Site visits in Rotterdam

17 November 2026, 13:45 to 15:45 CET

Practical information

The City of Rotterdam is organising **five site visits** during the afternoon of the **conference's first day**. These site visits will offer a practical insight into the key themes and challenges addressed by the Urban Agenda for the EU.

The site visits will take place on **17 November 2026, from 13:45 to 15:45 CET**.
All site visits will depart from and return to the conference venue, the ss Rotterdam. Transportation to and from the sites will be organised by the City of Rotterdam.

Participants attending Day 2 of the conference who have indicated their interest in the Amsterdam–Rotterdam bus transfer will be able to collect their **luggage** at the ss Rotterdam after the site visit. Please collect your luggage as soon as possible, as the buses to Amsterdam are scheduled to depart at 16:00 CET. Participants will be dropped off at **Amstel Station** in Amsterdam. They can then proceed to their hotels and/or the **evening conference** at **Capital C,** which will begin at 19:30 CET.

EUROPEAN URBAN INITIATIVE
Gemeente Rotterdam
Gemeente Amsterdam
Co-funded by the European Union

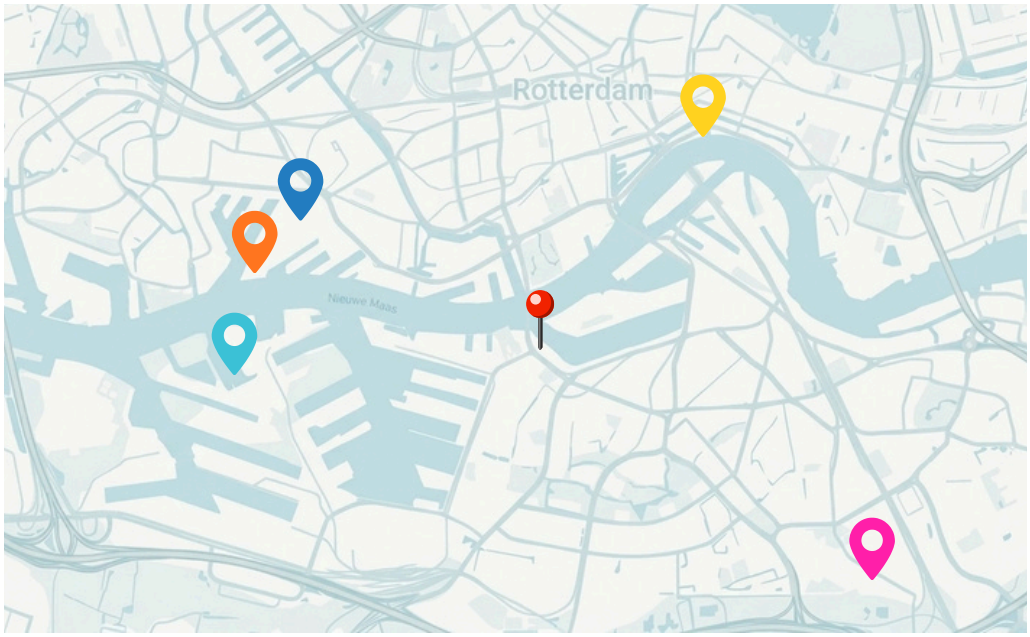
Rotterdam: living laboratory for sustainable and inclusive urban transitions

Rotterdam is a city of transformation. Built on resilience and innovation, the city continuously reinvents itself to address the major challenges facing European cities today: climate adaptation, the energy transition, circularity, social inclusion, economic resilience and citizen participation. Rotterdam's ambition is **not only to develop innovative solutions, but also to test, demonstrate and scale them in real-life urban environments**, creating tangible benefits for residents, businesses and communities.

As one of Europe's leading urban innovation hubs, Rotterdam actively contributes to the objectives of the Urban Agenda for the EU by translating policy ambitions into practical actions and tangible results. Through strategic use of European funding programmes and instruments such as the **European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)**, **Interreg**, **LIFE** and the **Just Transition Fund (JTF)**, the city has developed a rich ecosystem of projects that combine innovation, climate resilience and social inclusion.

The site visits offer participants a unique opportunity to experience this ecosystem firsthand.

From the innovation-driven manufacturing and energy transition activities at **RDM Innovation Dock**, to the circular entrepreneurship community at **BlueCity,** from community-led neighbourhood development in Bospolder-Tussendijken like **CLLD BoTu**, to social innovation initiatives such as **Current Start,** and from multifunctional **rooftop solutions** to **climate adaptation projects** implemented throughout the city, each visit demonstrates a different aspect of Rotterdam's integrated approach to urban development.



Map Data © Google [2026]

Conference venue
ss Rotterdam

Splashtour

CurrentStart

RDM Rotterdam

Bospolder-Tussendijken

Blue City

EUROPEAN URBAN INITIATIVE
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Site visit 1:

RDM Innovation Dock – tomorrow's innovation applied today

The City of Rotterdam will be handling all transportation arrangements.
Departure time from ss Rotterdam: 13:45 CET.

RDM Rotterdam is the **place for innovation in the port** and the port industrial complex, where education and business work on developments that are contributing to a smart port. The students are educated in **an inspiring learning environment** where practical skills are offered alongside theory. The combination of education and business, working (together) from idea to prototype and the use of test facilities and field labs make **RDM a genuine innovation hub.**

RDM Innovation Dock plays a central role in **Rotterdam's innovation ecosystem** and serves as a physical hub where businesses, startups, researchers, students and public authorities collaborate on solutions for the energy transition, circular economy and advanced manufacturing. This ecosystem has been strengthened through investments supported by the **Kansen voor West programme, which uses European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)** resources to **stimulate innovation, sustainable growth and regional competitiveness.** Through projects funded by Kansen voor West, RDM has expanded its capacity to support entrepreneurs, foster collaboration and accelerate the development of new technologies.
Building on this foundation, the **Just Transition Fund (JTF**) supports the broader transformation of the Greater Rotterdam region towards a climate-neutral and future-proof economy. The JTF focuses on helping industrial regions adapt to the challenges and opportunities of the energy transition by investing in innovation, skills development and sustainable economic activities. As a result, RDM Innovation Dock, Kansen voor West and the JTF are closely connected: together they create an integrated framework that combines infrastructure, innovation support and transition funding to accelerate the sustainable transformation of the Rotterdam region. At RDM Rotterdam you will find **60 companies.** Start-ups, SMEs and **world players in the maritime and offshore sector** contribute to the innovative character of RDM. On this guided tour through the Innovation Dock a few of them will showcase their innovations that received ERDF or JTF funding.

- **Funding**:
  - **ERDF** - Kansen voor West
  - Just Transition Fund (**JTF**)
- **Location**: Klinknagelstraat 2, Rotterdam
- **Ressources**: RDM Rotterdam

Site visit 2:

BlueCity – a model city of the blue and circular economy, located in an old tropical swimming pool

The City of Rotterdam will be handling all transportation arrangements.
Departure time from ss Rotterdam: 13:45 CET.

BlueCity Rotterdam is a leading **urban living lab for the circular economy,** demonstrating how vacant urban assets can be transformed into hubs for sustainable entrepreneurship, innovation and resource efficiency. By bringing together startups, businesses, knowledge institutions and public authorities, BlueCity creates practical solutions for **circular value chains** and sustainable urban development. Its activities closely align with the objectives of the Urban Agenda for the EU, particularly in the fields of **circular economy, climate adaptation, energy transition and jobs and skills in the local economy**. As such, BlueCity serves as a tangible example of how cities can accelerate the transition towards a resilient, inclusive and climate-neutral urban future.

BlueCity hosts a diverse community of circular entrepreneurs, ranging from sustainable food producers and **bio-based material developers to clean-tech startups,** circular construction companies, designers and social enterprises. Many of these businesses focus on transforming waste streams into valuable products, developing innovative circular business models, or testing solutions that contribute to climate neutrality and resource efficiency. As an innovation hub, **BlueCity also acts as a gateway for entrepreneurs to access regional, national and European funding opportunities.**

Companies within the ecosystem have benefited from programmes such as **ERDF** (through **Kansen voor West), Interreg**, **Horizon Europe, the Just Transition Fund (JTF)**, and various Dutch innovation and sustainability schemes.
By combining workspace, networking, knowledge exchange and access to funding, BlueCity helps promising circular innovations move from pilot stage to market deployment.
The BlueCity ecosystem therefore not only supports individual businesses, but also contributes to broader urban policy objectives related to circular economy, climate adaptation, sustainable entrepreneurship, green jobs and inclusive economic development. This makes BlueCity **a valuable demonstration site for European cooperation** projects and urban innovation initiatives.

- **Funding**: regional voucher scheme funded by **ERDF**
- **Ressources**:
  - Blue City NL
  - Kansen voor West

Site visit 3:

CurrentStart - Combining social and ecological impact; everyone deserves a second chance

The City of Rotterdam will be handling all transportation arrangements.
Departure time from ss Rotterdam: 13:45 CET.

Current Start supports approximately 300 ex-offenders in Rotterdam South in finding employment between 2023 and 2026. The project focuses on securing sustainable jobs, with a target of **70% of participants achieving this outcome**. In addition, participants are involved in practical work-based activities, such as **recycling and refurbishing laptops and other electronic devices.** A support network is being established to continue assisting participants after they complete the programme, and the approach is being gradually expanded to other target groups. In 2026, an **ERDF** (European Regional Development Fund) subsidy application of €1 million was submitted under the Kansen voor West programme to further develop the concept and transform the location **into Rotterdam's E-waste Recycling Hub.**

This initiative strongly reflects the objectives of the **Urban Agenda for the EU by addressing social inclusion, employment, skills development and the transition towards a circular economy in an integrated way**. By supporting ex-offenders in accessing sustainable employment while engaging them in e-waste recycling and refurbishment activities, Current Start demonstrates **how social and environmental challenges** can be tackled simultaneously.

The project contributes to a just and inclusive urban transition by creating **opportunities** for vulnerable groups to participate in the green economy and develop skills that are increasingly relevant in a circular and digital society. Through its combination of social innovation, workforce development and resource efficiency, Current Start serves as a practical example of how cities can generate both social and ecological value while strengthening community resilience and economic inclusion.

As the initiative evolves into **Rotterdam's E-waste Recycling Hub**, it further contributes to the Urban Agenda priorities on Circular Economy, Jobs and Skills in the Local Economy, Digital Transition and Inclusion, showcasing how local action can support broader European ambitions for sustainable and inclusive urban development.

- **Funding:**
  - **ERDF** 2023-2026 (finalized 30-06-2026: € 540.782,20 (ERDF-Kansen voor WEST)
  - New application : ERDF 1 million euro (starting date: 7 June 2026).
- **Ressources**:
  - Over Ons | CurrentStart
  - CurrentStart inclusie op Zuid

Site visit 4:

Community led local development Bospolder-Tussendijken – new initiatives that contribute to a resilient neighbourhood

The City of Rotterdam will be handling all transportation arrangements.
Departure time from ss Rotterdam: 13:45 CET.

In Bospolder-Tussendijken, residents are working towards creating a strong and future-proof neighbourhood by 2028 through a Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) approach. They develop their talents and collaborate on solutions related to the energy transition, healthcare, digitalisation, and employment, with local community leaders and initiators playing a central role. Over a five-year period, residents and organisations can submit initiatives through open calls. **A Local Action Group (LAG),** composed of neighbourhood representatives, assesses the proposals and decides which projects receive support, ensuring that decision-making remains firmly rooted within the community. The approach is based on the Resilient Bospolder-Tussendijken strategy and **strengthens existing initiatives while creating space for new ideas**. In this way, residents work together to build a resilient and inclusive neighbourhood.

This **community-driven approach** closely aligns with the objectives of the Urban Agenda for the EU, particularly regarding social inclusion, citizen participation, skills development, the digital transition and the energy transition. By placing residents at the centre of decision-making and empowering local stakeholders to shape their own future, the initiative demonstrates how integrated urban development can address complex social, economic and environmental challenges at neighbourhood level.
The Bospolder-Tussendijken experience illustrates how local communities can become active partners in delivering urban transitions. Through **collaboration between residents, civil society organisations, public authorities and local entrepreneurs,** the neighbourhood functions as a living laboratory for inclusive and place-based urban innovation. The approach contributes to strengthening social cohesion, increasing opportunities for vulnerable groups and ensuring that the benefits of the green and digital transition are shared equitably across the community.

As such, Bospolder-Tussendijken offers a valuable example **for European cities seeking** to implement the principles of the Urban Agenda through **participatory governance,** community empowerment and integrated neighbourhood development.

- **Funding**: € 850.000 **ERDF** Kansen voor West ITI Rotterdam
- **Ressources**:
  - Open oproep
  - Community led local development BoTu

Site visit 5:

Splashtours Rotterdam – Exploring Innovative Urban Development and Climate Adaptation

The City of Rotterdam will be handling all transportation arrangements.
Departure time from ss Rotterdam: 13:45 CET.

The City of Rotterdam will provide transportation through a dedicated Splashtours amphibious bus tour, offering participants a unique opportunity to experience the city's innovative approaches to urban development and climate adaptation — both on land and on **water**.

A central focus of the tour will be **M4H (Merwe-Vierhavens)**, one of Europe's leading urban innovation districts. Once a traditional port and industrial area, M4H is transforming into a vibrant mixed-use district where housing, entrepreneurship, urban manufacturing, innovation and climate adaptation come together. The area serves as a living laboratory for circular economy solutions, sustainable construction, energy innovation and nature-based urban development. Within M4H, participants will visit the **Keilehaven area,** where the **LIFE@UrbanAdapt** project demonstrates how former industrial waterfronts can become climate-resilient urban environments through green infrastructure, innovative water management and high-quality public spaces.

The tour will also showcase Rotterdam's innovative approach to climate adaptation through its participation in the **Interreg North-West Europe MultiRoofs** and **Interreg North Sea Cool Cities** projects. **MultiRoofs** demonstrates how multifunctional rooftops can contribute to stormwater retention, urban cooling, biodiversity, renewable energy generation and social use. **Cool Cities** focuses on reducing urban heat stress through nature-based solutions, climate-resilient design and the creation of cooler, healthier urban environments.

The initiatives demonstrate Rotterdam's integrated approach to urban transformation, combining climate adaptation, sustainable land use, circular economy principles and social inclusion. Experts from the City of Rotterdam will share insights into the policies, partnerships and lessons learned that support the transition towards climate-neutral, resilient and future-proof cities.

By combining innovative urban projects with the unique experience of **travelling by land and water in the Splashtours bus**, participants will gain insight into Rotterdam's approach to sustainable urban transformation and its relevance for cities across Europe.

- **Ressources**:
  - MultiRoofs
  - M4H (Merwe-Vierhavens)
  - Cool Cities
  - Keilehaven area