

Urban Agenda for the EU

Cities of Equality Partnership

**Draft
Action Plan
Consultation
Report**



September 2025





This publication is supported by the European Urban Initiative, which receives EU funding to provide support to the Urban Agenda for the EU on behalf of the European Commission for the period 2021-2027.

Disclaimer:

The Action Plan is not a Commission document. It is not binding on the Commission, the European Union or the public. Furthermore, the Actions presented in this Action Plan are not mandatory¹. The information and views set out in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the European Commission. The Commission does not guarantee the accuracy of the data included in this document. Neither the Commission nor any person acting on the Commission's behalf may be held responsible for the use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Authors: Cities of Equality Partnership
Prepared: September 2025

© European Union, 2025

Re-use is authorised provided the source is acknowledged. The re-use policy of the European Commission documents is regulated by Decision 2011/833/EU (OJ L 330, 14.12.2011, p. 39).

European Commission documents are regulated by Decision 2011/833/EU (OJ L 330, 14.12.2011, p. 39).

The photos and graphics in this publication are under the copyright of the EU and other parties. For any use or reproduction of photos or graphics that is not under the EU copyright, permission must be sought directly from the copyright holders.

Contact: urbanagenda@urban-initiative.eu

¹ Pact of Amsterdam, chapter 4, clause 19.

Cities of Equality Partnership



Draft Action Plan Consultation Report

A. Introduction

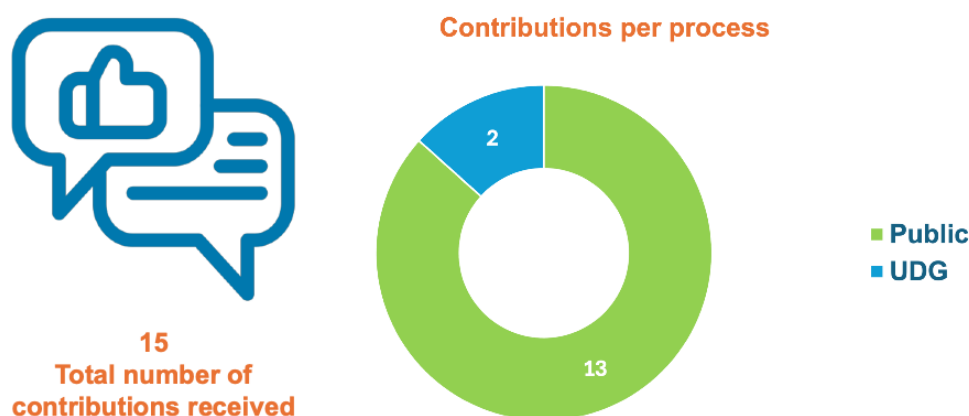
The public consultation for the Draft Action Plan of the Urban Agenda for the EU Partnership on Cities of Equality was conducted between 6 May and 6 June 2025 to gather feedback from a wide range of stakeholders. These included EU institutions, Member States, local and regional authorities, networks, civil society organisations, academia, and individual experts. The aim of the consultation was to ensure that the Action Plan responds to the priorities and challenges faced by urban actors in advancing equality, inclusion, and democratic participation across Europe.

The consultation process included three components: an open public consultation coordinated through the European Urban Initiative; an inter-service consultation with European Commission Directorates-General; and a consultation with Member States through the Urban Development Group. Together, these channels enabled a multi-level dialogue on the Action Plan's relevance, feasibility, and added value.

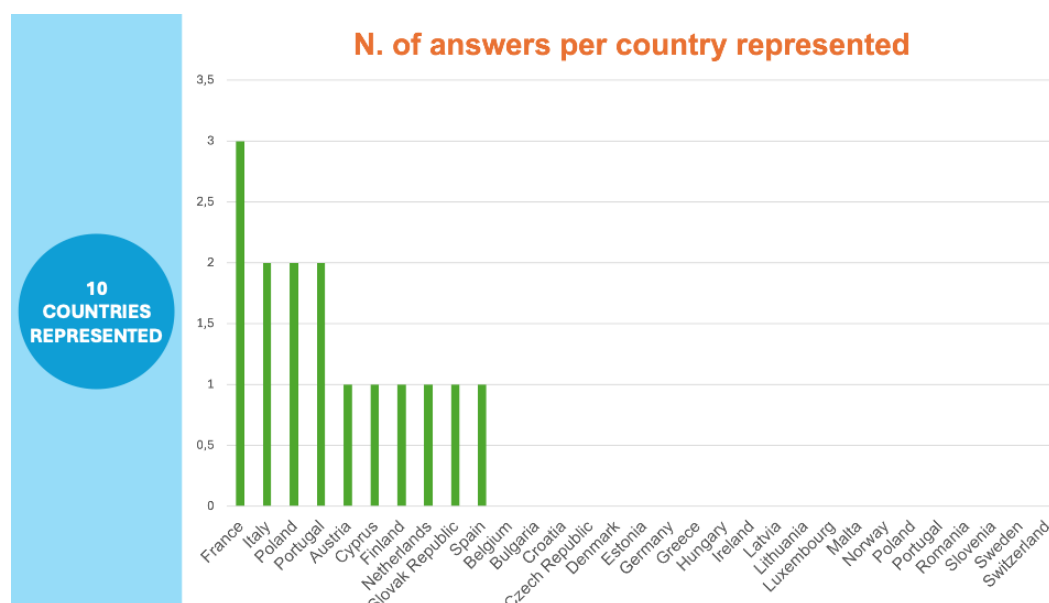
This report summarises the feedback received and presents the adjustments made in response. It is structured around general comments on the Action Plan and specific feedback related to each of the three Actions. It also highlights proposed synergies with other initiatives and outlines how this input shaped the final version of the Action Plan.

A.1 Overview of the Consultation Process Results

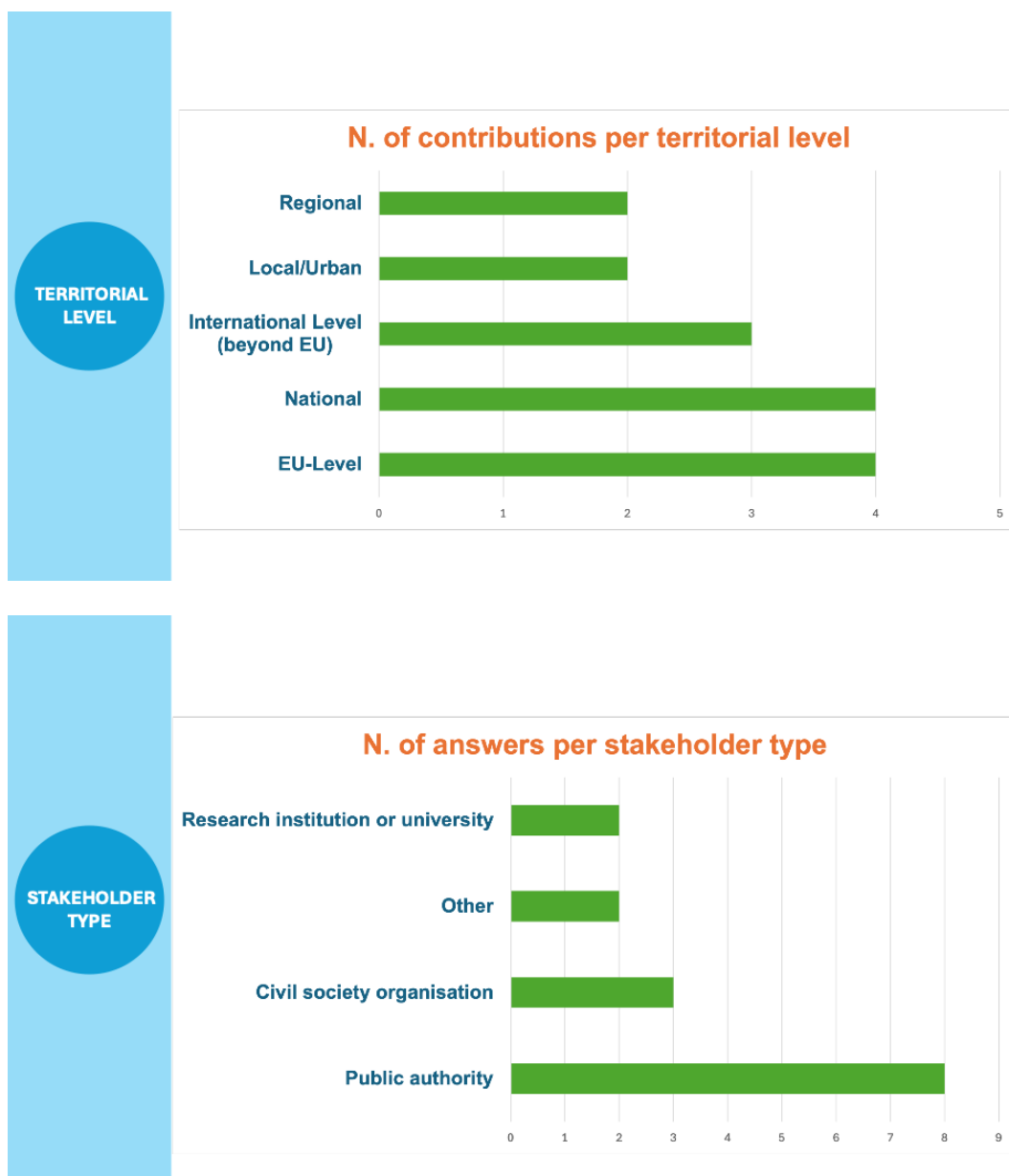
The public consultation collected insights from a diverse range of stakeholders across multiple member states. The following diagrams illustrate the number and type of stakeholder groups who participated.



The following diagram displays the distribution of responses received from each country, highlighting the level of engagement across represented member states.



The diagrams below illustrate the distribution of contributions by territorial level and by stakeholder type providing insight into the diversity of perspectives gathered during the consultation.



B. Addressing the Feedback of the Consultation Process

B.1 Overall Feedback on the Action Plan

The *Cities of Equality* Draft Action Plan received broad support for its ambition to strengthen inclusion, equality, and participatory governance in European cities. Stakeholders welcomed the structure and direction of the three Actions but raised key recommendations to improve relevance, feasibility, and impact. These insights have led to targeted revisions across the Action Plan.

Key topics raised and revisions

Stronger alignment with EU and international frameworks

Stakeholders, including the European Commission, urged clearer links to key policy commitments such as the EU Equality and Non-Discrimination Framework, EU Anti-Racism Action Plan (2020–2025), the Charter of Fundamental Rights, and the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan. References to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Istanbul Convention, the 2025 Roadmap for Women's Rights, the New Leipzig Charter, and the New Urban Agenda were also recommended to reinforce the Action Plan's policy relevance.

→ **Revision:** The revised Action Plan will explicitly reference and link each Action to the EU and international frameworks highlighted during the consultation.

Broadening the focus beyond socio-economic inequality

Respondents called for a stronger intersectional perspective, recognising overlapping disadvantages faced by women, migrants, persons with disabilities, children, and other underrepresented groups. This approach should integrate gender, diversity, and multiple forms of discrimination across all Actions.

→ **Revision:** The Action Plan will make intersectionality an explicit guiding principle, with all Actions addressing multiple and overlapping forms of disadvantage through targeted activities and inclusive methodologies.

Accessibility and inclusive participation

Improving both physical and digital accessibility was highlighted as essential to ensure meaningful participation of persons with disabilities. Feedback also stressed the need to explicitly recognise their specific needs. As a result, accessibility will be treated as a cross-cutting principle, with activities designed according to universal design standards and inclusive outreach.

→ **Revision:** Although intersectionality remains the main analytical framework, all Actions will explicitly address the needs of persons with disabilities and connect to relevant EU policy initiatives on disability. Accessibility will be embedded as a cross-cutting principle, with universal design standards applied to all activities and deliverables.

Adapting to diverse urban contexts

Contributors stressed the need for flexibility in applying the Actions, ensuring tools and frameworks are relevant to large cities, medium-sized towns, and small municipalities, while accounting for differences in socio-economic profiles, governance capacity, and regional priorities.

→ **Revision:** The Actions will now include activities and guidance adaptable to different city sizes, governance levels, and territorial contexts, ensuring flexibility and local relevance.

Practical tools, capacity building, and digital inclusion

Many stakeholders called for concrete guidance, good practice examples, and training to support implementation. They also recommended improving data use, strengthening digital literacy and inclusion, and ensuring better coordination between EU policy objectives and local action.

→ **Revision:** The revised Action Plan will strengthen its capacity-building components, provide practical toolkits and case studies, integrate digital inclusion measures, and promote alignment between EU-level objectives and local implementation strategies.

B.2 Action-Specific Feedback

This section provides a detailed summary of the feedback received for each individual Action proposed in the Draft Action Plan. The section identifies key themes and areas of concern specific to each Action and outlines how the Partnership has addressed this feedback through modifications, clarifications, or additions to the final Action Plan.

Action 1:

Creating a framework to assess spatial segregation and access to services

Action 1 received strong support from stakeholders who recognised the need for better data and knowledge to address spatial segregation and unequal access to services in cities.

Stakeholders underlined the importance of developing a data framework that goes beyond socio-economic indicators to reflect the multi-dimensional nature of inequality. Respondents called for more explicit integration of disability, gender, age, migration status, and sexual orientation into the assessment of social exclusion and service access, supported by disaggregated and locally relevant data. In particular, several comments highlighted the lack of accessibility in the built environment as a key barrier for people with disabilities.

Many contributions emphasised the importance of involving local actors, such as residents, service users, and community organisations, in co-producing and validating the data frameworks and protocols. This participatory dimension was seen as essential to ensuring the relevance, legitimacy, and usability of the tools to be developed.

To ensure the framework is adaptable to diverse urban realities, respondents recommended that it be tailored to reflect the varying needs of metropolises, medium-sized cities, and smaller towns. They also provided suggestions on the types of stakeholders to engage during implementation, including national statistical institutes, universities, and civil society organisations that represent underrepresented and marginalised communities. Stakeholders also suggested that the data framework and protocols developed should strive to be interoperable across urban systems and databases, preventing data duplication and ensuring long-term data sustainability.

Several projects, networks, and initiatives were also shared as potentially relevant for the implementation of Action 1. These include the URBACT Social Data Knowledge Hub (which will produce a Guidebook for data-driven policy-



making in cities), the COM4LGD project (funded by CERV), the RIGHTS CITIES project (CERV-funded, developing a self-assessment tool for cities), the French urban planning network FNAU (co-author of the Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities), as well as the Catalise network, RIPESS-Europe, the Transition Network, and the Community of Practice developed under the Erasmus+ REGEN4All project.

Finally, respondents proposed several ways to support effective dissemination of the Action's outputs. These included the creation of accessible digital platforms, training opportunities for local stakeholders, and the use of inclusive communication formats such as storytelling, visual tools, and multilingual materials.

Incorporation into the Action Plan

1. The action description now emphasises that the data framework and protocols will collect **disaggregated data** to assess social inclusion, desegregation, and equality in urban areas.
2. In line with consultation feedback, the focus on assessing "**access to services**" has been clarified to cover: the **geographical distribution** of services across the urban area;

informational, technological, and cultural barriers that may hinder access; and the **accessibility of the built environment** for persons with disabilities or limited mobility, as a fundamental precondition for full participation in society and the economy.

3. References to barriers related to **gender and disability** have been made more explicit. The Action now recognises that inequality stems not only from socio-economic status but also from multiple grounds of discrimination, including gender, geographical location, ethnicity, disability, age, and sexual orientation.
4. The Action will build on and connect with **existing initiatives** such as the **URBACT Social Data Knowledge Hub** and the **Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities (RFSC)**. It will also strengthen alignment with **EU policy frameworks**, including Cohesion Policy, the Union of Equality Strategies and the Roadmap for Women's Rights, the European Pillar of Social Rights and its Action Plan, the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy, the EU Accessibility Act and the AccessibleEU Initiative, and the European Green Deal. In addition, it will reflect the **Commission Recommendation C(EU) 2023/2836** on promoting the engagement and effective participation of citizens and civil society in policymaking, and the **Fundamental Rights Agency's Framework for Human Rights Cities**.

Action 2:

Mainstreaming equality in result-based funding instruments

Action 2 received broad support for its ambition to embed equality principles into funding instruments and public investment strategies.

Stakeholders called for closer alignment with existing legal and policy frameworks, including the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, the Union of Equality strategies, and the horizontal principles of Cohesion Policy. Respondents emphasised that gender equality, non-discrimination, and accessibility should be systematically addressed at all stages of the funding cycle—from programme design to implementation and evaluation.

A key priority raised was the need to link equality indicators to concrete budget allocation decisions. Several contributors highlighted the importance of using disaggregated and territorial data to guide funding, ensuring that investments effectively target marginalised and underrepresented communities—echoing similar feedback on Action 1.

At the same time, respondents noted that cities and managing authorities often lack the necessary tools, skills, and guidance to apply equality criteria effectively. As a result, there were strong calls for practical resources, capacity-building measures, and good practice examples to support implementation on the ground.

In addition, several stakeholders proposed exploring innovative and community-led financing approaches, such as participatory budgeting, civic investment, and community-based funding models. These suggestions also pointed to potential synergies with Action 3, particularly around the use of participatory processes in the design and assessment of funding proposals.

Incorporation into the Action Plan

- The Action will explicitly align with the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, Union of Equality strategies, and Cohesion Policy's horizontal principles, including gender equality, non-discrimination (based on gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age, or sexual orientation), and accessibility for persons with disabilities across all phases of programme design and implementation.
- The Action will build on existing work on gender-responsive budgeting and integrate relevant approaches into its methodology.
- A set of adaptable equality indicators will be developed to guide budget allocation and ensure funding decisions reflect local conditions and needs.
- Intersectionality will be embedded across all activities, with disaggregated data collection and analysis used to assess differentiated impacts on specific groups.
- A strengthened capacity-building component will be introduced, including training, case studies, and advisory support for local authorities and

- managing bodies, in collaboration with partners such as URBACT and HUB-IN.
- Synergies with Action 3 will be leveraged to promote participatory approaches in the design, implementation, and evaluation of funding instruments.

Action 3:

Collecting and exchanging best practices on citizen participation and co-governance methods, tools and frameworks

Action 3 received strong support for its emphasis on participation and inclusive governance.

Stakeholders suggested to build upon the great wealth of existing studies, repositories and tools on the topic of citizen participation to avoid duplications and ensure that the results of the Action feed into existing databases.

They also stressed the need to reach groups who are often excluded from traditional participatory processes, including migrants, persons with disabilities, and low-income communities.

There was strong support for including mechanisms to monitor participation outcomes—such as representation of underrepresented groups and improvements in policy responsiveness.

Respondents recommended featuring a wide variety of participatory models, especially from smaller cities, marginalised communities, and Eastern Europe. Initiatives such as neighbourhood assemblies, participatory food systems, or open-air diagnostics were mentioned as important sources of innovation.

Several contributors encouraged integrating participatory action research and co-produced knowledge into the Action. Universities, grassroots organisations, and commons-based initiatives were seen as key partners in designing and testing inclusive participation.

The EC and others called for improved accessibility in all materials and activities—including visual tools and events—and emphasised ensuring participation for persons with disabilities. Suggestions also included youth participation, AI tools, open-source platforms, and community training.

Incorporation into the Action Plan

5. The Portico platform will be the hosting platform for the final guidebook and case studies, with a view to contributing to a well-established and existing database.
 - The language of the Action has been revised to centre inclusive and intersectional participation, and to treat accessibility as a horizontal principle.



6. A section was added to the case study template about the impact of citizen participation schemes on target population and reaching vulnerable groups.
7. The recommendations received on the case study pool will be taken into account during the implementation phase – e.g. to diversify case studies to reflect a range of urban contexts, sizes, and populations.
 - The Action will incorporate participatory action research methodologies and promote collaboration with universities, civil society, and community groups in the design and assessment of tools.
 - Accessibility standards will be applied to all materials, visuals, and events. Open-source and interoperable platforms will support wide knowledge sharing.
 - Existing networks and resources (e.g. URBACT, HUB-IN, Rights Cities, MOOC on migrant co-design) will be actively integrated to avoid duplication and enhance visibility.

B.3 Synergies and alignment with other initiatives

The *Cities of Equality* Partnership received numerous proposals for collaboration from a broad range of stakeholders, including EU institutions, national and regional authorities, city networks, research bodies, civil society organisations, and project consortia. These synergies reflect strong momentum for cooperation on equality, participation, and inclusive urban policy.

Stakeholders offered concrete avenues for collaboration, including the integration of existing tools and datasets, peer learning through city networks, alignment with ongoing EU projects (e.g. URBACT, HUB-IN, Rights Cities), and the use of participatory research approaches developed by universities and grassroots groups. Several partners shared case studies, platforms, and knowledge hubs that could inform the implementation of specific Actions, particularly in the areas of data collection (Action 1), funding innovation (Action 2), and co-governance models (Action 3).

Suggestions also included opportunities for co-producing content, organising joint workshops, participating in surveys and tool development, and contributing to dissemination via thematic platforms, city associations, and regional events. Stakeholders highlighted the importance of avoiding duplication by connecting with existing EU repositories, initiatives, and communities of practice.

The Partnership will build on this feedback by establishing dedicated communication channels for each Action and the overall Action Plan. A stakeholder mapping process will be launched to identify potential collaborators and maintain an up-to-date network of contributors. This includes:

- Engaging with programmes such as **URBACT**, **HUB-IN**, **CERV**, and **Rights Cities** for knowledge exchange and piloting activities;
- Integrating resources and outputs from **academic networks** and **civil society consortia**, such as COM4LGD, REGEN4All, and UNITES;

- Establishing **peer-learning spaces** and **joint dissemination events** to showcase best practices and practical tools;
- Exploring partnerships with **national and regional governments** to embed the Action Plan's principles into operational programmes and urban strategies.

These synergies will strengthen the implementation of the Action Plan, amplify its policy relevance, and help ensure its actions are grounded in real urban needs and experiences across Europe.

C. Conclusion

The consultation process for the *Cities of Equality* Draft Action Plan has provided valuable feedback that has strengthened the content, focus, and implementation of the three proposed Actions. Stakeholders emphasised the need for inclusive data frameworks, accessible funding mechanisms, and deeper citizen participation. These insights have led to concrete revisions across the Action Plan.

The consultation also brought forward opportunities for alignment with ongoing EU programmes, grassroots initiatives, and city-led innovations. These synergies will guide the next phase of implementation, helping to ground the Actions in real-world practice and build momentum across different governance levels.