



PRESIDENCIA
ESPAÑOLA
CONSEJO DE LA
UNIÓN EUROPEA

Informal Ministerial Meeting
on Housing and Urban Matters
14 November 2023
Gijón

**Agreements on the Urban Matters Session
about the Urban Agenda for the EU**

Preamble

European Union Ministers responsible for Urban Matters, invited by the Spanish Presidency of the Council of the European Union on 14 November 2023 in Gijón, held an informal meeting with the aim of further strengthening collaboration and continuing to support the Urban Agenda for the EU (UAEU), defining its next steps for the future and several operational agreements for its implementation.



We, the EU Ministers responsible for Urban Matters, acknowledge:

- The European Union's Cohesion Policy 2021-2027;
- The 2030 Agenda adopted by the UN on 25 September 2015 comprising 17 Sustainable Development Goals;
- The New Urban Agenda adopted at the UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development in Quito on 20 October 2016;
- The Pact of Amsterdam, adopted at the Informal Meeting of Ministers responsible for Urban Matters on 30 November 2016 in Amsterdam, establishing the Urban Agenda for the EU;
- The New Leipzig Charter, adopted on 30 November 2020 at the Informal Meeting of Ministers responsible for Urban Matters;
- The Territorial Agenda 2030 – A future for all places, adopted on 1 December 2020 at the Informal Meeting of Ministers responsible for Territorial Cohesion;
- The Ljubljana Agreement and the Multiannual Working Programme adopted on 26 November 2021 at the Informal Meeting of the Ministers responsible for Urban Matters.

We, the EU Ministers responsible for Urban Matters, given that the Ljubljana Agreement and the Multiannual Working Programme established that Priority Themes and Cross Cutting Issues of the UAEU should be revised in 2023:

1. Consider that the 18 Priority Themes of the Urban Agenda for the EU cover the relevant challenges facing European cities now and in the foreseeable future, and that the 18 priority themes therefore remain valid.

2. Select the following two new topics¹ to go through an Ex Ante Assessment in 2024, as the first step to be launched as possible new Partnerships of the UAEU:

- Water sensitive city.
- Housing decarbonisation, heating and cooling local plans.

3. Propose the following topics as part of a list of potential new topics for the future:

- Urban planning and urban sprawl;
- Skills for urban transitions;
- Health;
- Inclusive and socially resilient cities, towns and neighbourhoods;
- Cultural Heritage.

¹ Short descriptions of the topics are provided in Annex 2

This list is flexible and open to the update or removal of any topic, or the inclusion of new topics, through a consensus from the Directors General for Urban Matters (DGUM).

4. Delegate the management of the list of potential topics to the DGUM, and also the selection of new proposals from it, as the first step of the process for potential future new Thematic Partnerships (TP) or Other Forms of Cooperation (OFC), as defined in the Ljubljana Agreement Multiannual Working Programme.

5. Acknowledge that Cross-Cutting Issues represent key aspects to be considered in the overall work of the Urban Agenda for the EU and its Partnerships. Agree that each Partnership shall therefore consider the relevance of the Cross-Cutting Issues for the selected priority themes, and take note that the list of the Cross-Cutting Issues of the Urban Agenda for the EU is restructured and clustered as follows, based on background concepts and according to the principles of the New Leipzig Charter, EU policies and priorities:

- a) Promoting urban policy for the common good, inclusiveness, accessibility, security and equality.
- b) Enhancing integrated and innovative approaches, notably through financing and in correlation to the green, digital and just transitions.
- c) Supporting effective urban governance, participation, and co-creation.
- d) Promoting multi-level governance and cooperation across administrative boundaries.
- e) Harmonising measures at different spatial levels and implementing place-based policies and strategies.
- f) Supporting sound and strategic sustainable urban planning, and balanced territorial development.
- g) Contributing to the acceleration of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda SDGs, the New Urban Agenda and Habitat III principles.

6. Take note that the discussion about the scope and functionality of the Cross-Cutting Issues will be continued during 2024, including the consultation with current and former Thematic Partnerships coordinators and action leaders in order to collect their input.

ANNEX 1. BACKGROUND CONCEPTS FOR THE CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES:

a) URBAN POLICY FOR THE COMMON GOOD

- *Provision of adequate public services of general interest, public welfare and infrastructure for the common good, particularly for those who live in deprived neighbourhoods, towns and cities in shrinking and remote areas.*
- *Ensuring inclusivity, including the weakest and most vulnerable groups in society, according to the principle of “no one left behind”, equal access to information and services, gender equality and women empowerment.*
- *Adaptation to demographic change, in particular ageing populations, and migration.*
- *Developing measures to respond to future unexpected crises and challenges, and helping cities to cope with all types of potential risks and to promote resilience through participation and co-creation following a multi-level governance approach.*
- *Strengthening national urban policy frameworks and developing good governance for urban development in line with the New Leipzig Charter.*

b) INTEGRATED AND INNOVATIVE APPROACHES

- *Effective integrated and sustainable urban development strategies and their implementation for the city as a whole, from its functional areas to its neighbourhoods.*
- *Innovative approaches to develop resilient, smart and climate neutral cities by their transformative power in their just, green, and productive dimensions.*
- *Promoting, skills, literacy and innovation. Considering digital transformation as a major cross-sectoral trend affecting all dimensions of sustainable urban development offering opportunities for citizens, services and businesses to innovate and to improve competitiveness.*
- *Sustainable and innovative finance and financing instruments that can serve as important levers to catalyse economically impactful capital investments and create long-term value for citizens, businesses and the city.*

c) EFFECTIVE URBAN GOVERNANCE, PARTICIPATION AND CO-CREATION

- *Effective urban governance, including citizens participation and new models of governance.*
- *Integrated and participatory approaches ensuring the involvement of the general public as well as social, economic and other stakeholders, including co-creation and co-design, promoting the participation of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged audiences and considering the role of digitalization.*
- *Social innovation: supporting the provision of services from the third sector, the local associations, the NGOs, citizens, etc. and shaping the answers to their own needs.*
- *Tackling the skills deficit by promoting the development of urban skills needed to tackle the green, digital and just transformations on a local and regional level.*

d) MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE

- *Multilevel governance between all administrative levels and cooperation of all societal actors, including civil society and the private sector, and fostering vertical and*

horizontal integration to work together avoiding silos and the exchange of knowledge and expertise among all multi-level governance stakeholders.

- *Governance across administrative boundaries and inter and intra-municipal cooperation: functional urban areas, urban-rural, urban-urban and cross-border cooperation; link with the Territorial Agenda 2030.*
- *European dimension: strengthening national urban policy frameworks, cooperation and networking of cities.*

e) PLACE-BASED APPROACH AND 3 SPATIAL LEVELS OF THE NEW LEIPZIG CHARTER (neighbourhood, local, functional areas)

- *Urban strategies and urban funding instruments based on sound analysis of the specific local situation, while following place-based development.*
- *Challenges and opportunities of small- and medium-sized Urban Areas and polycentric development.*
- *Enabling endogenous urban transformations, including urban regeneration avoiding gentrification, integrating social, economic, environmental, spatial and cultural aspects, and also linked to the brownfield redevelopment with the objective of limiting greenfield consumption.*
- *Harmonised coordination of measures implemented at all spatial levels to ensure coherence including the links with regional planning, 'research and innovation smart specialisation strategies' (RIS3) and balanced territorial development.*

f) PLANNING AND BALANCED TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT

- *Sound and strategic sustainable urban planning, and balanced territorial development, with a place-based and people-based approach to enable compact, socially and economically mixed cities.*
- *Appropriate formal and informal instruments, as applicable, covering all spatial levels, from neighbourhoods to local authorities and wider functional areas including the metropolitan level.*
- *Promoting universally accessible cities, towns and places where everyone is enabled and empowered to fully participate in the social, economic, cultural and political opportunities that these places have to offer, and considering different social groups' needs.*
- *Integration of climate change and European Green Deal policy goals into the urban development framework, and applying a "climate change lens" approach to the implementation of all development policies.*
- *Holistic understanding of high-quality architecture as the basis of integrated planning and design processes of the built environment in European cities, in line with the New European Bauhaus.*

g) INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION.

- *Contribute to the acceleration of the delivery of the UN New Urban Agenda (2016), the UN Sustainable Development Goals (2015) and the Paris Agreement on climate change (2015) as well efforts to localize the New Urban Agenda and SDG 11.*

Water sensitive city

Rapid urban growth in European cities has led to significant artificial land cover, which in some cities has greatly increased the effects of rainwater runoff. This phenomenon, combined with the effects of climate change, including increased precipitation alternating with droughts, can lead to significant flood risks. In the EU context, several ongoing developments within cities contribute to the pressing issues of water scarcity and floods, which pose challenges to sustainable urban development (Climate Change, Ageing infrastructure, Land-use changes, inefficient water management practices, lack of integrated approaches).

To address these challenges, a multi-level governance approach could help improve and create tools, measures and governance mechanisms to help implementing sustainable urban drainage systems, reusing water, set up storage systems promoting water conservation measures, to build models of water sensitive urban management and promote integrated approaches.

Housing decarbonisation, local heating & cooling plans

The European Union has set very ambitious energy and climate goals, including the decarbonization of the building stock by 2050. For achieving these goals Member States are obliged to develop and submit National Energy and Climate Integrated Plans (NECPS) and Long-Term Renovation Strategies for improving the energy efficiency and retrofitting of the building stock. The recently adopted Energy Efficiency Directive (EED) also foresees for cities of minimum 45,000 inhabitants to develop local cooling and heating plans. Adding to this, the Renewable Energy Directive (RED) also include a mandatory percentage of renewable energy in these local heating and cooling plans.

This partnership proposes to address decarbonisation of building through a strategic integrated approach, going beyond individual buildings and encouraging the district/neighbourhood approach and make full use of the provisions in the revised directives. Local heating and cooling plans are among the important steps towards decarbonisation of buildings. This approach could be linked with development of district heating, the development of energy communities and energy sharing and explore the possibilities of the Electricity Market Design reform. To put these objectives in practice, it is important to develop strategies and plans at the local level.

² This description of the topics is only illustrative and for discussion purposes. The description will not in any way restrict the process of the Ex-Ante Assessment or place limitation on future Partnerships.