

Urban Agenda for the EU

EUROPEAN  
U R B A N  
I N I T I A T I V E

# Coordinators & Action Leaders Meeting

Report

Brussels  
April 23  
2024



# A. Intro

## Overview of the Coordinators and Action Leaders Meeting

The Coordinators and Action Leaders Meeting (CALM) held on April 23, 2024, in Brussels marked a significant step in advancing the collaborative efforts of the Urban Agenda for the EU. The meeting aimed to foster better regulation, funding, and knowledge exchange across various urban domains. This in-person session provided a platform for deeper engagement and strategic synergies among participants.

### Objectives

The primary objectives of the CALM were:

1. To facilitate the exchange of experiences and best practices among all active Thematic Partnerships.
  - To enhance the design, implementation, and dissemination of Action Plans.
  - To explore and foster synergies among different Thematic Partnerships.
  - To provide strategic recommendations for improving urban policies within the framework of the Urban Agenda for the EU.

### Participants

The meeting saw the participation of approximately 40 representatives from diverse backgrounds, including:

2. Members of all 7 active Thematic Partnerships of the Urban Agenda:
  - Food and Cities of Equality: Officially launched in the beginning of 2024, these newer Partnerships are in the early stages of identifying key priorities and points of interest, laying the groundwork for their Action Plans' outlines.
  - Greening Cities and Sustainable Tourism: These Partnerships have recently formulated their Actions and drafted the first versions of their Action Plans.
  - Culture and Cultural Heritage, Public Procurement, and Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees: These more established and experienced Partnerships are actively implementing their strategies. They have moved beyond their typical three-year lifespan, extending their activities and updating their Action Plans with new Actions, thus carrying invaluable experience from all stages of the journey—from design to implementation and dissemination of Action Plans.
- Officers, Experts, and Invited Speakers:
  3. Representatives from the **European Commission (DG REGIO, DG HOME, Secretariat General of the EC)**, the Committee of the Regions, and the European Urban Initiative provided valuable insights and expertise, contributing to the strategic discussions and collaborative efforts during the meeting.

This diverse mix of participants ensured a comprehensive exchange of knowledge and experiences, enriching the discussions and outcomes of the CALM meeting.

## Methodology of the Workshop

The CALM meeting was structured to maximize interaction and collaborative learning through a mix of plenary sessions, break-out rooms, and expert presentations. The methodology included:

**Plenary Sessions:** These sessions provided a platform for all participants to gather, share overarching insights, and set the tone for the workshop. Keynote speeches and general discussions were held during these sessions to ensure a unified understanding of the meeting's goals.

**Presentations from Urban Agenda case studies:** Representatives from the most experienced Thematic Partnerships, such as Culture and Cultural Heritage, Public Procurement, and Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees, shared their case studies. These presentations offered practical examples and insights into the different stages of the Action Plan development.

**Break-Out Rooms:** Groups were formed with a diverse mix of Partnerships, ensuring the inclusion of one established, one middle-stage, and one new Partnership in each group. This diversity allowed participants to touch upon all main stages of the Action Plan—design, implementation, and dissemination. The groups worked together through moderated sessions providing advice and sharing lessons learned, enabling participants to offer targeted recommendations and support to each other based on their experience.

**Presentations by Experts and Invited speakers:** Experts from various fields provided additional information to the Coordinators and Action Leaders on key issues addressed in their work developing and implementing their Action Plans. These presentations offered various insights covering critical topics such as better regulation case studies presented by the European Commission and the Committee of the Regions, new cross-cutting issues by the European Commission's DG REGIO, Territorial Impact Assessment and communication opportunities by the European Urban Initiative (EUI).

**Interactive Tools:** Tools such as Miro and a **tailored [Synergy-Matrix](#)** were used to collect and organize participants' inputs in real-time, allowing for a dynamic and engaging workshop environment. These tools helped capture the collective knowledge and facilitated the synthesis of ideas across different sessions.

This structured approach ensured that the meeting was not only informative but also action-oriented, with a strong emphasis on concrete outcomes and collaborative learning.

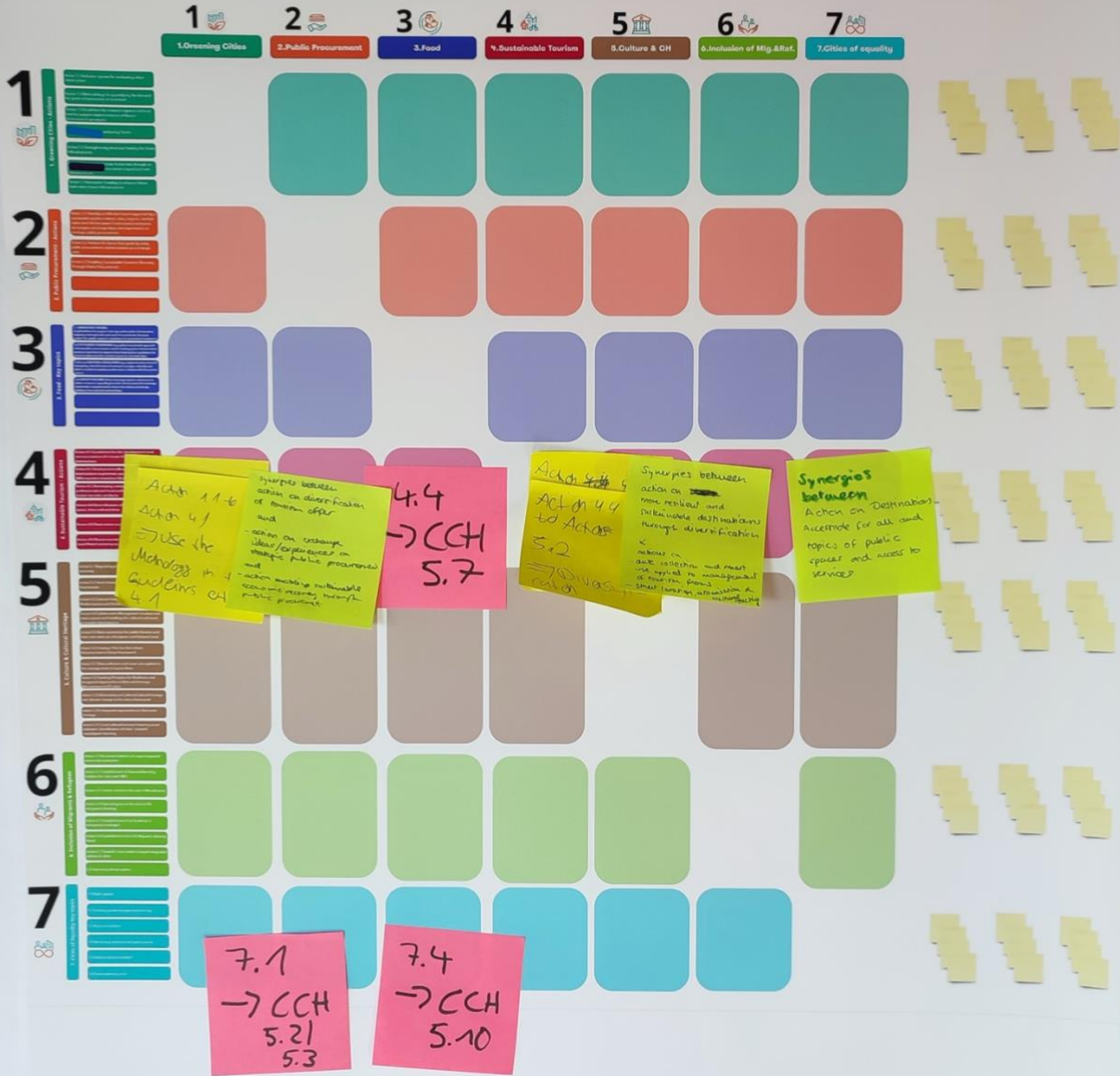
**INSTRUCTIONS:**

1. Read the actions/key topics selected by each TP
2. In the vertical column of your TP write down the number of the action/topic of other TPs you are interested in
3. Specify what type of synergies/collaboration you would like to create:
  - A. Mutual exchange;
  - B. Training session;
  - C. Support for actions development
  - D. Joint actions/initiatives
  - E. Other forms of collaboration/synergies

**DESIRED SYNERGIES: some examples...**

- A. Mutual exchange (best practices)
- B. Training sessions
- C. Support for actions development
- D. Joint actions/initiatives

Use the sticky notes to write down the needed forms of collaboration/synergy with other Thematic Partnerships



The Synergy-Matrix used to collect and organize participants' inputs during the CALM.

# B. Discussion Points

## Enhancing Urban Development Through Collaborative Action

The following sections provide a detailed exploration of the key themes discussed during the Coordinators and Action Leaders Meeting. These themes, resulting from the break-out room sessions, are critical for advancing the objectives of the Urban Agenda for the EU and ensuring the effective implementation of its Action Plans. By addressing how to draft realistic and feasible Actions, implement them effectively, disseminate their results, and facilitate synergies among Thematic Partnerships, these sections aim to provide comprehensive guidance and strategic recommendations for all involved stakeholders. Here, we summarize the key takeaways from these discussions.

### **Discussion Point 1**

#### How to Draft Realistic and Feasible Actions

During the meeting in Brussels, a significant focus was placed on the importance of drafting realistic and feasible Actions. Participants from various Thematic Partnerships shared their experiences, challenges, and strategies in creating actionable and impactful plans. The discussions emphasized the need for clear, achievable goals and the importance of aligning Actions with available resources and stakeholder needs.

#### Key points from the discussions included:

- The necessity of understanding the broader policy context and ensuring that Actions are in line with EU and national policies.
- The importance of stakeholder engagement from the outset to ensure that Actions are grounded in real needs and have broad support.
- Strategies for setting realistic timelines and milestones to keep Actions on track and manageable.

#### Key Recommendations

The following recommendations were distilled from the discussions to help Partnerships draft realistic and feasible Actions:

#### **1. Align with Policy Context:**

- Ensure that Actions are embedded within the broader EU and national policy frameworks to enhance relevance and support.
- Seek synergies with other initiatives and projects to leverage existing efforts and resources.

#### **2. Engage Stakeholders:**

- Involve a diverse range of stakeholders, including local authorities, community groups, and private sector partners, from the early stages.

- Conduct needs assessments and consultations to tailor Actions to the specific contexts and priorities of different stakeholders.

### **3. Set Clear Objectives and Milestones:**

- Define specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound objectives to guide the Actions.
- Establish clear milestones and deliverables to monitor progress and make necessary adjustments.

### **4. Ensure Feasibility:**

- Assess the availability of resources, including funding, expertise, and institutional support, to ensure that Actions are practical and implementable.
- Develop a risk management plan to identify potential challenges and mitigation strategies.

### **5. Promote Ownership and Accountability:**

- Assign clear roles and responsibilities to ensure accountability and effective coordination among partners.
- Foster a sense of ownership among all stakeholders to encourage commitment and sustained engagement.



## Concrete Lessons Learned from the Case studies

### **Culture and Cultural Heritage Partnership**

The Partnership emphasized the importance of aligning Actions with broader EU cultural policies and engaging stakeholders early in the process to ensure relevance and feasibility. For instance, they successfully brought the subject of public libraries onto the agenda of the EU Commission, showcasing their ability to influence policy.

### **Public Procurement Partnership**

The Partnership designed Actions with clear objectives and outcomes, such as developing an e-learning module to help users understand the main outputs of the Action Plan. They also formulated a procurement platform and organized an innovation conference to promote green public procurement and sustainable economic recovery.

### **Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees Partnership**

The Partnership conducted thorough needs assessments and stakeholder consultations to ensure their Actions addressed specific challenges faced by migrants and refugees. For example, they developed Actions to promote arts and culture for inclusion and to support LGBTQI migrants, ensuring these Actions were both relevant and feasible.

## **Discussion Point 2**

### How to Implement Actions More Effectively

The implementation phase of the Action Plans was a critical topic during the CALM. Participants shared their experiences and challenges encountered during the implementation of their respective Actions. The discussions highlighted the importance of structured planning, stakeholder engagement, and continuous monitoring to ensure effective implementation.

#### Key points from the discussions included:

- The need for clear and consistent communication among all partners.
- The importance of flexibility and adaptability to address unforeseen challenges.
- Strategies for effective resource allocation and management.

#### Key Recommendations

The following recommendations were distilled from the discussions to help Partnerships implement Actions more effectively:

##### **1. Structure Planning:**

- Develop detailed implementation plans with clear timelines, milestones, and responsibilities.
- Use project management tools and methodologies to keep track of progress and ensure accountability.

##### **2. Engage Stakeholders:**

- Maintain continuous communication with all stakeholders to keep them informed and engaged.
- Involve stakeholders in the decision-making process to ensure their commitment and support.

##### **3. Manage your Resources:**

- Allocate resources efficiently, ensuring that both financial and human resources are used effectively.
- Identify and secure additional funding sources if necessary.

##### **4. Implement Monitoring and Evaluation:**

- Implement a robust monitoring and evaluation framework to track progress and assess the impact of Actions.
- Use feedback from monitoring to make necessary adjustments and improvements.

##### **5. Adapt and Improve:**

- Be prepared to adapt Actions in response to changing circumstances and new information.
- Encourage a culture of continuous improvement and learning.



## Concrete Lessons Learned from the Case studies

### **Culture and Cultural Heritage Partnership:**

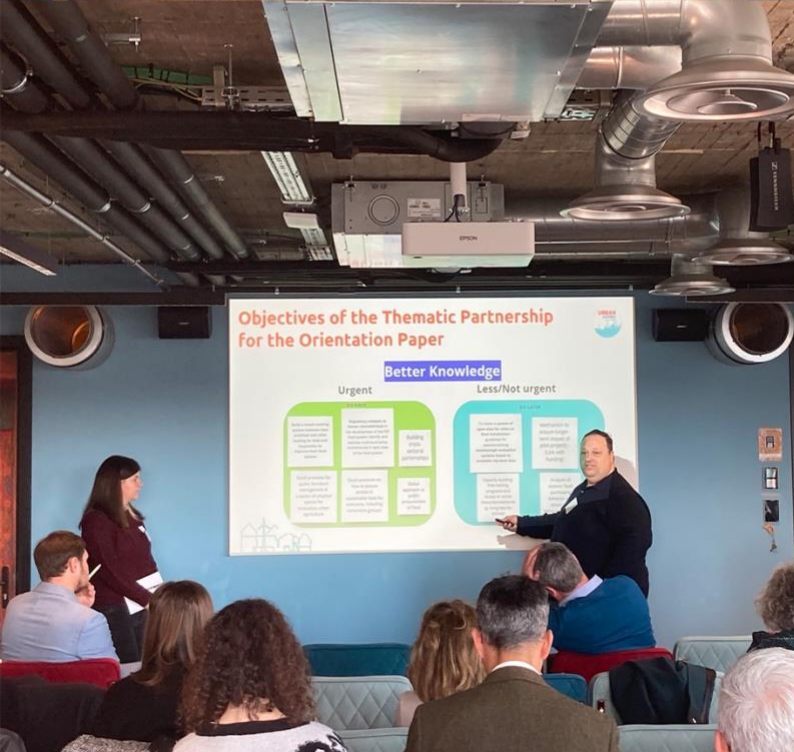
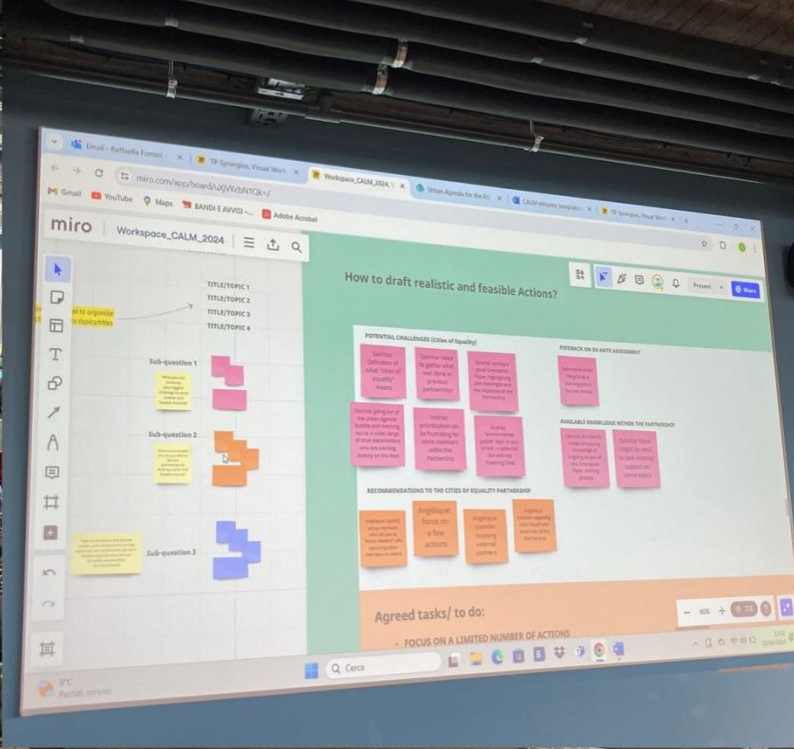
They employed structured planning and continuous stakeholder engagement to manage their projects. An example is the development of the Heritage and Risk Management Handbook, which was made available for download. This tool was designed with input from various stakeholders to ensure it met the practical needs of local authorities and cultural institutions.

### **Public Procurement Partnership:**

Structured planning and stakeholder engagement were crucial. For example, they developed capacity-building materials and involved new partners to ensure the actions were well-supported and effectively implemented. Their innovation conference in Brussels served as a platform to share best practices and foster collaboration.

### **Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees Partnership:**

Continuous stakeholder engagement and efficient resource management were key to their success. They conducted study visits and organized a final conference that produced 17 recommendations for local authorities and member states, showcasing effective implementation strategies.



## **Discussion Point 3**

### How to Disseminate the Implementation and Results

Effective dissemination of implementation and results is crucial for ensuring the visibility and impact of the Actions taken by Thematic Partnerships. During the meeting in Brussels, participants discussed various strategies and best practices for disseminating their work. The discussions highlighted the need for targeted communication, leveraging existing networks, and creating engaging content to reach broader audiences.

#### Key points from the discussions included:

- The importance of crafting clear and concise messages tailored to different audiences.
- Utilizing various communication channels to maximize reach.
- Collaborating with partners who have specific skills and resources for dissemination.
- Breaking out of the Urban Agenda bubble to reach local levels and wider stakeholders.

#### Key Recommendations

The following recommendations were distilled from the discussions to help Partnerships disseminate their implementation and results effectively:

#### **1. Develop Synergies for Dissemination:**

- Collaborate with other Thematic Partnerships to share resources and amplify messages.
- Use Partners with specific dissemination skills and resources to help spread the word.

#### **2. Craft Clear and Concise Messages:**

- Create short, impactful messages and position papers for the European Commission and other stakeholders.
- Ensure that messages are tailored to different audiences to enhance relevance and engagement.

#### **3. Utilize Various Communication Channels:**

- Leverage social media, newsletters, and websites to reach a wide audience.
- Use existing communication channels of the European Urban Initiative (EUI) to disseminate results.

#### **4. Engage in Participatory Activities:**

- Organize workshops, training programs, and public events to share results and gather feedback.
- Link dissemination activities with hands-on, participatory experiences to increase engagement.

## 5. Break the Urban Agenda Bubble:

- Reach out to local levels and smaller cities that may not be as familiar with the Urban Agenda.
- Develop strategies to communicate the results beyond the usual stakeholders involved in the Urban Agenda.



### Concrete Lessons Learned from the Case studies

#### **Culture and Cultural Heritage Partnership:**

The Partnership used workshops, public events, and participatory activities to share their findings and tools. For example, they conducted three workshops on dissonant heritage, which were crucial for answering key questions about transferring results to practical applications. They also created a dedicated website ([www.dissonant-heritage.eu](http://www.dissonant-heritage.eu)) and a toolbox for local levels to enhance accessibility and impact.

#### **Public Procurement Partnership:**

The Partnership used targeted communication strategies, including videos and position papers, to disseminate their results. The e-learning module enables a wide audience to access and benefit from their outputs. They also planned to disseminate results through a network by the end of 2024.

#### **Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees Partnership:**

The Partnership implemented a robust communication strategy, including newsletters and public repositories. They created a repository of integration policies available on the European Commission's website and maintained a monthly newsletter to keep stakeholders informed and engaged.

## **Discussion Point 4**

### How Can We Facilitate Synergies Among Thematic Partnerships

Facilitating synergies among Thematic Partnerships was a key focus during the CALM. Participants discussed the importance of collaboration, the exchange of best practices, and the need to align efforts to maximize impact. The discussions emphasized the value of coordinated Actions and joint initiatives to address common challenges and leverage collective expertise.

#### Key points from the discussions included:

- The importance of regular communication and joint meetings to foster collaboration.
- Using the synergy matrix to identify and align overlapping Actions and objectives.
- Utilizing opportunities for exchange such as the EUI's city-to-city exchanges or thematic workshops to share knowledge and experiences.

#### Key Recommendations

The following recommendations were distilled from the discussions to help facilitate synergies among Thematic Partnerships:

#### **1. Regular Communication and Joint Meetings:**

- Establish regular meetings and communication channels among partnerships to discuss progress, challenges, and opportunities for collaboration.
- Plan common meetings within significant events like the EU Week of Regions to facilitate broader exchanges.

#### **2. Use the Synergy Matrix:**

- Exploit the synergy matrix to map and identify potential overlaps and complementary Actions among the partnerships.
- Use the matrix to coordinate efforts and ensure actions are mutually reinforcing.

#### **3. Utilize City-to-City Exchanges and Workshops:**

- Leverage city-to-city exchanges to share knowledge, best practices, and innovative solutions across different partnerships.
- Organize thematic workshops focused on common challenges to facilitate in-depth discussions and collaborative problem-solving.

#### **4. Combine Actions at the Local Level:**

- Encourage partnerships to implement joint actions at the local level, combining resources and expertise to achieve greater impact.
- Exploit existing networks and collaborations to support local initiatives.

#### **5. Enhance Visibility and Political Backing:**

- Engage with political leaders and stakeholders to secure support for joint initiatives and enhance the visibility of collaborative efforts.

- Use targeted communication strategies to highlight the benefits of synergies and collective action.



## Concrete Lessons Learned from the Case studies

### **Culture and Cultural Heritage Partnership:**

By collaborating with networks like URBACT, the Partnership was able to extend the reach and impact of their initiatives on cultural heritage management. They formed synergies with the URBACT and Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (CERV) to further promote their work on dissonant heritage.

### **Public Procurement Partnership:**

The Partnership has collaborated with other Urban Agenda Partnerships, such as Climate Adaptation and Circular Economy, to address cross-cutting issues. This collaboration helped in sharing resources and enhancing the overall impact of their actions, demonstrating the value of cross-partnership synergies.

### **Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees Partnership:**

By connecting with other Partnerships and EU bodies, they amplified their impact. For example, they engaged with the Joint Research Centre (JRC) and DG Sante on evidence-based integration policies. These connections helped integrate their Actions into broader policy frameworks and ensured greater reach and effectiveness.



## **Conclusion**

The Coordinators and Action Leaders Meeting in Brussels marked a significant step forward in the collaborative efforts of the Urban Agenda for the EU. The meeting provided valuable insights and strategic recommendations, emphasizing the importance of structured planning, stakeholder engagement, continuous monitoring, and targeted communication for the successful design, implementation, and dissemination of Action Plans. By focusing on practical outcomes and collaborative learning, the meeting highlighted the necessity to continue fostering synergies among partnerships to leverage collective expertise and resources effectively, as the EUI Permanent Secretariat has initiated since 2022.

Moving forward, the next steps will involve exploring strategic synergies and cross-participation in meetings, exploiting the European Urban Initiative (EUI) City-to-City, Peer Review and Events exchanges to support knowledge exchange and practical insights, and establishing and communicating a comprehensive calendar of political events to help create common meetings and activities. Enhanced communication across all governance levels and targeted strategies to improve visibility will be crucial. Continuous monitoring and stakeholder engagement will ensure that actions remain relevant and impactful, aligned with local needs and broader policy frameworks, paving the way for more sustainable, inclusive, and resilient European cities.

We invite you to explore the published web article about this event published on the UAEU website:

<https://www.urbanagenda.urban-initiative.eu/news/unleashing-synergies-across-eu-urban-agenda-partnerships>



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# ANNEX

## List of participants

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