

Annex: About EUI

**Introduction and background on EUI Support
Services with relevance for TIA support activities**



Co-funded by
the European Union



What is EUI about?

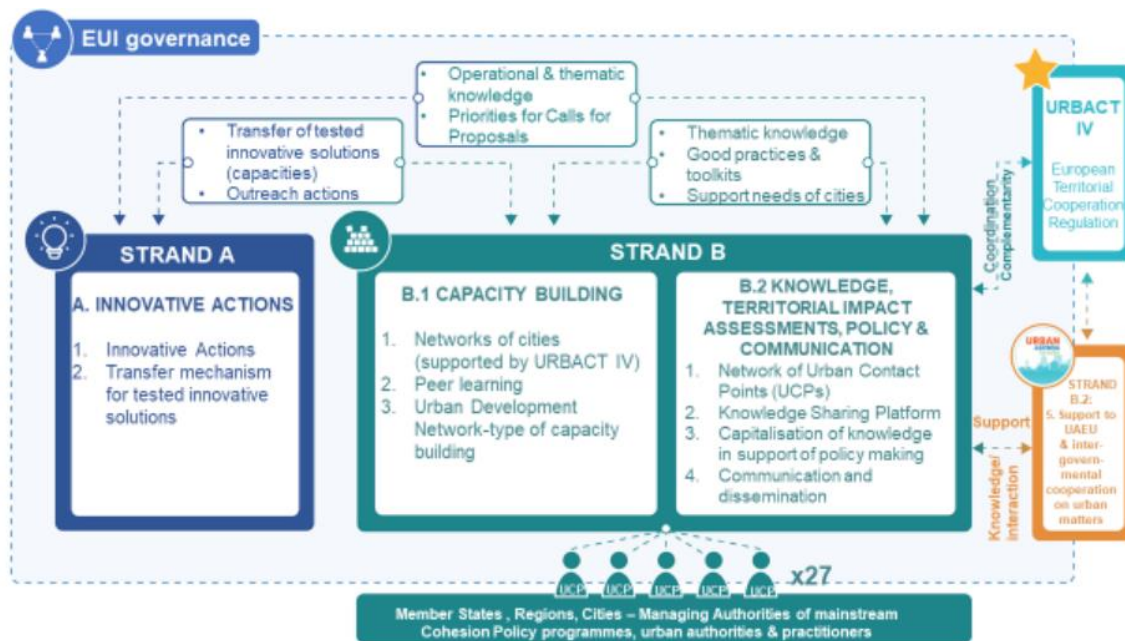
The European Urban Initiative

The European Urban Initiative is an essential tool to support cities of all sizes, to build capacity and knowledge, to support innovation and to develop transferable and scalable innovative solutions to urban challenges of EU relevance. The legal basis of the European Urban Initiative is included in Article 12 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1058 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on the European Regional Development Fund and on the Cohesion Fund² (hereinafter 'the ERDF/CF Regulation') that provides for the main content and strategic framework of the initiative. The overall objectives of the EUI are:

- to strengthen integrated and participatory approaches to sustainable urban development, and
- to provide a stronger link to EU policies, and to Cohesion policy.

The initiative is aimed to offer coherent support to cities to overcome the current fragmented landscape of manifold initiatives, programmes and instruments in support of cities under the Cohesion policy. As part of its strategic approach, the EUI shall cover all urban areas, including large, small and medium-sized cities ('cities of all sizes') as well as functional urban areas. It shall support the Urban Agenda of the EU, and upon request from one or more Member State(s), the EUI may support the intergovernmental cooperation on urban matters. In this context, the goal is to generate additional effective interconnections and synergies between the activities of the EUI and the UAEU and the intergovernmental cooperation.

Strands explained



B.1. Capacity Building

Through capacity building, EUI aims to enhance and strengthen cities' abilities to develop Sustainable Urban Development policies, strategies, and practices collaboratively and inclusively. Our capacity-building approach creates links and knowledge sharing among cities around the EU.

Drawing from previous Urban Development Network initiatives, the European Commission Joint Research Centre (JRC) knowledge and TAIEX mechanism, as well as UIA capitalisation efforts, our activities focus on:

1. Enhancing cities' capabilities to design and execute Sustainable Urban Development strategies, policies, and practices.
2. Improving the quality of these strategies, policies, and practices in design and execution.

The primary audience for EUI's capacity-building activities includes urban practitioners and policymakers from EU cities engaged in Cohesion Policy and

Sustainable Urban Development under Article 11 of the ERDF/CF Regulation and Cohesion Policy programs.

We propose three main activities: City-to-City Exchanges, Peer Reviews, and capacity-building events.

City-to-City Exchanges

City-to-city exchanges are in-person visits or online exchanges between an applicant city and one or two peer cities. Peer cities share new working methods and innovative approaches to specific implementation challenges identified by the applicant city. The challenges relate to the design and implementation of Sustainable Urban Development strategies, policies and practices.

Peer Reviews

Peer Reviews take the form of workshops in which cities are peer-reviewed by other cities and relevant stakeholders to benchmark their Sustainable Urban Development strategies. There are two possible roles in the process: City under Review and Peer Reviewer.

Cities under Review benefit directly by getting targeted advice on improving their design and implementation of Sustainable Urban Development strategies and practices in an integrated and participative way.

Peer Reviewers benefit equally from this process as they are bringing forward their good practices and getting new ideas from all the cities that are brought together by the Peer Review.

Capacity building events

Capacity-building events comprise a wide range of formats: workshops, seminars, etc. enabling cities to improve their capacity to design and implement Sustainable Urban Development strategies.

Events can be national (country-specific), cluster (they bring together countries that might have similar topics to treat) or EU-wide (for all EU cities).

B2. Knowledge and Communication

The EUI Knowledge Management Strategy

EUI aims at sharing and capitalising on knowledge on sustainable urban development in providing accessible know-how information on urban matters. A knowledge management strategy is currently being developed. The strategy setting the framework for all the knowledge-related activities of the Initiative. The document also outlines the scope, methodological and partnership principles associated to activities for the capitalisation and dissemination of urban knowledge.

Capitalisation of knowledge

Building on the 2014-2020 experiences of UIA knowledge management activities, EUI knowledge activities aim at capturing, consolidating and enabling the transfer of outputs and results produced by the different activity areas of the Initiative. The capitalisation work concerns the outputs and results of EUI-Innovative Actions, Capacity Building activities (including URBACT IV) as well as Article 11 cities of the ERDF/CF Regulation and the mainstream Cohesion policy programme investments in urban areas and the Urban Agenda for the EU. The activities will take the form of different capitalisation exercises, carried out through dedicated policy labs (Policy Labs, Focused Policy Labs, and Policy briefs).

- **Policy labs:** extended exercises involving experts, city representatives, and stakeholders to gather and synthesise knowledge on specific topics over

several months. These labs facilitate peer learning, identify best practices, and develop policy recommendations.

- **Focused policy labs:** short, intensive workshops designed to address specific urban challenges, producing actionable insights and recommendations in a condensed timeframe.
- **Policy briefs:** in-depth analyses and recommendations based on the outcomes of Policy labs and other knowledge inputs, structured to be accessible and useful to policymakers and practitioners.

Portico, the European urban knowledge platform

Portico, the gateway to urban learning, is the knowledge-sharing and community platform for sustainable urban development in the EU powered by EUI. The platform provides easy access to the latest knowledge and practical resources from diverse partners supporting EU Cohesion Policy for just, green and productive cities. It also hosts the Portico Community, providing networking and peer exchange opportunities for urban practitioners across the EU. It is based **on three pillars:**

- **Knowledge Hub:** integrates resources and tools from different initiatives, providing a curated selection of content that enhances the skills and knowledge of urban practitioners.
- **Urban Panorama:** provides a landscape view of actors, initiatives and services in sustainable urban development, helping practitioners to identify and connect with relevant resources and opportunities.
- **Community:** fosters a dynamic collaboration and exchanges between urban practitioners, policymakers and experts, facilitating collaboration and peer-to-peer learning.

Communication

The ambition of the EUI is to increase awareness of urban policymakers and practitioners at all levels of the EUI, the Urban Agenda for the EU community, as well as the public at large, by communicating and disseminating support tools and

knowledge available in the area of sustainable urban development; outputs and results.

The objectives of the EUI communication and dissemination strategy are the following:

- Raise **awareness** of the EUI, UAEU and how the EU is supporting sustainable urban development in Europe
- Encourage **participation** in the activities and opportunities provided by the EUI and UAEU
- Trigger **interest** in the knowledge developed by the EUI and UAEU

B.2 Support to UAEU and Intergovernmental Cooperation on urban matters

The Urban Agenda for the EU

The Urban Agenda for the EU is an innovative multi-level governance initiative on urban policy, developed in the scope of intergovernmental cooperation on urban matters, and officially established by the Pact of Amsterdam in 2016. It enables cities, Member States, city networks, the European Commission, other EU institutions, the Union's advisory bodies, and other stakeholders to come together to jointly tackle pressing urban matters and deliver concrete outputs for the benefit of EU citizens. The Urban Agenda for the EU is boosting the role of cities in national and EU policymaking to better connect the EU with citizens' needs. It is a key delivery mechanism at the EU level for the New Urban Agenda (Habitat III).

Making multi-level governance tangible has been recognised as one of the most important successes of the Urban Agenda for the EU. Multi-level governance is crucial beyond this initiative and at the EU level, it is widely promoted through Cohesion policy to target the investments in the most efficient and balanced way.

The Urban Agenda seeks to stimulate actions along three key objectives (or "pillars"): **Better Regulation, Better Funding and Better Knowledge**.

In addition, the UAEU aims to address several cross-cutting issues¹ and thematic priorities. The Pact of Amsterdam led to the selection of an initial list of 12 priority themes for challenges to be addressed in Thematic Partnerships. In 2018, two more themes were added, and two Thematic Partnerships launched accordingly (Assessment study, 2019). Lastly, in 2021 the Ljubljana Agreement defined other four thematic focuses: Greening Cities, Sustainable Tourism (which were launched in winter 2022) and Food and Cities of Equality (which were launched in winter 2023). The Gijon Agreements (2023) proposed a selection of priority themes for future partnerships and agreed on seven new cross-cutting issues.

The 18 Thematic Partnerships have brought together more than 330 partners/members ranging between local, regional and national authorities, European Institutions, NGOs and Umbrella Organisations, research institutions, programmes and networks as well as private companies.

Ex-Ante Assessment

The Ex-Ante Assessment (EAA) will follow the objectives agreed in the Multi-Annual Working Programme of the Urban Agenda for the EU. It is the first step towards the creation of Thematic Partnerships and Other Forms of Cooperation (OFC) as part of the Urban Agenda for the EU. It is an exploratory process, which will allow for the deployment of a pragmatic, effective and result-oriented approach aiming at increasing the impact of future UAEU deliverables. The EAA will conduct an in-depth analysis of the proposals for new themes to help optimise focus, timing and activities of the multi-level cooperation as well as safeguard the suitable level of partners' thematic and procedural expertise. It should still allow flexibility in the work and decision-making of partnerships according to the spirit of the UAEU.

It can be considered as a strategic and pragmatic tool checking whether a multi-level governance approach to deliver on the objectives of the UAEU for a specific theme

¹ The seven cross-cutting issues are Urban policy for the common good; Integrated and innovative approaches; Effective urban governance, participation and co-creation; multilevel governance; place-based approach and 3 spatial levels of the new Leipzig Charter; Planning and balanced territorial development; International dimension.

or question related to sustainable urban development fits in a favourable policy and regulatory context.

Urban Contact points

The Network of Urban Contact Points (UCP) is a single network of contact points in the Member States, operating in the national language(s), established by the European Urban Initiative with the following main objectives:

- To increase the number of urban policymakers and practitioners at the local, regional and national levels participating in the activities of the EUI and the UAEU and to strengthen the links between the EU, national, regional and local levels.
- To improve the knowledge base and capacities of urban policymakers and practitioners at local, regional and national levels in the field of sustainable urban development.
- To encourage stakeholders, managing authorities, intermediary bodies and Article 11 (and 7) cities to take advantage of the support and opportunities offered by the EUI.

The UCPs work in complementarity with the National URBACT Points.