

EUROPEAN
U R B A N
INITIATIVE

Peer Reviews

Call for applications

12 March – 30 April

Guidance for Applicants



Co-funded by
the European Union



Région
Hauts-de-France

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW 2**
- 2. IN BRIEF: WHAT IS AN EUI PEER REVIEW? 3**
- 3. WHAT’S IN IT FOR PARTICIPATING CITIES? 4**
- 4. WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO TAKE PART? 5**
- 5. WHAT KIND OF TOPICS CAN A PEER REVIEW ADDRESS?..... 6**
- 6. THE EUI PEER REVIEW PROCESS IN DETAIL..... 7**
 - STEP 1. CONFIRMING THE SCOPE 7**
 - STEP 2. MATCHMAKING 8**
 - STEP 3. CONTENT PREPARATION 9**
 - STEP 4. PEER REVIEW EVENT 10**
 - STEP 5. FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES..... 11**
- 7. WHAT IS EXPECTED OF PARTICIPATING CITIES? 13**
 - 7.1. CORE PEER REVIEW ACTIVITIES..... 13
 - 7.2. COMMUNICATION, OUTREACH AND CAPITALISATION..... 14
 - 7.3. BEYOND THE PEER REVIEW..... 15
- 8. TIMELINE AND MILESTONES OF THE CURRENT CALL 16**
- 9. HOW TO APPLY? 17**
- 10. HOW ARE CITIES SELECTED? 18**
 - 10.1. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA 18
 - 10.2. EXCLUSION CRITERIA 19
 - 10.3. SELECTION CRITERIA 20
 - 10.4. CONFIRMATION OF PARTICIPATION 21
 - 10.5. COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE..... 21
- 11. CONTRACTUAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE ELEMENTS..... 22**
 - 11.1. CONTRACTUAL ARRANGEMENTS..... 22
 - 11.2. MODIFICATIONS TO THE APPLICATION 22
 - 11.3. ELIGIBLE COST CATEGORIES 22
 - 11.4. TERMS OF REIMBURSEMENT 23
 - 11.5. CALCULATION OF ELIGIBLE COSTS 23
 - 11.6. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS..... 26
- ANNEX I. LEGAL BASIS FOR EUI PEER REVIEW 27**
- ANNEX II. EUI PEER REVIEW EXPERTS..... 28**
- ANNEX III. FULL EUI COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE 29**

1. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

This guidance document is aimed at urban authorities who are interested in taking advantage of the opportunity to participate in a peer review activity supported by the European Urban Initiative (EUI). It presents the following content:

- In brief: What is an EUI peer review?
- What's in it for participating cities?
- Who is eligible to take part?
- What kind of topics can a peer review address?
- The EUI Peer Review process in detail
- What is expected of participating cities?
- Timeline and milestones of the current call
- How to apply?
- How are cities selected?
- Contractual and administrative elements

What other capacity building opportunities does EUI provide?

Peer reviews are just one of the capacity building activities organised by EUI. You might also be interested in opportunities to take part in a City-to-City Exchange or thematic learning event.

Activity	Key features
City-to-City Exchanges	<p>EUI has a continuously open call and a range of support tools for any urban authority in the EU to benefit from short-term peer support from one (or two) cities in addressing a particular challenge for the successful development or implementation of their SUD strategy.</p> <p>A City-to-City Exchange takes place through up to three in-person visits over a maximum of five months – or can be as simple as one study visit. Additional online exchanges can also be organised. In their application, cities identify the topic they would like to address, the city they want to work with and the preferred number and format of study visits.</p> <p>City-to-City Exchanges provide opportunities to learn about new working methods and innovative approaches, focusing on one specific aspect of SUD and learning from only one (or two) other cities.</p>
Events	<p>EUI organises ad hoc capacity building events, mixing expert-led and peer-based learning in various formats. These include seminars, workshops and training events, which might be EU-wide events, country-specific or with a small group of countries.</p> <p>EUI capacity building events bring together urban authorities, ERDF Managing Authorities, the European Commission and relevant stakeholders to exchange information and experiences on key urban challenges and the implementation of SUD strategies.</p> <p>These events are also opportunities to seek synergies between and lessons across EUI, Urban Innovative Actions, URBACT and the Urban Agenda for the EU.</p> <p>Stay tuned for the next events. Sign up for the EUI newsletter and follow EUI on social media.</p>

2. IN BRIEF: WHAT IS AN EUI PEER REVIEW?

Peer Review is a **capacity building activity offered by EUI** to support European cities to improve the design and implementation of their Sustainable Urban Development (SUD) strategies,¹ through a process of benchmarking and peer learning.

Each peer review involves **one 'city under review' (primary beneficiary), working with individuals from up to six cities acting as 'peer reviewers' (secondary beneficiaries)** to address concrete challenges in developing, implementing or monitoring an effective SUD strategy.

Only urban authorities receiving ERDF support for their SUD strategy under Article 11 of the [ERDF Regulation \(EU\) 2021/1058](#) (known as 'Article 11 cities'²) are eligible to be **'cities under review'**. Representatives of **any EU urban authority can take part as a 'peer reviewer'**. (See Section 4 "Who is eligible to take part").

'Cities under review' identify the **challenges that they wish to address** according to their specific needs and are matched with 'peer reviewers' who can share their experiences, approaches and ideas in addressing those challenges (See Section 5 "What kind of topics can a peer review address?"). Each peer reviewer tackles three guiding questions defined by the city under review.

All participants discuss common issues and current challenges related to their integrated SUD strategies and **everyone learns from each other**. (See Section 3 "What's in it for participating cities?")

Participation in an EUI peer review is based on a **formal selection process** following an open call (See Section 9 "How to apply" and Section 10 "How are participants selected?"). **'Cities under review' apply as an urban authority** with up to four named representatives, whilst **'peer reviewers' apply as individuals** with the formal support of the urban authority they work for.

Each EUI peer review follows a **fixed implementation process**, adapted from a methodology developed by the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission. It involves a **preparatory phase, a two-day peer review meeting and targeted follow-up**. (For more precise details see Section 6: "The EUI Peer Review process in detail")

The two-day peer review events are paid for by EUI, working with a **host city**. Each event involves **several peer review groups at the same time working in parallel through their guiding questions**. There are also opportunities for cross-fertilisation between the different groups and topics, notably in **informal networking moments and study visits**.

Peer review events may be organised as country-specific events, as EU-wide events or for a cluster of EU Member States. The scale of each event will be determined by the EUI Secretariat based on the number, identified needs and characteristics of the selected cities under review.

¹ A SUD strategy is a strategy that adopts an integrated and place-based approach to urban development. This means a strategy that tackles economic, social and environmental goals, engages multiple levels of governance and multiple stakeholders in an urban area (including Functional Urban Areas). For more information we recommend consulting the [handbook for sustainable urban development strategies](#).

² Article 11 of [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/1058](#) on the ERDF and the Cohesion Fund defines the support provided to Sustainable Urban Development, requiring that "At least 8% of the ERDF resources at national level under the Investment for jobs and growth goal... shall be allocated to sustainable urban development." On this basis, 'Article 11 cities' and 'Article 11 strategies' are those that implement the 8% earmarking established.

The process and timings of the activity are defined by the **EUI Secretariat** and supported by approved **EUI ‘peer review experts’** who accompany the cities through their journey.

3. WHAT’S IN IT FOR PARTICIPATING CITIES?

Cities under review

Cities under review are at the heart of the EUI Peer Review activity, since **their SUD strategy is the main focus of attention**. Cities under review benefit from:

- i. A **structured self-assessment process**³ to help identify specific needs in developing, implementing or monitoring their SUD strategy.
- ii. Specific, tailored **feedback, reflections, and inspiration from their peers** to directly address a challenge they are facing related to their SUD strategy.
- iii. Constant **expert support, guidance and advice** from the team of approved EUI experts and the EUI Secretariat.

Peer reviews can be beneficial at any point along the policy lifecycle of SUD strategies, including: **at design stage**, for example to review a draft strategy; **during implementation**, for example to prepare project selection, to ensure continuous stakeholder engagement, or to develop cross-sectoral approaches or risk management; and **at monitoring and evaluation stage**, for example to set up evaluation mechanisms, to define indicators, or to ensure the continuity, replication or scaling-up of projects.

EUI covers the **travel costs of up to four city-under-review representatives** to take part in the two-day peer review event, as well as a **per diem** to cover food and other expenses. For more precise details, see Section 11 “Contractual and administrative elements”.

Peer reviewers

While the primary focus of each peer review activity is the city under review, **peer reviewers** – and the cities they represent -are expected to provide experience and feedback but also benefit in multiple ways:

- i. Peer reviewers **learn from, as well as inspire, the city under review** – the learning always goes two ways.
- ii. There are also opportunities to **learn from the other peer reviewers** taking part, hearing about a range of inspiring practices and approaches from cities across Europe.
- iii. Finally, through the process of sharing their own approaches and practices, peer reviewers are encouraged to **critically reflect on their own successes and remaining challenges**.

EUI covers the **travel costs** of peer reviewers to participate in the peer review meeting, as well as a **per diem** to cover food and other expenses. Their urban authority **can also claim staff costs** for the days involved in their team member participating in the peer review activities. The precise amounts and conditions are set out in Section 11.5 “Calculation of Eligible Costs”.

³ The preferred tool is the [Self-Assessment Tool for Sustainable Urban Development strategies \(SAT4SUD\)](#), designed by the Joint Research Center for **Local Authorities** and national and regional **Managing Authorities** of EU Cohesion Policy, in charge of building or updating sustainable urban development strategies.

Host cities

All participating cities can apply to be the host city of a peer review event, providing opportunities to **showcase their city to their peers from across Europe** – including through site visits – as well as **engaging local elected representatives and local media** in discussions around their SUD strategy.

EUI covers all the financial costs of hosting the event. Host cities can also send **up to six representatives** to the peer review event because there are no travel costs to cover.

4. WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO TAKE PART?

A more detailed presentation of all the eligibility criteria used for assessing applications to take part in an EUI Peer Review is set out below in Section 10.1 “Eligibility Criteria”. However, it is useful here to already set out the key criteria in terms of who is eligible to apply.

Role	Eligible cities	Eligible participants
City under review	Article 11 cities only (<i>see definition below</i>), as defined by national or regional ERDF Managing Authorities.	Up to four representatives of the urban authority – who work directly on the SUD strategy.
Peer reviewer	Peer reviewers can represent any EU urban authority with experience in the design and implementation of integrated, place-based strategies. The experience and involvement of article 11 cities is most encouraged.	Peer reviewers must be formally authorised by their urban authority to take part in the process. Up to two individuals from any one city may be accepted.

Cities under review

The **primary beneficiary of a Peer Review must be a city entitled to receive ERDF support** for the development and implementation of its sustainable urban development (SUD) strategy under Article 11 of the ERDF Regulation – known as ‘**Article 11 cities**’.

This is because – as an instrument of EU Cohesion Policy – **EUI prioritises the achievement of EU Cohesion Policy objectives** and maximising the impact of EU funding support. (See Annex I – Legal basis for EUI Peer Review).

Note: *It is the relevant ERDF Managing Authority – at national or regional level – in each country that defines its Article 11 cities. **Check out the current [list of Article 11 cities](#) for the period 2021-2027.***

Cities under review apply as an urban authority, which can be **represented at the peer review event by up to four people**. The nominated **staff members** must be individuals with responsibility and/or experience in the design and implementation of the SUD strategy. **Relevant stakeholders** may also be invited by the city under review to join the delegation participating in the peer review event.

Peer reviewers

Peer reviewers **apply as individuals** to take part in a peer review process. However, it is the urban authority that they represent which is the formal beneficiary of the financial support available. So, applicants must be **authorised by their urban authority** to represent them and **no more than two peers from the same city** will be selected for the same peer review event.

Peer reviewers can represent **any EU urban authority** but must have relevant **experience in the design and implementation of integrated, place-based strategies**. Due to their relevant knowledge and experience, peer reviewers from Article 11 cities – and the equivalent Article 7 cities⁴ from the 2014-2020 period – are particularly encouraged and prioritised (see Section 10.3 on Selection Criteria)

5. WHAT KIND OF TOPICS CAN A PEER REVIEW ADDRESS?

An EUI Peer Review is required to **focus on specific challenges related to the design and implementation of SUD strategies**. Each city under review is tasked with identifying the challenge/s they want to tackle and formulating it into **three ‘guiding questions’** to be addressed in turn.

The challenges tackled should **align with the key elements of integrated approaches to sustainable urban development identified under EU Cohesion Policy** – as outlined briefly in the ERDF Common Provisions Regulation⁵.

The **JRC’s [Handbook for Sustainable Urban Development Strategies](#)**⁶ is a **key reference material** for cities to identify relevant topics that need to be addressed. It presents the required elements of an SUD strategy in more detail. The Handbook sets out the following **‘six building blocks of the EU approach to sustainable and integrated urban development’**:

- i. A **diagnosis of the urban area and strategic vision** for its development (Strategic dimension).
- ii. A **selection of the target area(s)**, including integration across scales, from neighbourhoods to wider territories. (Territorial Focus).
- iii. A **multi-level governance and multi-stakeholder** approach, ensuring citizen engagement (Governance model).
- iv. **Integration across sectors** and policy areas. (Cross-Sectoral integration).
- v. Integration of **multiple sources of funding**, including prioritisation of actions to be supported by EU Funds (Funding and Finance).
- vi. A **result-oriented logic** and framework for monitoring and evaluation, linking Operational-Programme and strategy-specific indicators (Monitoring System).

Example topics (guiding questions) covered by previous EU Peer Reviews

- How to **engage relevant stakeholders** to boost the implementation of SUD strategies?
- How to build understanding of an SUD strategy as a tool for urban transformation and **boost internal cooperation** and engagement among all municipal departments?
- How to be more effective in the **long-term planning and continuity** of SUD measures?

⁴ Article 7 the ERDF [Regulation \(EU\) N° 1301/2013](#) defined the support provided to Sustainable Urban Development, requiring that “At least 5% of the ERDF resources at national level under the Investment for jobs and growth goal... shall be allocated to sustainable urban development.” On this basis, ‘Article 7 cities’ and ‘Article 7 strategies’ are those that implemented the 5% earmarking established in the past 2014-2020 programming period.

⁵ Article 29 of [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/1060](#) laying down common provisions for the ERDF [and other ESIF funds], outlines the elements that must be covered by any territorial strategy supported with EU Funds.

⁶ The Handbook for Sustainable Urban Development Strategies produced by the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission was based on a mixed-methods analysis of 964 SUD strategies implemented across 28 EU countries during the 2014-2020 programming period. Quantitative data was collected using [STRAT-Board](#), which is both a database and an online mapping tool.

- How can the **private sector and other sources of financing** (apart from EU) be involved in the funding of the actions and services of the SUD strategy
- How to ensure the **metropolitan fringes** equally benefit from EU/National Investments?
- How to ensure the **sustainability of services** in a shrinking population context?

These topics were covered at EUI Peer Review events organised in [June 2023 in Thessaloniki](#) (Greece), in [November 2023 in Coimbra](#) (Portugal) and in [January 2024 in Kalisz](#) (Poland).

6. THE EUI PEER REVIEW PROCESS IN DETAIL

An EUI Peer Review follows a **five-step process** adapted from a methodology developed for sustainable urban development strategies by the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission. All resources developed by the JRC on sustainable urban development strategies are [accessible online](#).

The EUI Secretariat oversees the whole process, defining and confirming the format and timing of each implementation step. Furthermore, from the beginning of the process until the end, **each selected 'city under review'** will be allocated two EUI peer review experts to provide support and guidance.



STEP 1. CONFIRMING THE SCOPE

The Peer Review process starts once the application and selection phase have been completed and both the 'cities under review' and the pool of 'peer reviewers' have been informed of their selection. (*For more information on the application and selection procedures, See Sections 9 and 10 below.*)

The **first step of each Peer Review process** is then to confirm its thematic and geographical scope.

Thematic scope

The selected 'cities under review' will conduct a **self-assessment analysis** of their current situation, challenges and needs using the [Self-Assessment Tool for Sustainable Urban Development strategies](#) (SAT4SUD) developed by the JRC – or a comparable tool relevant to their SUD strategy.

Based on the **specific operational challenges identified for the design and implementation of their SUD strategy**, they will refine the definition of three main issues they wish to address – known as the **three “guiding questions” of the Peer Review** (For more details, see Section 5 above, “What kind of topics can a peer review address?”).

The peer review experts and EUI Secretariat will support cities under review with this process.

Geographical scope

Under Step 4 of the process, **3-4 peer review groups will come together in one peer review event**. This aims to enable exchanges across and between peer reviews (as well as within them).

To prepare this – during Step 1 of the process – the EUI Secretariat and Peer Review Experts will cluster all selected ‘cities under review’ into groups based on thematic or geographical characteristics.

Cities may be clustered together according to a **common interest in a particular theme or territorial delivery mechanism for SUD** (e.g. use of an SUD programme, SUD priority axes, Integrated Territorial Investments - ITIs, Community-Led Local Development – CLLD or Functional Urban Areas – FUAs), characteristics and geographical context (e.g., as part of a cross-border Functional Urban Area).).

Cities under review kick-off meeting

Once the clustering has been defined, **a kick-off meeting for all the ‘cities under review’ at the same event** will be held.

STEP 2. MATCHMAKING

All participants approved under any specific call – whether cities under review or peer reviewers – constitute a ‘cohort’. Step 2 of the Peer Review is **matching the selected ‘cities under review’ with the most appropriate ‘peer reviewers’** from the cohort. Each city under review will be allocated between four to six peer reviewers. This task will be undertaken by the EUI Secretariat working with the team of Peer Review Experts in a process lasting around three weeks.

‘Peer reviewers’ will be matched with ‘cities under review’ **based on their interest, motivation and capacity to address the guiding questions** put forward by each city under review. Cities may be chosen due to similarities in challenges addressed or in urban context.

Matching of peer reviewers will be **mostly according to the answers provided in the application form**. Nevertheless, this may be supported by additional information gathering, such as through a survey, to further establish relevant experiences, motivation and interest.

If recommended by the EUI Peer Review Experts and/or Secretariat, **additional peer reviewers may be asked to join the cohort** – even if they did not apply. This could be because they are known to have particularly interesting or relevant experience to share of developing and implementing SUD strategies. Notably, this might include participants from previous EUI Peer Reviews or other EUI Capacity Building activities who have demonstrated valuable knowledge and experience.

Once each ‘city under review’ has been matched with its selection of up to six ‘peer reviewers’, the allocated **Peer Review Experts will liaise with participating cities on the next steps**.

STEP 3. CONTENT PREPARATION

Kick-off meeting for cities under review

A first kick-off meeting is organised between cities under review of a same peer review event. The meeting aims at:

1. Briefing the cities under review on their role, the timeline and ways of working of the activity.
2. **If relevant**, defining a common guiding question to be addressed during the event by all cities under review and all peer reviewers. The common guiding question is based on a common challenge to all cities under review of one event.

During this meeting, cities under review will prepare a short presentation outlining their urban context and the challenges they identified. The discussion will be moderated by the Peer Review Experts, who will support the cities under review throughout the activity.

Background paper

In order to prepare the content of their peer review event, each 'city under review' is required to draft a **background paper** detailing the specific characteristics of their city and the challenges they face. They should actively **consult with their local stakeholders to contribute to this task**.

To facilitate the task, cities under review will receive a **template background paper** from the EUI Secretariat as well as **personalised guidance and support from their peer review experts**. The template may be adapted by the city under review, but the required content sections and maximum and minimum lengths indicated in the template must be respected.

Cities under review should share their background paper with the EUI Secretariat **not later than one month before the peer review event**. The background paper will be then disseminated to the peer reviewers.

Peers kick-off meeting

Following the matchmaking exercise and background paper, a first kick-off meeting **bringing together the city under review with their peer reviewers** will be organised by the EUI Secretariat and experts.

Key aims of the meeting are to **clarify understanding of the needs and guiding questions of the city under review** as set out in the background paper, which peer reviewers must read in advance and ask any additional information they may need to understand the context of the city under review.

Pre-event online briefing

No later than two weeks before the peer review event, an online briefing will be organised by the EUI Secretariat and experts, bringing together all expected participants. Key aims are to **clarify expectations and details of what will happen at the event**. Peer reviewers can ask for further specifications and feedback on **examples and experiences to highlight during the upcoming event**.

The briefing may also suggest **updates to the background paper** that the city under review should make in advance of the event. All participants should leave this briefing clear on **what they should be presenting at the event and any materials they need to prepare**.

STEP 4. PEER REVIEW EVENT

Clustering of cities under review

Peer review events are **organised according to a geographic or thematic clustering of 3-4 cities under review** (for more details see Step 1 “Confirming the scope”). The criteria for clustering include common interests or challenges, similar territorial tool for SUD delivery, shared characteristics and geographical contexts.

For peer review events that are country-specific or based on a regional clustering of Member States, **some or all sessions may be held in national languages to facilitate exchanges.**

Host cities

In the application form, applicants are invited to indicate whether they would like to be considered as the host city for a peer review event. Host cities are usually – but not always – cities under review.

Host cities benefit from increased profile and can suggest a potential study visit itinerary, providing an opportunity to **showcase their city to their peers from across Europe**. They can also help **design the opening plenary**, which can be focused on their context and engage their elected representatives in discussions on their SUD strategy. Hosting a peer review event also provides opportunities to **engage local media** and generally raise awareness of local efforts and sustainable urban development.

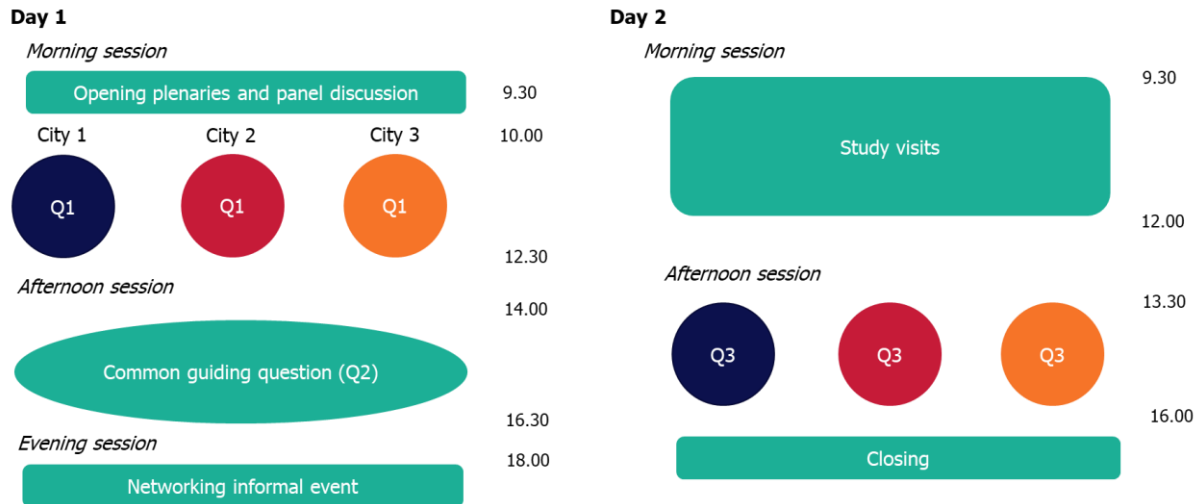
While the host city may be asked to suggest possible venues and local service providers, EUI will organise and finance the entire peer review, including contracting service providers and defining the agenda. **No financial contribution is expected from host cities.** Host cities can also send **up to six representatives** to the peer review event because there are no travel costs to cover.

Peer Review Event Agenda

Each peer review event follows the same structure and key elements based on the methodology defined by the EUI Secretariat and Peer Review experts:

- Each peer review event lasts **two days**
- **Opening and closing plenaries** bring together all participants across peer review groups
- **Three discussion rounds** will address each peer review’s three guiding questions in turn.
 - The **common guiding question** will be addressed during a **joint session**.
 - The other guiding questions will be address in **parallel sessions**
- The event will include **informal networking** opportunities
- The event will include **study visits** to relevant sites in the host city

There is some flexibility in the order of sessions (such as the timing of the study visits and informal networking). The agenda of the event evolves according to the needs of the participating cities. An indicative agenda for a typical peer review event is as follows:



STEP 5. FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

Feedback report

The EUI Peer Review Experts are responsible for drafting a Feedback Report on each peer review, which they will share with the city under review **no later than two weeks after the peer review event**. This report will detail the discussions that took place, the examples presented and the recommendations and insights provided.

The cities under review then review the feedback report with their stakeholders and **identify which recommendations they would like to prioritise** for the further development of their SUD strategy.

They are invited to **update the feedback report to include their plans and priorities within two months**. They send it to the EUI Secretariat who – after validating it together with the Peer Review Experts – upload it on an online platform (e.g. SharePoint) so that all participants, including peer reviewers, are able to access the full report, with both the recommendations and planned follow up.

Follow-up webinar

At least six months after the peer review event, the EUI Secretariat will organise a **feedback webinar for participating cities** to discuss the progress of cities under review in implementing their plans and priorities, integrating the provided recommendations into their SUD strategies.

Cities under review will **share any tangible benefits** brought by the inputs received as well as **identifying remaining hindrances or new challenges** in the design and implementation of their SUD strategy or related projects. This should retain a focus on the six building blocks of the EU approach to sustainable and integrated urban development (See Section 5. “What kind of topics can a Peer Review address?”)

Additional capacity building support

Cities under review can submit a follow-up ‘fast-track’ application for a **city-to-city exchange** in order to explore ways of implementing any of the specific recommendations set out in their feedback report. For example, they are encouraged to take the opportunity to **visit a peer city which is already**

implementing a similar approach. The application can be fast-tracked because the cities are already confirmed to be eligible and the topics relevant for city-to-city exchanges.

The **cities of peer reviewers are also encouraged to apply** for a city-to-city exchange following on from any of the topics they discussed or learned about during the peer review.

Further, if several 'cities under review' share a common interest in a follow-up topic, this request may be considered by the EUI Secretariat for a **future EUI capacity building event.**

Final follow-up

The EUI Secretariat will contact all participants in order to **follow up on the progress of cities under review around twelve months after the peer review event.** This is vital for EUI to be able to identify and celebrate successes, track the impact of the Peer Review, make improvements to the process and identify further capacity building needs to address.

7. WHAT IS EXPECTED OF PARTICIPATING CITIES?

Here, we summarise the main commitments made by cities participating in an EUI Peer Review (in return for the benefits outlined in Section 3 “What’s in it for participating cities?”).

7.1. CORE PEER REVIEW ACTIVITIES

Cities under review

Throughout the Peer Review process, ‘cities under review’ will be invited to **review and assess their ways of working, their strategy and policies**, as well as to listen to inputs from the peers and experts. **Active involvement and an open mind** are thus critical to get the most out of the activity.

More specifically – and **with ongoing support from the EUI Secretariat and Peer Review Experts** – cities under review are expected to:

- i. Participate in an **online kick-off meeting** with other cities under review
- ii. Complete [a self-assessment tool](#) to analyse current strengths and weaknesses.
- iii. Draft a **background paper** setting out local characteristics and the guiding questions (priority topics) of the peer review.
- iv. Participate in a **‘peers kick-off meeting’** with their allocated peer reviewers to discuss first assumptions related to the guiding questions of the city under review.
- v. Help prepare and participate in a **pre-event online briefing** to understand the tools used during the event.
- vi. Finalise the background paper and **prepare a presentation** for the peer review event.
- vii. Participate actively in the **two-day peer review event**.
- viii. **Circulate and review the draft feedback report** with relevant stakeholders,
- ix. Confirm their **plans and priorities** for following up on the recommendations provided.
- x. Prepare and participate in a **follow-up webinar** six months later.

Around **8 working days** are estimated for a city under review (plus travel time when required).

Peer reviewer cities

To support the cities under review, peer reviewer cities are expected to **provide strategic, technical and practical advice, insights and know-how** for designing and implementing SUD strategies based on their experiences. Active involvement and a **willingness to share lessons learnt and best practices** are thus critical to get the most out of the activity.

More specifically, cities under review are expected to:

- i. **Review the background paper** of the city under review in detail.
- ii. Participate in the **peers kick-off meeting** with their allocated city under review.
- iii. Help prepare and participate in a **pre-event online briefing**.
- iv. Prepare identified **content and presentations** for the peer review event.
- v. Participate actively in the **peer review event** across all sessions.
- vi. Review the feedback report and participate in the **follow-up webinar** six months later.

Peer reviewers are expected to commit **5 working days** (plus travel time to and from the event)

7.2. COMMUNICATION, OUTREACH AND CAPITALISATION

Respect visibility requirements of EU Funds

Capacity Building activities are co-financed by public funds. **Beneficiaries must consequently acknowledge their funding source**, the support from the European Union and communicate the role and achievements of the European Urban Initiative (EUI).

Article 50 of the Common Provisions Regulation covering the ERDF⁷ lays down beneficiaries' obligations regarding information and communication measures for the public. **Visibility requirements apply to all co-financed printed and digital products**, publications, and on-site activities and events.

In order to properly follow the visibility requirements:

- Beneficiaries must include the **EU emblem and reference to ERDF support** from the EU
- **Urban authorities must include:**
 - a statement that highlights the support from the EU and EUI in all documents and communication materials for general public and for participants
 - on its official website and social media sites, if such exist, a short description of the activity, proportionate to the level of support, including its aims and results, and highlighting the financial support from the European Union.

The following materials and templates are available on the [EUI website](#):

- European Urban Initiative Visual Identity
- European Urban Initiative Brand book
- Templates: (i) PowerPoint and Word, (ii) letter paper, (iii) publication layout

Act as external ambassadors for EUI Peer Review

All participants are encouraged to act as an ambassador of the peer review :

- **Disseminating the results and outcomes** of the peer review within their institution and among stakeholders.
- **Participating in EUI capacity building events** as a participants or speakers (when invited)
- **Participating in other activities organised by EUI** to promote peer reviews and share testimonies from previous participants.
- **Sharing within their professional networks** and on social media the outcomes and benefits of the peer review activity.

When relevant, the EUI Secretariat may provide the participants and ambassadors with ad-hoc templates for communication and dissemination of the activity. Costs incurred for the dissemination

⁷ [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/1060](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021

of the activity are not covered by the EUI Secretariat, unless the participants are invited as speakers to an EUI in-person promotional event.

Support the capitalisation of knowledge by EUI

Throughout the implementation of the peer review process, participating cities will generate a wealth of knowledge about the SUD strategy process, in terms of what works, what does not, and what could be done differently in different contexts. EUI will endeavour to **capture and share this knowledge with other policymakers and practitioners** across Europe in a process known as 'capitalisation'.

Different mechanisms will be set up by EUI to ensure this capitalisation and transfer of knowledge emerging from the Peer Review activities. The peer review experts will have a crucial role to play here, typically feeding into activities carried out by the EUI Secretariat. Where relevant – and upon request from the Secretariat – **peer review participants are expected to contribute to capitalisation activities**. This may include sharing their experiences at an event or for a publication, or feeding into follow-up activities, such as studies, on elements discussed during their Peer Review.

This may include also feeding into future work to build knowledge on challenges and possible solutions for the design and implementation of SUD strategies as well as on the identification of good practices.

7.3. BEYOND THE PEER REVIEW

EUI Pool of Peers

All participants in EUI peer-exchange activities – whether from cities under review, peer reviewers or those involved in City-to-City Exchanges – are **invited to be part of the EUI pool of peers**.

This pool consists of a database of all past participants, with the name of their institution, experience and contact details. Members of this pool may be contacted to participate in a future EUI Peer Review or may be invited to act as a peer in a City-to-City Exchange. **Participants that are not interested in the pool can opt out as part of the peer review follow-up.**

In addition, **representatives of cities under review from one peer review can act as peer reviewers in another**. Reviewing another city is a valuable part of the capacity building process that brings additional insights to any city looking to continually improve its SUD strategy and actions. Participating as a peer can bring new outlooks on challenges previously addressed by a peer review. It is also a networking opportunity and helps to foster the development of an EUI capacity building community.

8. TIMELINE AND MILESTONES OF THE CURRENT CALL

The present call will select participants for peer-reviews that will take place in 2024. The below is an **indicative timeline** of the peer review process under this call:

- **12 March 2024 – launch of the Call for Applications**
 - While the call is open, potential applicants can book [bilateral online consultations](#) with the EUI Secretariat to get more information and advice about the call.
 - **09 April – [Applicant Webinar](#)** providing information and guidance on the call and how to apply.

➤ **30 April 2024 – deadline for applications – closure of the call at 12:00 (CET).**

- **14 May 2024** – indicative and **earliest date for results of the Call**. All applicants (whether approved or rejected) will be notified of the results around three weeks after the call closes - depending to some extent on the number of applications received.
- **28 May 2024** – confirmation of **date and location (hosts) for peer review events** and start of content preparation for cities under review.
- **25 June 2024** – confirmation of the **composition of all peer review groups** (city under review + peer reviewers) based on completion of the matchmaking exercise and the agreement of participants.
- **June onwards** – completion of background paper, kick-off meeting for cities under review, peers kick-off meeting and pre-event briefing (**preparatory activities**)
- **Before end 2024** - it is expected that **three peer review events** be held in the second half of 2024 – most likely from September onwards.
- **2025** – during the 12 months after each peer review event, **follow-up activities** will be organised including a webinar after six months and further follow up after a year.

9. HOW TO APPLY?

The Call for Applications opens on 12th March 2024 and **closes on 30 April 2024 at 12:00 (CET)**. Applicants are required to fill in [the application form on EU Survey](#) specifying their preference in terms of acting as 'city under review' and/or 'peer reviewer'. A courtesy Application Form in MS Word format is available on the EUI website. However, **only applications submitted through the EU Survey tool will be accepted** - applications submitted by email will be deemed ineligible.

Application Form

The Application Form is composed of three sections:

➤ **A. Applicant information.**

The applicant is asked to provide standard information and contact details, as well as information on their urban authority and involvement with SUD strategies and SUD-related EU cooperation.

➤ **B. Challenges and motivation**

The applicant is asked to identify challenges they are facing and set out their **motivation and interest** in the role of city under review or peer reviewer. Depending on their answer, the subsequent questions are different.

If selecting city under review

The applicant will provide **information on their SUD strategy**, including its status and timeline, a description of the potential guiding questions to be addressed and participating individuals. The applicant is also invited to express their willingness to act as a host city for a peer review event.

If selecting peer reviewer

The applicant is invited to provide information on their **capacity, fields of expertise and their motivation** for participation as a peer reviewer, including what they expect to gain from the process.

➤ **C. Endorsement by the urban authority**

The applicant is asked to confirm the endorsement of the application by an authorised signatory from the applying urban authority (i.e. with delegation and power to engage the legal person of the urban authority) and to provide their contact details. The legal obligations linked to the endorsement of the application are detailed in the Application Form.

How to receive assistance

The EUI Secretariat is ready to assist applicants with any questions related to the call.

- Applicants may contact the Secretariat with **specific queries via email** to capacitybuilding@urban-initiative.eu
- The Secretariat will organise an **Applicant Webinar** at the beginning of April 2024 (exact date tbc). The webinar will also be recorded and made available on the EUI website.
- Potential applications can benefit from online **bilateral consultations with the EUI Secretariat** to receive information and advice about the call throughout the period the call is open. They are required to first read the call documentation, watch the webinar recording and prepare questions. Sessions can be booked [here](#).

10. HOW ARE CITIES SELECTED?

Each application is **evaluated by a team of independent experts**, working under the supervision of the EUI Secretariat who retain responsibility for the final selection decision. The evaluation and selection process is organised in **two main steps**:

1. **Eligibility check**, using defined **eligibility criteria** and **exclusion criteria** to ensure equal treatment of applications and avoid further assessment of ineligible applications.
2. **Quality evaluation**, using the defined **selection criteria** and including a **prioritisation score** to inform choices between applications meeting the overall criteria.

10.1. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

If not all requirements set out below are complied with, the application is deemed ineligible, and no further assessment is undertaken. Applicants will be notified at the end of the evaluation and selection process of the eligibility of their applications.

Eligibility criteria for all applications

1. The **Application Form has been submitted electronically via EU survey before the deadline** indicated in Section 8 “Timeline and milestones of the current call”.
2. **Mandatory fields** in the Application Form **are duly completely**.
3. The applicant is either:
 - a. an **urban authority** – or its representative - **of a Local Administrative Unit** defined according to the degree of urbanisation as city, town or suburb (corresponding to DEGURBA code 1 or DEGURBA code 2 of Eurostat).
 - b. A **Functional Urban Area** (or association or grouping of urban authorities) - with legal status of organised agglomeration composed by Local Administrative Units, where the majority (at least 51%) of inhabitants live in Local Administrative Units defined according to the degree of urbanisation (DEGURBA) of Eurostat as cities, towns or suburbs (corresponding to DEGURBA code 1 or DEGURBA code 2).

In case the Functional Urban Area, does not have a legal status, one of the main urban authorities of the Functional Urban Area may apply in the name of the Functional Urban Area.
4. The application form is submitted by a representative of the urban authority that is involved in the design and/or implementation of the SUD strategy and directly works for that urban authority. An Application Form submitted by a stakeholder involved in the design and/or implementation of an urban authority’s SUD strategy – but not working for the authority itself - will be declared ineligible⁸.
5. The applicant is **located in an EU Member State**.
6. The applicant institution **complies with the requirements on exclusion** from access to funding (See sub-Section on “Exclusion criteria” below”).

⁸ As defined in Article 29 of the [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/1060](#), “territorial strategies shall be under the responsibility of the relevant territorial authorities or bodies.” Stakeholders hence do not bear the responsibility of the territorial strategies, although they greatly contribute to them.

7. The application must be duly **endorsed by an authorised signatory** who has delegation and power to engage the legal person of the urban authority.

Additional eligibility criteria for cities under review

1. The applicant is an **Article 11 city** i.e. an urban authority selected by its national/regional ERDF Managing Authority to implement an SUD strategy under article 11 of the ERDF Regulation.
2. The **relevant person from the urban authority** in charge of designing and/or implementing the SUD strategy of the applicant city is involved in the peer review process.

Additional eligibility criteria for peer reviewers

The applicant demonstrates relevant experience with the design and implementation of integrated, placed-based SUD strategies.

The **applicant is/was involved** or in charge of designing and/or implementing the SUD strategy of their urban authority. They are directly employed by the urban authority.

Priority will be given to:

- Applicants from an Article 11 city i.e. an urban authority involved in Article 11 of the current ERDF Regulation (2021-2027),
- Applicants from an Article 7 city i.e. an urban authority involved in Article 7 of the previous ERDF Regulation (2014-2020), ,

10.2. EXCLUSION CRITERIA

All applicants must provide a **declaration confirming that the urban authority does not fall under one of the exclusion criteria** set out below - this declaration is included in the Application Form.

In accordance with EU Financial Regulations,⁹ applicants may be excluded from the reimbursement procedure if the applying urban authority or persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control within the urban authority, or persons who are essential for the implementation of the project are in **one or more of the following exclusion situations**:

- bankruptcy, insolvency or winding-up procedures,
- breach of obligations relating to the payment of taxes or social security contributions,
- grave professional misconduct, including misrepresentation,
- fraud,
- corruption,
- conduct related to a criminal organisation,
- money laundering or terrorist financing,
- terrorist offences or offences linked to terrorist activities,
- child labour and other trafficking in human beings,
- irregularity,

⁹ [Regulation \(EU, Euratom\) 2018/1046](#) on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union, amending previous EU Regulations: 1296/2013; 1301/2013; 1303/2013; 1304/2013; 1309/2013; 1316/2013; 223/2014; 283/2014; and Decision 541/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012.

- creating or being a shell company.

During the selection procedure and prior to the final decision of the Selection Committee, the EUI Secretariat checks applicants in the **Early Detection and Exclusion System (EDES)**, established by the European Commission to reinforce the protection of the Union's financial interests and to ensure sound financial management.¹⁰

If an urban authority is detected in the EDES, the EUI Secretariat will notify the applicant, who has then the opportunity to **present a defence before the final decision of the Selection Committee**, in compliance with the principle of proportionality.

10.3. SELECTION CRITERIA

Applicants that are declared eligible will be subject to a quality evaluation, looking at aspects of the experience and motivation of the applicant, and coherence and consistency of the application.

The independent EUI Peer Review Experts will conduct the quality assessment of each application based on the selection criteria below. Each application is assessed by at least two experts. A Selection Committee comprised of the Experts and members of the Secretariat then check and confirm the ranking of all eligible applications, also taking into account the prioritisation score outlined below.

Quality requirement for all applications

- **Motivation & expectations.** The applicant clearly describes their motivation and what they expect to gain from the activity. The overarching goal of capacity building and peer learning is well understood.

Additional quality requirements for cities under review

- **Challenge definition & coherence.** This includes the description of challenges and definition of guiding questions.
- **Consistency with Article 11.** The application is consistent with the context and challenges of SUD as understood within Article 11 of the Regulation. The SUD strategy to be reviewed is clearly identified, its status and timeline are coherent.
- **Maturity of the SUD strategy.** The status and timeline of the applicant's SUD strategy will be assessed to ensure all strategies from approved applications will be reviewed at an impactful and decisive moment of the policy life cycle.

Additional quality requirements for peer reviewers

- **Expertise and experience.** The applicant clearly describes the relevance of their knowledge and experience with regards to the development and implementation of SUD strategies.

Prioritisation system

To help the decision-making process, a scoring system considers not only the specific merits of each application, but also **a prioritisation of applications** based on clear criteria.

¹⁰ Article 142 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046.

Based on **individual scorings for the priority criteria** described in the table below, the prioritisation score is added to the quality evaluation score to give each application a final overall evaluation.

Priority criteria	Scoring scale
Article 11 city	Yes = 1
Level of regional development	Urban authority is from a less developed region = 1 Urban authority is from a region in transition = 0.5
Size of city	Urban authority with up to 500,000 = 1
<i>Additional prioritisation criteria for peer reviewer</i>	
ERDF experience	Article 11 city or article 7 city = 1

10.4. CONFIRMATION OF PARTICIPATION

Once the evaluation of all applications is completed, the EUI Secretariat will notify approved and rejected applicants with a notification letter or e-mail. The notification will be sent to the contact persons defined in the Application Form and to the authorised signatory from the urban authority.

- Applicants of **ineligible or rejected applications** are informed in writing about the decision, including detailed information on the reasons why the application is rejected (whether because the eligibility criteria were not fulfilled, or following the quality evaluation).
- **Approved cities under review** will be contacted by the EUI Secretariat for confirmation of participation and to confirm dates and location for the peer review event.
- **Approved peer reviewers** will be contacted by the EUI Secretariat for confirmation of participation and for information of the next steps of the peer review process.

Upon confirmation of participation, cities under review and peer reviewers commit to participate in the peer review event on the agreed date and location. **Unsuccessful applicants may reapply** for the next call for Peer Reviews or a City-to-City Exchange.

10.5. COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Applicants are entitled to make a complaint if they feel their application has not been treated fairly and all complaints will be treated seriously. The full EUI complaints procedure can be found in Annex III, however, the key elements of the procedure defined for this Peer Review Call for Applications are:

- **Only the applying urban authority can file a complaint.**
- The urban authority can raise questions or objections about the decision of EUI regarding the eligibility or evaluation of the application. In principle, **complaints can only be logged against the following criteria:**
 - The assessment does not correspond to the information provided by the applicant in the submitted Application Form and mandatory annexes.
 - The application evaluation and selection process failed to comply with the specific procedures laid down in the Guidance for the Call for Applications that materially affected or could have affected the decision.

- Queries or complaints must be sent to the EUI Secretariat – by post or email – **within 15 working days after the first official notification** of the non-selection of the application by the EUI Secretariat¹¹. This deadline will not prejudice the start of the activity for the selected applications.
- The EUI Secretariat will then have 20 working days to respond to the complaint. **If the complaint is considered justified**, the application will be sent back to the Selection Committee to review the application and its evaluation.

11. CONTRACTUAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE ELEMENTS

11.1. CONTRACTUAL ARRANGEMENTS

No contract is expected to be signed. By applying for a Peer Review, the urban authority commits to support the implementation of the activities if selected.

It is essential that the application form confirms that the **application is endorsed by an authorised signatory with delegation and power to engage the legal person of the urban authority** (hereafter: authorised signatory) – see Section 10.1 “Eligibility criteria” above and Part C of the Application Form “Endorsement by the urban authority”.

In case of doubt, the **EUI Secretariat may contact the authorised signatory** listed in the Application Form to verify the information provided.

11.2. MODIFICATIONS TO THE APPLICATION

In case of unforeseen and exceptional circumstances, a request can be made to the EUI Secretariat to approve **changes to the nominated people to take part in the peer review event**, as follows:

- The city under review may involve **fewer or other staff members** in the peer review compared to those listed in the application form.
- In exceptional and duly justified cases, the peer reviewer may propose **another staff member from their urban authority** to replace them, provided that they are also involved in the design, implementation or evaluation of the SUD strategy.

11.3. ELIGIBLE COST CATEGORIES

Financial support is provided by EUI to cover the following categories of costs related to participation in the Peer Review activity:

- a. **Staff costs of peer reviewers.** (Staff costs of cities under review are NOT covered.)
- b. **Travel costs** of each participant to attend the Peer Review event (where travel is required).
- c. A **per diem** to cover accommodation, subsistence, and local transport of each participant (where travel is required).

¹¹ The deadline for receiving a complaint starts counting from the day after the first notification was sent. The notifications are dispatched only to the email addresses of the authorised signatory and contact person of the application. The EUI Secretariat cannot be held accountable in case the notification was not received by the applicant, therefore it is the responsibility of applicants to provide active email addresses and to check them regularly (including SPAM folders). Addresses cannot be changed following submission of the application form.

Within each cost category, **specific conditions apply** to determine exactly who is eligible and what for. See 11.4 “Terms of Reimbursement” and 11.5 “Calculation of eligible costs” below.

11.4. TERMS OF REIMBURSEMENT

Reimbursements are made in the form of **lump sum payments which are a form of ‘simplified cost option’** to cover the costs of each participant without the administrative burden of collecting and submitting receipts. The calculation of the lump sum to be paid is defined according to specific criteria for each cost category (such as distance travelled). See 11.5 “Calculation of eligible costs”.

Note that due to the lump sum nature of the reimbursements, **participants are responsible for booking their own travel and accommodation arrangements.**

The lump sum is **payable after the submission of the Reimbursement Form** – together with proof of bank account details – and its approval by the EUI Secretariat. (See 11.6 “Reporting requirements”).

The **default option is that reimbursements are paid to the bank account of the relevant urban authority.**

11.5. CALCULATION OF ELIGIBLE COSTS

Staff costs

The urban authority employing a selected peer reviewer¹² may receive a **fixed amount of EUR 350 per working day** to cover the related staff costs. The authority can claim **five working days per peer reviewer** covering the two days of the peer review event plus three days for preparatory activities.

Cities under review are not eligible to claim staff costs – they are considered to be the primary beneficiary of the Peer Review.

Travel costs

The travel costs **related to participation in the peer review event** can be claimed for all participants requiring travel – whether representing a city under review or a peer reviewer. **Participants from the host city cannot claim travel costs.**

Eligible travel costs for a return journey are calculated based on a **fixed unit cost according to the distance** between the place of departure and host city – as defined by the European Commission.

- i. For **distances of 400km or more**, the eligible unit cost (for either rail or air travel) is calculated on the basis of the [EC travel distance calculator](#) – which first confirms the officially recognised distance between two locations and then provides the unit cost for different ‘distance bands’ (e.g. 400-600 km).

Example 1: travel between Coimbra (Portugal) and Zagreb (Croatia)

The distance of a one-way trip between Coimbra and Zagreb is 2586 km by rail according to the EC distance calculator. Eligible travel costs for the roundtrip (going and return) is hence 433€ per staff member.

¹² Peer reviewers are direct employees of the urban authority, as defined in Section 4 “Who is eligible to take part?”.

- ii. For **distances below 400km within one Member State**, the eligible unit cost is defined on the basis of a fixed rate for any journey of between 50 and 400 km for each Member State – as set out in the EC table of [‘intra-Member State return journeys’](#)¹³

Example 2: travel between Lille (France) and Paris (France)

The distance of a one-way trip between Lille and Paris is 221 km according to the EC distance calculator. Eligible travel costs for the roundtrip (going and return) is hence 64€ per staff member.

- iii. For **distances below 400km between two Member States**, the unit cost is based on the addition of the unit cost for an intra-Member State return journey in both countries.

Example 3: travel between Brno (Czechia) and Budapest (Hungary)

The distance of a one-way trip between Brno and Budapest is 326 km according to the EC distance calculator. Eligible travel costs for the roundtrip (going and return) is hence 48€ per staff member (28€ for intra-Member State journey in Hungary, 20€ for intra-Member State in Czechia).

Since travel costs can be claimed for all participants coming from outside the host city, this means costs can be covered for **up to four staff members from each city under review and up to two peer reviewers from the same city** in each peer review.

Per diems

The per diem is a **flat daily rate** that covers accommodation, subsistence, and local transportation (including journeys up to 50km distance) of participants at the peer review event.

A per diem can be claimed for **each participant coming from outside the host city** for the two days of the peer review event plus up to two days to cover the necessary travel time to the host city (**up to a maximum of four days in total**).

[Per diem amounts](#) are fixed for each Member State according to a Decision of the European Commission.¹⁴

Summary of eligible costs per form of reimbursement (with the exception of host cities)

Eligible costs (transfer of lump sum)		
Cost	City under review	Peer reviewer
Staff costs	No	Up to 5 days (2 days of the peer review event, plus 3 for preparatory activities)
Travel costs	Yes	Yes
Per diem	Up to 4 days (2 days of the event plus 2 travel days)	Up to 4 days (2 days of the event plus 2 travel days)

¹³ Commission Decision C(2023) 4928 amending Commission Decision C(2021)35 authorising the use of unit costs for travel, accommodation and subsistence costs. (p.10)

¹⁴ [Commission Decision C\(2023\) 4928](#) of 26.7.2023 amending Commission Decision C(2021)35 authorising the use of unit costs for travel, accommodation and subsistence cost.

Note: An exception to the above tables is that any city hosting a peer review is not entitled to request any reimbursement for travel costs or per diem amounts.

11.6. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Both cities under review and peer reviewers are expected to **communicate with the EUI Secretariat and the Peer Review Experts on a regular basis** to achieve a successful peer review.

However, reimbursement will only be made once the EUI has validated that the participant has completed all their associated tasks (see Section 7.1) to the expected quality. There are also some **formal reporting requirements** which need to be respected, including completion of a feedback report and submission of a completed reimbursement form.

Final version of the feedback report

Cities under review are required to have submitted a completed a final feedback report of sufficient quality within two months of the peer review event. This should include their plans and priorities in response to the draft report and recommendations provided by the Peer Review Experts.

If the report is not completed, or still unsatisfactory after requests for correction/ completion have been sent, the city will not receive reimbursement, or benefit from promotional opportunities from EUI (e.g. invitation to participate in capitalisation studies, or invitations to speak in capacity building events etc) or benefit from a fast-track application for city-to-city exchanges.

Peer reviewers do not have to submit a final report, but the Secretariat still needs to validate that they have completed their tasks to the expected quality, notably at the peer review event. Quality refers to preparation and active contribution during all sessions of the peer review event.

Reimbursement form

Participants are required to complete an electronic reimbursement form, which will be sent to them by the EUI Secretariat after the peer review event. Respondents will be asked to provide:

- **Confirmation of the eligible costs of their participating representatives for calculation of the lump sum payment amount:**
 - Names of staff participating in the peer review event (from the urban authority).
 - Days worked (up to 5) – paid at a flat rate of EUR 350 per day for peer reviewers
 - Distance travelled (one-way) – The form will automatically calculate the lump sum for travel on the basis of the distance that participants are required to calculate using the official [EC travel cost calculator](#)
 - Per diems requested based on 2 days at the event and up to 2 days of travel.

- **Bank account details for receipt of the lump sum:**
 - Including IBAN of the bank account
 - along with supporting documents (Bank Account Identification Document) proving the bank account is owned by the urban authority.

Payment is made by the EUI Secretariat no later than 80 calendar days from the date of the approval of the above reporting requirements.

ANNEX I. LEGAL BASIS FOR EUI PEER REVIEW

The Cohesion policy legislative package for 2021-2027 provides for the establishment of a European Urban Initiative (EUI). This initiative is conceived as an essential tool to support cities of all sizes, to build capacity and knowledge, to support innovation and develop transferable and scalable innovative solutions to urban challenges of EU relevance.

The legal basis of the EUI is included in the European Regional Development Fund/Cohesion Fund Regulation which provides for the main content and strategic framework of the initiative. The overall objectives of the EUI are (i) to strengthen integrated and participatory approaches to sustainable urban development, and (ii) to provide a stronger link to EU policies, and in particular to Cohesion policy. The initiative is aimed at offering coherent support to cities to overcome what may have been perceived in the past a fragmented landscape of manifold initiatives, programmes, and instruments in support of cities under Cohesion policy.

The capacity-building component of EUI seeks to improve the capacities of cities in the design of sustainable urban development (SUD) policies, strategies and practices in an integrated and participative way. It also contributes to the design and implementation of these policies and action plans on a local, regional and national level. This element encompasses the cooperation with URBACT IV networks of cities, as well as peer learning activities and capacity building events which are outlined in the sections to follow.

Sustainable Urban Development within Cohesion Policy should be primarily understood in the context of article 11 of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)/Cohesion Fund (CF) Regulation¹⁵, in conjunction with Article 28 (*Integrated territorial development*) and Article 29 (*Territorial strategies*) of the Common Provisions Regulation (CPR)¹⁶. Article 11 provides the regulatory framework for urban authorities to design and implement SUD strategies, and to be involved as decision makers in project design and selection. Building the capacities of urban authorities on these challenges is key to ensuring that SUD strategies and the related ERDF investments (minimum 8% of ERDF resources in each EU Member State) deliver good results.

Sustainable Urban Development is also defined in the context of the New Leipzig Charter which highlights that, to achieve just, green, and productive cities, it is necessary to establish integrated and sustainable urban development strategies and ensure their implementation for the city as a whole, from its functional areas to its neighbourhoods¹⁷.

¹⁵ Article 11 of [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/1058](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021: "To address economic, environmental, climate, demographic and social challenges, the ERDF shall support integrated territorial development based on territorial or community-led local development strategies (...) that are focused on urban areas, including functional urban areas ('sustainable urban development')".

¹⁶ Article 28 and Article 29 of [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/1060](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021

¹⁷ [New Leipzig Charter- The transformative power of cities for the common good](#) (europa.eu)

ANNEX II. EUI PEER REVIEW EXPERTS

Each city under review will benefit from the support of two EUI Peer Review Experts that will follow them throughout the preparation, delivery and follow-up of the event.

The peer review experts are selected due to their specific skills and experience in the following areas:

- Experience working with cities on challenges related to the design and implementation of SUD strategies and/or supporting urban authorities and stakeholders with finding possible solutions to urban policy challenges.
- Experience moderating events aimed at facilitating learning among cities.
- Experience with the use of the Joint Research Centre / Urban Development Network Peer Review methodology or similar peer review methodologies

Peer Review experts will provide the participating cities with support throughout the entire peer review process, including on the following tasks:

- Accompanying cities under review with review and preparation of SAT4SUD analysis, background paper, and guiding questions as needed,
- Overseeing preparation of recommendations by peers,
- Organising webinar one month before peer review to prepare event,
- Moderating 2-day peer review event,
- Drafting of follow-up report within ten working days after event including review by the EUI Secretariat
- Participating in follow-up webinars 6 months after peer review event.

For any country-specific peer reviews to be organised in languages other than English, a dedicated separate team of peer review experts with the necessary language skills may be composed via a separate call for experts.

EUI directly covers all costs related to the activities of Peer review Experts (including costs for travel and accommodation).

ANNEX III. FULL EUI COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The EUI is committed to providing a high-quality service. A complaint is treated as any expression of dissatisfaction with our service which calls for a response. Complaints will be listened to, treated seriously, and learnt from so that we can continuously improve our service.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction whether justified or not. Complaints can cover:

- the standard of service we provide,
- the behaviour of staff or any action or lack of action by staff affecting an individual, group or organisation,
- the decisional process of supporting and financing European Urban Initiative activities,
- application evaluation related to the eligibility check, quality and operational evaluation,
- financial control procedures,
- the decisional process of the Entrusted Entity/ EUI PS during activity implementation.

Complaints do not cover: matters that have already been fully investigated through this complaints procedure, anonymous complaints, complaints about access to information where procedures and remedies are set out in legislation/regulation e.g. access to documents, general data protection.

All complaints received will be dealt with confidentially. However, we do not expect staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour by complainants. Unacceptable behaviour includes behaviour which is abusive, offensive or threatening. We will take action to protect staff from such behaviour if a complainant behaves in a way that is unreasonably persistent or vexatious.

All complaints must be submitted in English, in writing (post or email) to the following addresses:

The European Urban Initiative – Permanent Secretariat
Les Arcuriales, 45D Rue de Tournai, 7e étage
59000 Lille, France
e-mail: complaints@urban-initiative.eu

The EUI has a two-stage complaints procedure. At each stage, as much clear detail as possible needs to be provided, including (if relevant) any documents and correspondence, and including the statement that a complaint is being made in line with the procedure. For complaints concerning project and financing decisions, a complaint can only be made if originating from the main accountable body.

Step 1: Complaints are made to the EUI Secretariat. This is the first opportunity to try and get a complaint resolved. The EUI Secretariat in liaison with the Entrusted Entity, will examine the complaint and provide answers to the complainant.

Step 2: If the response provided by the EUI Secretariat is considered unsatisfactory by the complainant and it is felt the procedures were not respected, then a formal complaint may be filed and a review by a Complaints Panel may be requested. In principle, and depending on the issue addressed, the Complaints Panel is made up of the EUI Secretariat and the Entrusted Entity. Impartiality of members of the Complaints Panel towards the case under review will be ensured. The decision if the complaint is justified or to be rejected is taken by the Complaints Panel by consensus. The decision of the Complaints Panel is final, binding to all parties and not subject to any further complaint proceedings.

Complaints must be raised maximum 15 working days following the incident in question. The Permanent Secretariat will then have 20 working days to respond to the complaint.

Following the answer to the complaint, the complainant has a maximum of 15 working days from the date of the response, to request that the complaint be progressed to the next step.

The review will be undertaken and communicated to the complainant within 20 working days following the request.

The aim is to complete all complaints within the timescales above; however, if a complaint is very complex and/or a Complaints Panel is needed to be convened, it may occasionally be necessary to extend the time limit. If this is the case, the complainant will be kept informed of progress with the investigation, the reasons for the delay, and the new deadline.

The above complaints procedure and timeframes shall not prejudice the start-up or ongoing implementation of activities financed by the European Urban Initiative.