workshops, field visits, peer review sessions, and dissemination activities, etc.

THE FOLLOWING RELATED OUTPUTS ARE EXPECTED:

- ✓ Network Roadmap (based on the Baseline Study process). Further explanation around expectations of the Baseline Study process are provided in Part III of the guide.
 - ✓ At least 6 Core in-person transnational network meetings. A standard set of 4 core network meetings with specific focus in different stages shall be organised by all networks:
 - Activation: “Ready for action” meeting;
 - Planning Actions: “Focus on integrated approaches”;
 - Preparing implementation: “draft IAP peer review”;
 - Network Finale: Final network meeting including optional sharing event.
 - ✓ Customised set of exchange and learning activities. Combination of in-person and online activities is expected. Applicants are expected to suggest general principles and ideas for organisation of these activities depending on the specific needs related to the policy challenge tackled. Exact number and formats shall be defined during activation stage based on the Baseline Study process. Further guidelines for shaping customised activities are provided in Part III of the guide.
- **Production of various thematic and methodological outputs** shall take place during the lifetime of the network in order to ensure an effective uptake of knowledge. Nevertheless, structured process of interim updates on network progress is suggested. We expect different thematic and methodological productions to be captured and summarised within unique standard network output– Quarterly network report.

THE FOLLOWING RELATED OUTPUTS ARE EXPECTED:

- ✓ 6 Quarterly network reports (to be shared from quarters 4 to 9)
- **Co-development and implementation of the network communication plan.** Communication is everyone’s business and, both for transparency but also increasing visibility reasons, all project partners should be involved with the development of the communication plan, setting objectives, messages, target audiences, channels and planning at network-level. The plan shall include specific content and milestones to be shared widely, as showcasing results from network activities (particularly the Final Network Product), optional events open to attendants beyond project partners, news and articles.

THE FOLLOWING RELATED OUTPUTS ARE EXPECTED:

- ✓ Network Communication Plan
- ✓ At least 3 articles published on the network webpage
- ✓ Network Results product/s

Further guidance regarding the possible features and design of network level activities is provided in PART III of the present guide.

Work Package 3 – Local level activities

The URBACT Local Group (ULG) aims to have an impact on Local Governance and practices by enabling save space for the innovation in city administrations. It promotes the environment for active involvement of local stakeholders in co-creation and production of an Integrated Action Plan. It fosters:

- > Development of organisational culture by building bridges inside the city administration as well as with external actors.
- > Building relationship with stakeholders_involvement by exploring and testing solutions i.e. including concrete pilot experiments, organising creative workshops and sharing events with citizen, etc.
- > Improved professional capacity by practicing tools & methods for effective design processes.

) Key activities include:

- Setting up and running a URBACT Local Group for the co-production of Integrated Action plan
- Taking part in the exchange activities at transnational level and contribute to these activities (participation to seminars with relevant delegates, organisation of study visits, production of inputs, etc.)
- Testing actions activities as an integral part of the IAP co-production process. It can be used as a tool for triggering the stakeholders' engagement and try out the coherence and operationalisation of specific actions for the potential upscaling and definition in the Integrated Action Plans.
- Taking part in the capacity-building activities organised by the URBACT Secretariat for local stakeholders involved in URBACT Local Groups.
- Share results and lessons learnt and good practices to local stakeholders involved in urban development and wider EU community.
- Translating the network communication plan into communication activities at local level (e.g. local events, social media channels in local languages and coordinated efforts with the National URBACT Points).
- Making links with EU cohesion policy funds by building cooperation relationships with Managing Authorities of Operational Programmes.

THE FOLLOWING RELATED OUTPUTS ARE EXPECTED:

- ✓ URBACT Local group contact list. An updated contact list shall be shared with the URBACT Secretariat when appropriate.
- ✓ Integrated Action Plan (draft IAP version shall be ready for "IAP peer review" network meeting to take place at the start of Preparing Implementation stage).

Further guidance regarding specific activities to take place at local level is provided in PART III of the present guide.

Summary of network outputs

Standard network outputs as required in application submission system synergies CTE				Customised Outputs to be developed by the network during the Activation stage	
WP	Type of Output	Quantity	When	Type of output	when
2	Network roadmap (Baseline study)	One per network	At the end of Activation stage		
2	Network communication plan	One per network	At the end of Activation stage		
2	Transnational Network meetings (Core network in-person meetings)	At least 6 (4 with pre-defined specific focus in each stage)	1 in Activation stage, 2 in Planning actions, 2 in Preparing implementation, 1 in Network Finale (with optional back to back final event)	Customised set of exchange and learning activities (in-person or online)	Notably during the Planning actions and preparing implementation stage
2	Quarterly Network Reports	6 per network	To be shared in Quarters 4 - 9	Optional set of sharing products to be foreseen by each network based on the communication plan	To be defined in communication plan
2	Network articles	At least 3 per network	1st at the end of Activation stage 2nd at the end of Planning Actions 3rd in network Finale		
2	Network Results Product/s	1 set per network	In Network Finale		
3	URBACT Local Group (contact list)	1 per partner	At the end of Activation stage (and later depending on updates)		
3	Integrated Action Plan	1 per partner	Lead Partner (with LE and PP inputs)		

All required standard outputs shall be considered in network proposals. All applicants are invited to propose as well customised network activities/ outputs in addition to standard network outputs. Based on the principles and ideas defined in the application form these will be further developed and elaborated during the Activation stage based on the Baseline Study process. Details around key principles for shaping different activities and outputs at network and local level to be proposed in the application form are further provided in Part III of the guide.

PART II

Setting up an Action Planning Network

This section complements the Term of Reference of the call for Action Planning Network proposals with useful suggestions corresponding to the following sections of the application form:

- ✓ section 2 – Thematic content
- ✓ section 3 – Rationale of proposed partnership

Defining the thematic focus

An URBACT Action Planning Network is built around a shared policy challenge providing the platform for the exchange of lessons and experience around designing and delivering integrated and participatory policies for sustainable urban development. It contributes to the EU cohesion policy objective 5 – Europe closer to citizen. Moreover, the shared policy challenge addressed by the network creates a bond between partners.

The identification of the policy challenge to be addressed in the network is an initial key step when preparing an application in the framework of the call for proposals. Section 3 of the Terms of Reference document provides a thorough description of possible thematic coverage for Action planning networks. Here you will find additional reflections to be considered when defining the thematic scope, the network shall address.

) **Have you consulted what your colleagues from other departments are working on?**

The decision on the preferred policy issue should be based on an honest assessment of local priorities and challenges discussed within the candidate city, with colleagues from different departments, with elected representatives and other relevant stakeholders (including residents and final beneficiaries). You should make sure:

- ✓ there is a clear understanding of the policy challenges you intend to address,
- ✓ policy challenges are considered as priorities in the local political agenda and shared by other departments and stakeholders,
- ✓ there is a clear political willingness to support the design process of the Integrated Action Plan, and,
- ✓ the implementation of the Integrated Action Plan is identified in the foresight of city opportunities as well as feasible and timely in relation to the city funding priorities.

This preliminary assessment is essential for all partners involved in the network.

) **Would your policy challenge interest other cities in Europe?**

You should reflect on the relevance of the policy challenges identified for other European cities and more especially on the contribution that the Action planning network will provide to other policy-makers and practitioners facing similar local challenges in Europe and beyond. Action planning networks are first of all conceived as tools to increase the capacity of cities in the design of integrated and participatory policies for sustainable urban development, but they are also expected to generate knowledge (in the form of case studies, most recent policy trends in different thematic fields, policy recommendations, etc.) to feed into the debate at EU, national and regional levels.

) **How should the policy challenge be structured in your proposal?**

The thematic content of the network is an important component of the application form and the proposal should clearly set out the following points:

A summary of the policy challenge addressed:

The application should include a clear and detailed analysis of the policy challenge, citing evidence of the scale of the problem (e.g. high levels of youth unemployment, low business start-up rates, incidence of CO₂ emissions etc.). It should provide some explanation of why this particular challenge was selected and how it is relevant for the network partners.

It is important to be very specific when developing a policy challenge. A well-defined and focused policy challenge will help cities develop better quality exchange and more focused solutions.

The relevance of the policy challenge within the urban dimension of EU cohesion policy context:

Relevance is an important criterion in the selection of the Action planning networks. This must be communicated in the application form in two ways:

- ✓ Firstly, the policy challenge must be relevant for a high number of cities across Europe. Although URBACT is initially interested in exchange and learning within the networks, ultimately the programme has a particular interest in solutions relevant for all European cities.
- ✓ Secondly, the policy challenge should reflect the European Union urban policy priorities which are reflected within the URBACT Programme objectives defined by EU cohesion policy objectives (2021 – 2027). These provide a coherent clustering of the topics and activities supported. Complementing these objectives, network applicants shall also consider other relevant activities under the urban dimension of EU cohesion policy notably the European Urban Initiative including Urban Agenda for the EU. Additional other relevant initiatives for consideration are provided in the Terms of Reference of the call.

Considering the cross-cutting principles:

In addition to the main theme addressed the networks will choose to work on, they will also have to reflect on how the network transnational activities and the Integrated Action Plan co-production process will address the cross-cutting thematic considerations, including:

- ✓ gender equality
- ✓ green transition
- ✓ digital transformation

Whether cities aim to address mobility issues, cultural heritage, financial engineering, energy transition or any other topic, applicants are invited to take the extra mile and consider how these holistic themes can be part of the challenges. A tailor-made capacity building support related to the consideration of the cross-cutting thematic dimensions will be provided by the programme to all approved networks.

) Are there policy challenges you always wanted to tackle but were afraid to start?

The beauty of Action planning networks is that partners can potentially cooperate on any topics of shared relevance in line with their local needs, as long as this falls within the scope of EU cohesion policy. Even though a multitude of topics have been tackled by past URBACT networks there are themes that have been less presented or even never developed. The programme would like to emphasize this point in current call for Action planning networks and encourage cities to come forward with high quality proposals for these themes.

It is suggested to have a look at what previous URBACT networks have worked on by visiting their webpages on urbact.eu website. The search engine enables selecting themes and topics which can give you an idea about the structure of topics tackled in URBACT: <https://urbact.eu/networks>

Building the Partnership

An effective transnational partnership is central to the success of the Action Planning Networks. Since 2002, the URBACT Programme has supported more than 1 000 cities in nearly 150 different networks; it has therefore extensive experience to draw upon. URBACT also has a good understanding of the essential ingredients for a successful transnational network. In this section, we share our experience in order to support the development of high-quality network proposals.

Below are some key questions you should ask yourself to identify the right partners and ensure the rationale for the coherence of the proposed partnership for the Action planning network:

- ✓ Is the identified policy challenge relevant for all partners?
- ✓ Does each partner have a shared understanding of the policy challenge to be addressed?
- ✓ Does each of the partners have an evident commitment to tackling the policy challenge with possible local links to Sustainable Urban Development through Cohesion Policy?
- ✓ Does each of the partners understand the commitment to design an Integrated Action Plan within the URBACT framework?
- ✓ Does each partner commit to provide sufficient resources for their network activities as required?
- ✓ Lastly, it should be ensured that the proposed partnership is eligible in the proposed framework. The Terms of References of the call details the eligibility criteria for possible compositions of partnerships.

Relevance of partners

The relevance of partners operates at two levels. Firstly, there is the question of the relevance of participating cities. Secondly, within those cities, there is the issue of local stakeholder relevance. The following considerations reflecting both levels should help you in selecting the partners and institutions to be involved:

- ✓ The challenge addressed must be a priority for all network partners. This can be evidenced in a number of ways. For example, it will be identified within local strategies and/or within the Operating Framework for EU funds, usually with identified resources attached. In some cases, the city will have previously tried to address this challenge, with limited degrees of success. Thirdly, different stakeholders within the city will have identified this challenge as being important, again reflected in their respective strategic planning.
- ✓ The experiences of all network partners are relevant and will contribute to the learning process of the whole partnership. Each partner city will contribute to the transnational exchange and learning activities with their own experiences and knowledge. These will be different for each partner depending on the local context, previous experiences.
- ✓ For certain topics the size and positioning of the city could be important comparable elements for the coherence check of partners' local situations i.e. maritime cities working on maritime issues.
- ✓ There is a clear understanding of the added value an involvement in an URBACT network will bring to the partner in relation to respective capacity building needs.

In case you want to be a Lead Partner you might receive an expression of interest from cities interested in your policy challenge. You can first send them a simple questionnaire (see example below and a more detailed one [here](#)). On that basis you will be able to do the shortlist of the most relevant candidates and follow up with more detailed questionnaire or even a phone call before making a final choice.

EXAMPLE – SIMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ASSESSING RELEVANCE OF PARTNERS

Institution details

1. Partner institution (Name, Address, Postcode, City):
2. Are you a public body?
3. What is the size of your city ?
4. Type of area (more developed, less developed, transition) ?
5. Are you currently partner in an URBACT network or applying to join others? If yes which one(s)?
6. Contact Person (First name, Family name, Service, Function, Phone number, Mobile number,, Email, Address, Postcode, City)
7. Who from your city would take part in transnational exchange meetings? (ability to speak English & in depth knowledge of the topic needed)

Partner profile

8. Have you already been involved in an URBACT Network? What is your motivation to join this network?
9. What are the problems and challenges faced by the partner city in relation to the theme?
10. What are the existing policies, strategic frames and concrete actions developed by the partner city so far in relation to the policy challenge?
11. What could be the scope of the Integrated Action Plan to be produced by the partner city within the framework of the network?
12. Who will be involved in the initial URBACT Local Group to be set up by the partner city?
13. What is the potential contribution of the partner city to the network activities and what does the partner expect from the network?
14. What is the experience of the partner city in terms of working through transnational exchange in relation to the policy challenge?
15. What is the added value URBACT would bring to the city in terms of learning and capacity building?

In the application form it is necessary to highlight possible complementarities and differences between the partners in terms of needs and previous experience.

SEVEN tips for Building a “Great” partnership

) There is no such thing as a perfect size

It is up to each network to decide about the ideal size of their partnership, as this depends on many factors. It is clear though that going for the minimum number of partners is very risky. It could be that one partner you want to involve drops out at the very last minute before you submit your application i.e. joins another Network proposal, does not provide the signed Letter of Commitment on time, etc. Anything can happen!

) Ensuring the (geographical) balance of partnership

The partnership for Action planning network shall, according to the eligibility criteria, include at least 70% of partners from Less developed and Transition regions. At the same time, you should aim for geographical balance across Europe – a partnership shall cover at least 7 countries regardless of number of partners. In this regard, you should consider having a reserve candidate (possibly with the signed Letter of Commitment) that is ready to join, in case of a last-minute drop out. In addition, a sufficient number of partners from more developed regions is expected in a balanced partnership. The map showing the categorisation of EU Regions for 2021-2027 can be found [here](#).

) Welcome newcomers

Not all cities in Europe have had the opportunity to take part in an URBACT network and experience the “URBACT learning journey”. Thus, URBACT’s guiding principle is to ensure participation of a maximum number of cities in URBACT networks. URBACT is particularly seeking to support cities which are new to the programme, i.e. the city has not been a partner in URBACT II or III. You should consider all these elements when selecting partners without sacrificing the quality and relevance of your project proposal. The [partner search tool](#) and [contacting the National URBACT Points](#) are two good ways to look for cities that have never been involved in URBACT before and that have the same interest with yours in joining an Action Planning Network.

) Be demanding, test the commitment

Besides considerations on the size of the partnership, the focus should be on the “quality” of the partner and on the relevance of their participation in a specific network. Aim for coherence and complementarity in terms of partners’ needs expectations and potential contributions. You should also make potential partners (and selected partners) aware of the ‘URBACT networking framework’ described in PART I and III of this guide and ask for commitment to these requirements. Therefore, the Lead Partner preparing a good questionnaire to collect information on partner cities in order to inform final partnership selection is very important.

) Beware of the “sleeping partners”

Once the network is approved and activities get started, some partners can turn out to be less active than expected. Therefore, developing a smaller partnership of 8 cities is also risky should some of them turn out to be ‘sleeping partners’. Even though you can consolidate the partnership during activation stage with possible replacement of partners the dynamics in the partnership and the richness of the transnational exchange may be impacted.

) Be smart – connect!

To facilitate the partner matching process, the URBACT programme encourages you to use the Partner Search tool and contacts of National URBACT points which can be very useful for finding right partners from different countries. These are provided in section 12 – useful resources of the Call document. For questions regarding the eligibility of “non-city” partners you should always consult the URBACT Secretariat at apn@urbact.eu. Do it early enough during the selection process as the eligibility verification process of non-city partners might take time.

) The best tip to avoid mistakes

Do not accept new partners on a “first come, first served” basis. Take time to speak with the relevant people in a candidate partner city before you decide on your final partnership. Try to avoid cities who reach you through consultants -this can be an indication that the city does not have real interest and/or capacity to become committed and active partner (this might be the case even for Lead Partner candidates).

Try to detect some potential flaws in candidate partners’ interest:

- Just want to become an URBACT city, no matter what topic; (cities committed to more than 3 network proposals can already be considered questionable)
- want to become an URBACT city with my topic, no matter what network;
- want to become an URBACT city although not equipped to actually handle the topic and make a difference at local level;
- are more interested in the budget than the policy challenge;
- ambitious politician with no commitment of wider municipality administration (incl. staff allowed to travel etc.);
- ambitious officer with no support from politicians who understand the importance of the project.

PART III

Shaping your network activities at transnational and local level

This section complements the Term of Reference of the call for Action Planning Network proposals and the URBACT IV Programme Manual with useful suggestions corresponding to the following sections of the application form:

- ✓ section 3 – Rationale of proposed partnership
- ✓ section 4 – Thematic content
- ✓ section 7 – Use of expertise

Network level activities

Past URBACT experience indicates that a detailed methodological approach to structuring and organising transnational exchange and learning is key to a successful URBACT network. As transnational exchange is, by definition, collaboration between languages, learning styles, culture, governance models, a clearly defined framework is vital. The detailed methodology for the transnational network activities will be determined during the activation stage based on the Baseline Study process and presented in Network Roadmaps and all partners should have a role in the design process. Nevertheless, all applicants are invited to present key principles and ideas for shaping their network activities already in the application process.

The Network Roadmap (Baseline Study process)

The Network Roadmap is a key network deliverable to be produced during the Activation stage. It will describe in detail the policy challenges the network is facing, placing it within the context of the EU's urban policy priorities. The insights from the Baseline study process will provide key details of each partner's background, the local conditions, context as well as potential for engagement. Most importantly, the Network Roadmap will set out the network's customised exchange and learning methodology based on the identified assets and barriers as well as the complementarities between partners.

The production of the Network Roadmap based on the Baseline study process is the main responsibility of the Lead Expert, but requires the input of all partners in the network. The Lead Expert (ideally accompanied by the Lead Partner) is required to visit and interview all partners in order to develop the partners' profiles for the study. The study will build on the different contributions provided by partners (local data, strategic priorities, delivery structures, related interventions etc.)

During these visits the Lead Expert (and Lead Partner) should present the URBACT framework and the specific objectives and focus of the Network, and review the local situation and experiences in relation to the policy challenge to be addressed. The partner visits should be organised in close cooperation with the partners and include possible meetings with the relevant project coordination staff, possible URBACT local group coordinator, elected representative(s), civil servants concerned with the policy challenge addressed, relevant delivery bodies and other local stakeholders identified as potential members of the URBACT Local Group.

Clear political support for the participation of the city in the Action Planning Network should be demonstrated by all partners involved and shall be investigated during the visits from the Lead Expert and Lead Partner.

Specific guidelines for the Baseline Study process will be available for approved Action Planning Networks.

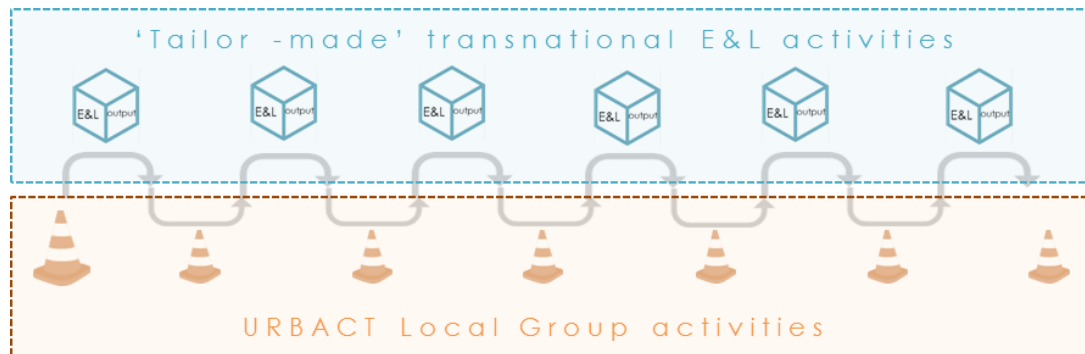
The production of the Network Roadmap being the main responsibility of the network Lead Expert, will be used to assess the performance of Lead Experts in relation to the knowledge of policy issues tackled by the network, methodologic support for exchange and learning, as well as, the writing skills.

Below are a few examples of good Baseline Studies from previous URBACT Networks:

- URBACT III Action Planning Network – [Active Citizen Baseline Study](#)
- URBACT III Action Planning Network – [ROOF Baseline Study](#)
- URBACT III Action Planning Network – [URGE Baseline Study](#)

Customisation of network exchange and learning activities

There is no single preferred methodological approach to the customisation of the transnational exchange and learning in networks. URBACT does not adopt a prescriptive approach and welcomes innovative models and creative approaches. The most important thing is that the methodology proposed is realistic, clearly explained and has a logical rationale. It should also consider the specificities around the policy issues being addressed as well as the needs and the experience of all partners. Key success factors for effective learning in relation the theme shall be clearly demonstrated. In addition, the methodological approach should generate a continuous flow of knowledge between the transnational and the local level for the appropriate application of knowledge generated during different network activities.



) 10 reflections for designing effective Exchange & Learning activities:

1. Different lengths of transnational network activities can be foreseen. Physical sessions are likely to take place over a period of two to three days. If working online however, duration and format should differ, as discussed in points 7 and 8 below.
2. Transnational meetings should be interactive, stimulating and enjoyable. Consequently, regardless of the methodological approach, networks are expected to think seriously about the design and delivery of transnational sessions, so that participants get maximum benefit from the experience. Staff exchanges and bi-/tri lateral deep dive meetings, as well as specific study visits have proven to be very effective in past URBACT networks.
3. The thematic focus of the network will have an impact on the types of stakeholders that will be involved in the transnational meetings and thus on the type of activities that can be proposed during the sessions.
4. At the design stage of transnational E&L meetings, different activities can be considered. These include:
 - ✓ Inputs from a variety of expert speakers (these might be Lead Experts and/or Ad-hoc Experts working with the project, local experts on a particular topic or guest speakers from other networks and organisations)
 - ✓ Forensic site visits (with the active involvement of local stakeholders of the hosting city)
 - ✓ Peer review exercises
 - ✓ Group problem solving
 - ✓ Structured discussions and analysis sessions using [dynamic facilitation techniques](#)
5. The local stakeholders of the hosting city should play a key role in presenting their local situation in relation to the transfer process, needs and experiences/solutions. All partners should receive

some orientation material in advance, so they arrive with some understanding of the local context, even if the meeting is online.

6. Advance planning is an important part of effective transnational seminars. At the very least, this means collaboration between the Lead Expert, Lead Partner and host partner around the agenda, contributors and the logistics. In some cases, Lead Experts have visited the host city in advance to see venues and meet the hosts. In other cases, they have organised online planning meetings in advance of the transnational seminars.
7. Even prior to the pandemic, URBACT networks were making increasing use of online tools and methods to reduce their carbon footprint. However, Covid-19 has provided a huge catalyst for the use of digital platforms which have been actively embraced by the Programme and its networks. Although face to face collaboration still offers the best basis for building trusted relationships, a growing range of activities can be conducted online and regardless of the pandemic, the future of urban collaboration is hybrid. URBACT has developed a range of resources to support this, which include the [Hints and Tips](#) materials and the [URBACT Toolbox](#).
8. Online meetings require a technical rehearsal in advance, to ensure that the digital platform and all audio and visual inputs work correctly. Speakers also welcome the opportunity to check presentations and connections in advance of their inputs.
9. 'Housekeeping' matters also need to be considered carefully. These include finance, administration and communication issues. As much as possible, it is advisable to manage these aspects of the network outside the main business of the transnational seminars. This might mean via online meetings, separate to the exchange and learning sessions.
10. Finally, networks are using social media (in particular Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Viber, Telegram etc.) to complement their transnational activities. All networks are encouraged to establish a social media profile and these tools can be very effective to enhance the internal communication among partners as well as to promote transnational events and to engage with a wider audience in proceedings (for external communication, see the related section).

Tools for network learning and knowledge uptake

Knowledge coming from transnational exchange and learning activities should be effectively captured, organised and documented in order to be easily accessible to all stakeholders involved in the local co-production process. A few examples are listed below:

Pre- and post-meeting briefing note

This tool is used to capture and document the E&L rationale. The pre-briefing note provides a clear understanding of the content to be covered at each network meeting (including necessary preparations) and reminds partners about the tasks that need to be undertaken before the meeting. The post briefing note documents the learning from the meeting for each session, and lists the tasks to be undertaken before the next meeting. This is being considered as very efficient tool for ULG coordinators to report learning from the transnational to local level and as a reminder of tasks.

Key Learning grid

A basic tool used at the end of each transnational network meeting in order to capture key learning points for each partner and actions to be carried out at local level. The grid is reviewed by partners and the Lead Expert at each transnational meeting. It helps partners record the history of learning and monitor actions throughout the journey. It can be also used for internal network recording of the exchange and learning process.

Support and follow up materials

The set of all the materials, handouts, produced for/at network activities. These can include compilation of PowerPoints, templates, canvases, main learning notes from different sessions, photos, short videos, peer learning points etc. These can help ULG participants design debriefings at local level. Private Network Basecamp space will be available to all approved networks for gathering and organising all network productions and making them available for network partners.

Capturing and sharing network results

A minimum set of outputs with three standard formats are proposed for capturing and sharing network results – Quarterly Network Reports, Network articles and Final Network Results product/s.

) Quarterly Network reports

Different thematic and methodological productions shall be captured and summarised within unique standard network output– Quarterly network report. Each network is expected to produce 6 Quarterly network reports reflecting network activities during Planning actions and Preparing implementation stage.

Preferably, these reports should aim to capture and connect learning for the partners in the network but these shall also have an adequate format for network communication - the knowledge generated by the network is interesting and useful for a wider audience of local, regional, national and EU-level policy makers and practitioners not directly involved in the network activities. Therefore, these shall include at least:

- ✓ Highlights from core network meetings activities as well as other bespoke network exchange and learning activities
- ✓ Thematic inputs related to the policy focus tackled by the network
- ✓ Partners' local activities and progress made in relation to the IAP co-production process.
- ✓ Brief presentation of tools developed and/ or used demonstrating integrated and participatory approaches

Networks are free to design their own unique visual identity which can be inspired and combined with a variety of formats showcasing network activities in concise and effective way. The quarterly network reports shall be shared as regular network webpage updates and can feed the production of the Final Network Results Product to be delivered at end of the journey.

) Network articles and other interim products

All Action planning networks shall produce at least three network articles throughout the network duration in order to showcase the interim results of the network activities to a wider audience in a concise format. Each network article will reflect the state of play linked to the specific milestone of the network journey:

- ✓ First network article shall present network challenges and ambition. It will be published on the network webpage during the activation stage as a first network output dedicated to wider audience.
- ✓ Second network article shall be shared at mid-point summarising network exchange and learning activities taking place in planning actions stage including the insights from testing action activities and key networks learning insights
- ✓ The third article shall be shared in final stage and reflect network results, impact at local level, as well as future prospects

Other Interim sharing products can be designed based on the different thematic and methodologic inputs from network exchange and learning activities. These shall be used for knowledge dissemination purposes and using formats as additional articles and other outputs (e.g. policy papers, policy recommendations or thematic reports). These can be produced by different Ad hoc experts as part of their work plans.

) **The final network results product/s**

The network results product should rely on the (most relevant) outputs from your transnational exchange and learning experience i.e. the quarterly network reports. There is no predefined format for the network results product: it can be a digital product or a written document as long as it reflects the partners' and network's learning experience.

The product can showcase successful cases of accessing Cohesion Funds, but also refer to the challenges the partners have faced. People are not just interested in the 'what' part, but also in the 'how'. In short, the Final Network Product should wrap up and bring light to the action planning journey. The following elements are considered of interest for other cities:

- ✓ Introducing the challenges and objectives of the Integrated Action Plans
- ✓ Explaining why partner cities chose to embark on this journey
- ✓ Demonstrating the added value of working in a transnational URBACT network
- ✓ Presenting the highlights of the journey and the main learning from partners
- ✓ Suggesting next steps for the network partners

The budget foreseen for the development of this product might change from network to network, depending on the format, content and investments related to its production.

Local level activities

Local level activities within the Action planning network are centred on the URBACT Local Groups (ULGs), established in each participating city.

URBACT Local Group (ULG)

) What is an URBACT Local Group?

The ULG is a fundamental tool that enables experimentation for innovation in city administrations. As the programme promotes multi-level participation, we expect the composition of these groups to reflect the project's thematic focus. This means that a network on digital transformation will have a different stakeholder mix to one promoting carbon reduction. Cities should think carefully about the composition of their ULG, ensuring appropriate coverage. Partners should also seek the participation of their relevant Managing Authority, to promote the visibility of their planning work, and to ensure alignment with the National Cohesion Policy Framework. The [URBACT Toolbox](#) includes tools on [identifying appropriate stakeholders](#) and [establishing the ULG](#).

) What's the role of the ULG Coordinator?

Each city will appoint a coordinator for its ULG. This key person will function as the main contact point for other partners by attending transnational network sessions, as well as being the pivotal link within the ULG on the ground. The ULG Coordinator will be responsible for the delivery of the city activities and outputs described below. S/he will also be the key point of contact for the [National URBACT Points](#) (NUPs), throughout the lifespan of the project. NUPs should play a key role in capitalising network activities and results and supporting the networking activities with relevant national decision makers. The ULG/Local Project Coordinator will also act as the point of contact between the partner city and the URBACT Secretariat.

) What's the format for ULG sessions?

The ULG is an active working group that will be at the heart of the action planning process in each city. It may be a group designed especially for the URBACT project, or be a relevant group that is already in place. Each ULG will be different, reflecting local structures, priorities and actors. It is expected to meet on a regular basis and to take account of the URBACT principles and tools to work efficiently and interactively. The URBACT Toolbox provides guidance around how to design and run these sessions well.

ULGs will organise a series of meetings and events, in line with the Network Roadmap, to drive the co-production process and create a draft IAP. The network level activities can provide inspiration to try out ideas, concrete solutions, and tools with the relevant stakeholders. The ULG process should be closely linked with the overall network methodology and feed the exchange and learning at transnational meetings.

The ULG can be used as laboratory to experiment and learn by doing. Testing actions activities can be used to involve different stakeholders in the design process in order to assess the possible upscaling of specific actions, test stakeholders' engagement and build closer relationships. This is one of the essential factors for the successful integrated approach.

) How often should the ULG meet?

At the start of the project, each ULG should define its working patterns based on the general networking framework agreed within the network during the activation stage. This will include regular working sessions which are often linked to the transnational network meetings. For example, it can be very helpful to meet prior to a transnational meeting to prepare and ensure that the opportunity is optimised. Following the transnational sessions, it is also helpful to meet in order to share feedback and key learning points. ULGs have also found it useful to come together when key activities or outputs are due, such as the testing actions activities or draft Integrated Action plans.

The ULG Coordinator is responsible for the organisation of the ULG working sessions.

Integrated Action Plans (IAPs)

The work at local level forms the basis for the delivery of Integrated Action Plans. The activities to be foreseen in the ULGs should be aligned with the transnational exchange and learning itinerary and follow a framework agreed at network level. Linking the local work with EU regional and urban development priorities, The Urban Agenda for EU, as well as, UN Sustainable Development Goals is crucial for successful IAPs.

During the activation stage all partners will define the co-production process of Integrated Action Plans. These will be reflected in respective Network Roadmaps outlining the basic IAP structure, ambition, objectives, stakeholders mapping, timeline of activities including links with transnational activities, and the scope of possible testing actions activities. Defining the involvement of different stakeholders (including national/ regional levels) for this will be crucial.

The URBACT Programme will provide a general framework for the production of Integrated Action Plans - The IAP Guidelines will be shared during the activation stage. The Guidelines will provide information and principles about the expected structure and elements to be included in Integrated Action Plans, in line with the action planning journey stages and milestones.

In addition, the URBACT Summer University (taking place w/c 28 August 2023) will be the main training event targeting notably the ULG / Local partner coordinators during the activation stage. This will be a 3-day event, delivered in English, which aims to provide URBACT networks' partners and their local stakeholders with tools and methods to develop integrated and participatory approaches, for the design and future delivery of the Integrated Action Plans. The curriculum will therefore aim at familiarising participants with the URBACT method, focusing on the integrated approach and different aspects of the action-planning cycle. The interactive programme will also be an opportunity for exchanges to take place between the programme's local players, to spread relevant and tangible practices at a transnational level and to enable the ULGs to create links with one another, in particular at national level.

The cost of the participation at this event shall be covered and foreseen in the network budget.

) Testing actions

The philosophy of an URBACT network is to collaborate and identify possible solutions to a particular challenge. These solutions are developed into actions as part of an Integrated Action Plan. By including an opportunity for cities to test some of these solutions at a smaller scale before embarking on larger scale actions is an innovative way to bring about a culture change in city administrations.

'Starting small but thinking big' is perhaps a most suitable motto to use to explain testing activities in the URBACT network.

Within the ULG framework partners have the possibility to experiment with ideas (developed or shared in transnational meetings) and carry out specific testing activities. During Activation stage it is important to explore and identify possible formats and scope of testing activities that would best suit network partners regarding the specific policy challenge. This shall be explored during the Baseline study process but also considered and embedded in the customized exchange and learning methodology for the following stages.

Testing actions can be triggered by an idea or a concept, perhaps already tried in another city, which can be tested to check the relevance, feasibility and added value of its implementation in different local contexts. These can be used to involve different stakeholders in the design process in order to assess the possible upscaling of specific actions. Partners will be able to learn from these tests, measure the results and either adapt, upscale or reject actions to be included in the Integrated Action Plan based on this experience. These can improve the future delivery of actions by being aware of possible risks and hardships.

SOME BASIC EXAMPLES OF WHAT THE TESTING ACTIVITY COULD BE:

- ✓ 5-day test of a concept in a local neighbourhood, repeated several times, with adaptations and improvements after each test.
- ✓ Temporary testing of alternative uses for public space – closing streets etc.
- ✓ Temporary testing of alternative modes of transport in specific neighbourhoods.
- ✓ Local neighbourhood events or campaigns to raise awareness of specific topics.
- ✓ Training for local citizens on relevant topics (zero carbon or waste reduction for example).
- ✓ Virtual tools to consider re-use of vacant buildings.
- ✓ Sensors in the case of IoT, a policy paper, an instrument, an operational plan etc.).
- ✓ Paper Prototyping exercises or user needs workshops.
- ✓ Purchase of small equipment such as maintenance tools or a bike to develop solutions linked to the circular economy and recycling.
- ✓ Purchase of small mobile recycling units to test their use at public events.
- ✓ Experimenting with new forms of citizens' participation.

More details around testing activities from previous Action Planning Networks will be provided to approved projects

URBACT as a programme does not finance infrastructure investment and works mainly on improving methods of working to solve urban challenges using soft measures. The testing activities will follow this principle and as such hard infrastructure projects cannot be supported by the programme.

Network Communication

Communication is a crucial process embedded into every step of an URBACT network. It ensures that URBACT cities can create a positive legacy, making project live beyond its life cycle.

To maximise the update and visibility of the work by URBACT beneficiary cities, approved URBACT networks will have to carry out the following activities (as thoroughly described in the URBACT Programme Manual, Book 1, Section F -Communication at Network level, p.91-102):

) Assign a communication officer for the URBACT network:

Whether from a Lead Partner or a Project Partner city, a key to success is to always have a referent person (communication officer) for the communication activities at network level. In most cases, **this role is fulfilled by someone from the Lead Partner team**, but it can actually be an **external provider** or even someone else **from another partner city** who is notably at ease with the position and related tasks — should this be the case, the corresponding budget for communications should be allocated accordingly. This officer is expected to be in close contact with the URBACT Joint Secretariat.

) Deliver a communication plan:

From the moment the network officially starts its activities and within six months (unless a different timeline is set in the call for networks), the network with the help of the communication officer has to submit to the Secretariat **a communication plan**.

) Develop a network branding:

under the coordination of the network's communication officer, each network has to define a network acronym, tagline and boilerplate within the first couple of months after the approval of the network.

) Develop a visual identity:

Each URBACT network has to develop its own visual identity that will make it both distinct and recognisable to an external audience. This visual identity includes notably a logo, with different versions – the official one, a smaller for social media profile pictures, a black and white for easier use when printing documents etc. The logo should be sent to the URBACT Secretariat within the first couple of months after the approval of the network.

) Respect programme branding and EU requirements:

Alongside their network visual identity, URBACT beneficiaries must always use URBACT/EU logo. Any kind of material produced by the network has to bear the URBACT/EU logo. *If this is not the case, costs of any materials or activities will not be eligible for reimbursement.*

Similarly, following the REGULATION (EU) 2021/1060 Art 50(1) all URBACT beneficiaries – Lead Partners and Project Partners – **must produce an A3 poster within six months from the approval of the network and must publish a news about the network in their respective institutional websites.**

) **Maintain a network webpage on the URBACT website:**

All URBACT networks (even closed ones) benefit from a dedicated webpage to communicate about good practices, case studies, recommendations or reports to an audience external to the beneficiary cities. In this sense, a network webpage acts as a “business card”. For the network webpages, the Network Communication Officers are expected to create an **editorial planning – with articles, news, events and a library** – following the decisions agreed in the communication plan. The Network Communication Officer is then in charge of maintaining the network webpage on a regular basis but the Lead Expert and other Project Partners can upload different content, including quarterly network reports, articles, news, events, videos and other documents

) **Use digital communication tools:**

While URBACT does not make any particular channel mandatory, **it is required for Network Communication Officers to set up an account on at least one social medium and regularly update it with content**. In this way, articles from the network webpage can be shared through social media and reposted by URBACT social media for greater visibility.

) **Sharing network final results:**

Besides the local mandatory products, networks are expected to also deliver a final product. This output needs to **capture the experience of the network, any lessons learnt and policy recommendations**. The final product can take whichever format the network’s partners deem fit, in order to better reach the intended target audiences — series of thematic reports, publication, tools, videos, animations, etc. — the crucial thing is to consider the dissemination process for it. Final events can be a powerful way to spread this material, for example, as well as the network webpages.

In addition, the URBACT beneficiaries are encouraged to take contact with their National URBACT Points to coordinate about communication at national level.

Network expertise framework

Adequate expertise support has proven to be crucial for effective capacity building in cities. Transnational networking and learning between peers requires careful design of events with inspirational facilitation techniques. Proper design and delivery of integrated sustainable urban development policies in cities demands a transdisciplinary approach.

For this reason, expertise support for URBACT networks is structured around three core dimensions for ensuring effective exchange and learning:

- Expertise for the design and delivery of transnational exchange and learning activities
- Thematic expertise (related to wide array of themes and related subtopics in relation to sustainable urban development policy challenges)
- Methods and tools for integrated and participatory approaches for the design and delivery of sustainable urban development policies.

In addition, an adequate set of communication skills has proven to be vital for ensuring the overall quality of expertise support also in the context of hybrid working reality. These are required for all experts validated in the pool.

The Lead Expert role in URBACT networks remains pivotal for ensuring an effective learning. Expert candidates interested in this role will need to validate a set of “URBACT Lead expert skills” crucial for maximising the impact of network exchange and learning activities and knowledge production with proven leadership and coaching approaches.

Network expert roles and missions

In order to improve the efficiency of the expertise support provided to URBACT networks, expertise made available to approved networks is presented in two distinct URBACT network expert roles:

- > **A network Lead Expert** supports the partnership over the entire duration of the network which requires a high level of professional commitment (in case of appointment). A Lead Expert workplan will consist of up to 140 days of expertise spread over 31 months network duration. A Lead Expert supports the network with:
 - The definition of the main focus of network activities based on the Baseline Study process. It includes designing the network work plan with a menu of exchange and learning activities with various formats, elaborating the main expected results and production of network outputs.
 - The delivery of transnational exchange and learning activities with effective facilitation techniques.
 - The knowledge of EU policy frameworks and the specific thematic fields tackled by the network.
 - Coaching and supporting the use of effective methods and tools for the design and delivery of integrated and participatory processes in partner cities.
 - The knowledge capture and uptake and communication of network results

This list of tasks is not exhaustive; each Lead Expert will have a dedicated work plan based on the suggested expertise support framework with defined task categories (see below). A Lead Expert's role is to empower and support cities in their sustainable development processes, rather than teach or dictate.

The shortlisted network Lead expert candidates will be proposed for appointment after network approval (The Terms of References of the present call provide detailed information about the appointment procedure for network Lead experts). One can be appointed as Lead Expert only in one URBACT network at the time. However, appointed Lead Experts can perform other ad hoc expertise missions in other networks.

- > **Network Ad-hoc Experts** provide support on specific needs identified by the network with shorter and more specific expertise tasks. Most network Ad-hoc expertise missions require shorter commitments (up to 5 days). Nevertheless, longer network Ad-hoc expertise missions (6 - 20 days) are also possible depending on specific network expertise requests. Sometimes Ad-hoc experts can also complement network Lead Expert support with specific and complementary tasks over the entire duration of the network – these kinds of missions usually exceed 20 days of expertise.

Network ad hoc expertise missions can include tasks supporting one or more specific expertise needs in line with different types of expertise, such as:

- supporting the design and facilitation of network meetings,
- providing specific thematic inputs at different exchange and learning activities,
- training on methods and tools for supporting integrated and participatory processes in partner cities,
- customised support at local level and with the production of specific network outputs.

This list of tasks is not exhaustive; each network Ad-hoc expert has specific set of missions defined with the work plan in line with suggested expertise support framework with defined task categories (see below).

All approved networks shall appoint at least two network Ad hoc experts during the life-time of the network. The support from Ad hoc experts is suggested notably during the Planning actions and Preparing Implementation stage of the network journey. There are no limitations in relation to number of Ad hoc expert missions in different URBACT networks.

The selection and appointment of experts

The selection and appointment of network experts will take place after the network approval. All networks shall appoint at least 3 network experts during the life-time of the network – a network Lead expert and at least two network Ad hoc experts. All selected experts appointed to carry out the expertise support shall be validated and included in the [URBACT pool of experts](#). In case networks will not be able to find an adequate expert in the pool (due to the specificity of the expertise need), any expert can be invited to apply for validation – [the call for experts](#) will remain open over the entire duration of the URBACT programme.

The selected network experts are proposed via the expertise request form that shall be validated by URBACT Secretariat. For validation, the suitability, geographical balance and the gender balance of appointed network experts shall be considered. After the validation, URBACT Managing Authority makes the contractual arrangement with the expert whereas network Lead partners are responsible for coordination and certification of expertise services. Detailed guidance will be provided to approved networks.

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

Mapping of expertise needs and organisation of tasks

Each network shall have a specific expertise budget of EUR 144 500 to cover a maximum of 170 days of expertise regardless of the number of partners.

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. During the Activation stage all Network Lead experts will have a fixed work plan with a total 40 days of expertise in order to carry out essential tasks related to the network development and delivery of the Network Roadmap. During activation stage there is in principle no need for the use of additional ad hoc expertise support. The use of ad hoc expertise support is suggested in the following stages.

Expertise support in Action planning network will be structured and organised in the following way:

- Support with Network development, dynamics, and network results management (approx. 45 days, exclusively for Lead experts). This includes:
 - ✓ Support Lead partner with partnership dynamics including network coordination meetings
 - ✓ Delivery of the Baseline study and production of Network Roadmap including bilateral visits and development of network E&L methodology
 - ✓ Support the Mid-term reflection process
 - ✓ Production of Integrated Action Planning report
- Support to transnational network activities (approx. 60 days for Lead experts and Ad hoc experts). Including:
 - ✓ Support the design and facilitation of core network meetings (Lead expert task)
 - ✓ Support the design and delivery of the customised set of exchange and learning activities in-person or online (Lead expert task)
 - ✓ Ad hoc expertise support at transnational network activities (task dedicated to Ad hoc expertise missions)
- Support to partners with the delivery of local activities (approx.40 days for Lead experts and Ad hoc experts). Including:
 - ✓ One to one support for the set-up and sustainment of URBACT Local Groups and the use of URBACT toolbox
 - ✓ Support with Testing activities
 - ✓ Support partners with production and reviews of Integrated Action Plans
- Support with the knowledge capture and communication of network results (approx. 25 days for Lead experts and Ad hoc experts)
 - ✓ Support with the delivery of Communication plan and production of specific communication outputs defined by the network
 - ✓ Production of Quarterly Network Reports (Lead expert task)
 - ✓ Production of core network articles (Lead expert task)
 - ✓ Production of Network Results Product/s

Most of these listed tasks will have pre-defined suggestions of deliverables. Exact mapping of tasks together with expert workplan management and expert reporting templates will be provided to approved networks at the start of the journey.

Network Results management framework

In order to ensure the quality of expertise support across networks all Lead experts will need to participate in essential information and training sessions and embrace the tools proposed by URBACT. For this purpose, specific guides will be designed for delivery of expected services.

Lead experts play a key role for the network development and dynamics. The quality of the support provided will be assessed twice during network journey:

- The performance evaluation by partners at the end of Activation stage
- The Mid-term reflection process at the end of Planning actions stage

Network results management framework will be introduced to all Lead experts which includes:

- The use of digital tools (i.e. Miro) for monitoring partner progress and capacity building support
- The State of Actions Report to be shared at the end of Planning actions stage
- The Integrated Action Planning Report to be provided at the end of the project
- Regular Check-in sessions with Lead experts to share the experience and ideas around the delivery of different support activities as well as the development of methodological approaches and tools.
- The use of well-established tools suggested by the programme for ensuring the balanced progress across networks notably related to the application of Integrated and participatory approaches and the IAP co-production process.
- The dedicated Lead expert space on Basecamp for programme support as well as 24/7 “peer support shop” - sharing experiences and ideas with other appointed network Lead experts.

THE “URBACT” Glossary

The URBACT Method¹

It is a series of processes and tools that enable an environment for promoting integrated sustainable urban development through effective learning and practice. The building blocks of the method are:

- ✓ Networking amongst EU cities to exchange good practices and find solutions to their policy challenges with expert support
- ✓ Applying the integrated and participatory approaches at local level to solving concrete challenges with variety of stakeholders within the framework of URBACT Local Group.
- ✓ Expertise support, capacity-building and training for urban practitioners to empower them to drive change within cities.
- ✓ Capitalisation and communication of knowledge and practices to reach and provide a wider community of urban practitioners in Europe and beyond with concrete solutions.

Network Lead Partners and Project Partners

Each network has to appoint a Lead Partner with full responsibility for network management, coordination of activities among the transnational partners, 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.

URBACT Local Group

The URBACT Local Group (ULG) is a fundamental building block of the URBACT programme. In every partner city, the ULG brings together all relevant local stakeholders related to the chosen policy challenge that the city wants to tackle. The ULG is the vehicle for a participatory process allowing relevant stakeholders to be involved in the co-production of Integrated Action Plans.

URBACT Joint Secretariat

The URBACT Joint Secretariat, housed within the French Managing Authority (L'Agence nationale de la cohésion des territoires), is in charge of implementing and managing the Programme on behalf of the Member and Partner States of the European Union. The Joint Secretariat follows and supports networks on all aspects of their work from peer-learning processes, capacity building, communication activities, and capitalisation efforts to management & financial support.

URBACT Monitoring Committee

It is a committee of EU Member/Partner States set up to monitor the implementation of the URBACT Programme, in agreement with the Managing Authority. The Monitoring Committee reviews the implementation of the Programme and progress towards achieving its objectives and functions. It adopts the methodology, criteria for selection and the eligibility rules before the launch of each call for proposals as well as approves the selection of Networks.

National URBACT Point (NUP)

The URBACT Programme currently runs 24 [National URBACT Points](#) covering 27 countries (Austria-Germany, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus-Greece, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France-Luxembourg, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and UK). National URBACT Points, represented by ministries, associations of cities, universities, or consultant agencies, are in charge of communicating and supporting URBACT-related activities in their countries and in their native languages.

Cities should make contact with their National URBACT Points and explore what kind of support they can provide.

¹ [URBACT Programme Manual](#) sets out the *modus operandi* of the URBACT IV programme.

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