European Urban Initiative (EUI) & URBACT programmes

An overview of the programmes, their calls and other opportunities

Karl Murphy, EMRA

National Contact Point for EUI & URBACT in Ireland

kmurphy@emra.ie

Presentation Content Overview

European Urban Initiative (EUI), Urban Agenda for the EU (UAEU), and URBACT

1. Background on EUI, Innovative Actions, Capacity Building (City to City Exchanges & Peer Reviews), including current calls, EUI events, knowledge capitalisation (Portico and the Urban Matchmaker).

2. What is the UAEU, how it's implemented, Thematic Partnerships, including current calls.

3. What is URBACT, network types, the URBACT Method, EU City Labs, URBACT coverage in Ireland with some current and past examples, calls in near future.

European Urban Initiative (EUI)-EMRA as National Contact Point

EMRA was appointed Urban Contact Point (UCP) for the European Urban Initiative (EUI) last December (2023), following nomination by the DHLGH.

This followed EMRA's recent re-appointment as National URBACT Point (NUP) through to 2027; first appointed in 2018.

Both programmes in tandem enable EMRA to support all local authorities across the three Irish regions in the realm of Sustainable Urban Development (SUD), especially through both programmes' calls and opportunities for our towns and cities.

European Urban Initiative (EUI)-its origins

Origins: during the period 2014-2020, €115 billion from Cohesion policy funds were invested in cities, with €17bn of this managed directly and implemented locally by urban authorities through almost 1,000 sustainable urban development strategies.

Alongside these, the Urban Innovative Actions (UIA) initiative provided direct support for cities to experiment with innovative solutions. The Urban Development Network (UDN) was also configured to support the communication and the exchange of information between "article 7 cities" (cities committed to implementing sustainable urban development), the UIA cities and the European Commission.

The EUI consolidates the UIA and UDN into one initiative, giving concrete support to cities; fostering city-led innovation, the sharing of urban knowledge, practice, and to further build capacity. It has a total ERDF budget of €450m for 2021-27.

During this 2014-2020 period, the URBACT III programme was helping cities too. The URBACT IV Programme remains an additional and popular option for Irish local authorities. **More on this later.**
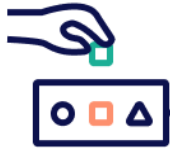
We bring capacity building

Strengthening capacities of cities in design of sustainable urban development strategies, policies and practices in an integrated and participative way

We fund Innovative actions in cities

with 80% direct co-funding of up to €5M allowing the cities to experiment as testbeds for their innovative idea and to transfer it to other EU cities

URBAN
AGENDA
FOR THE **EU**

We share knowledge and capitalise on experiences

Providing a knowledge environment for cities to ensure easier access to horizontal and thematic knowledge and share knowhow on sustainable urban development

Our final goal : sustainable urban development in Europe !

Innovative Actions- characteristics

Innovative Actions: the EUI supports projects which are:

▷ INNOVATIVE **(not implemented previously in EU)**

▷ PARTICIPATORY

▷ MEASURABLE

▷ SUSTAINABLE AND SCALABLE

▷ TRANSFERABLE

Implemented in **partnership**. Prepared with a leading role for the **city as a strategic partnership leader**. Planned to **achieve the goals of local strategies and policies**. In line with the spirit of the principles of good urban governance according to the **New Leipzig Charter**. Fostering local **innovation ecosystem**.

Innovative Actions- key features
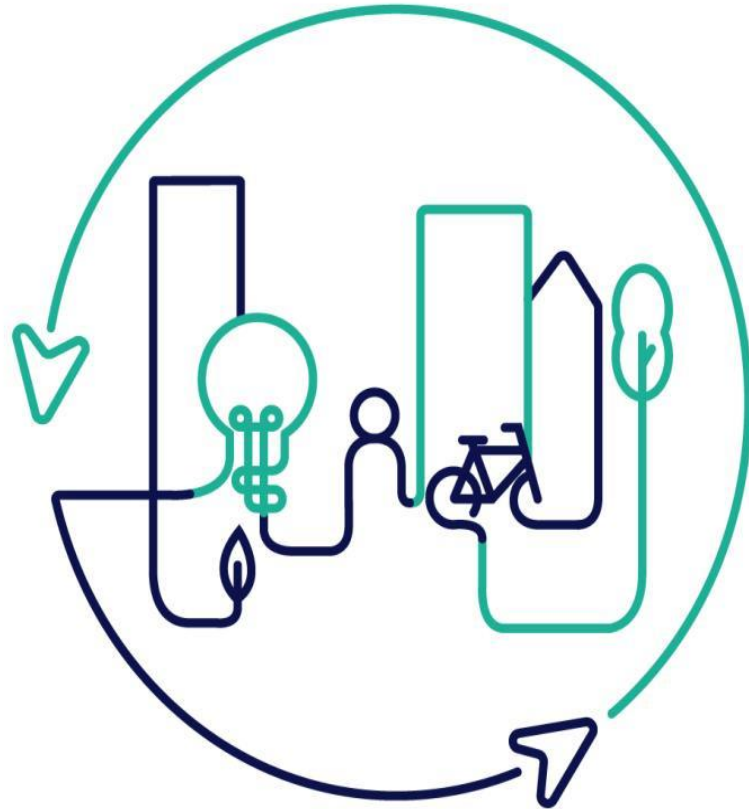
- **Financial support**: €315m available with up to EUR 5 million ERDF (maximum co-financing rate of 80%)
- **Beneficiaries**: urban authorities (associations or groupings of urban authorities) with a total population of more than 50k inhabitants
- **Implementation period**: 3.5 years
- **Thematics**: each time defined by the European Commission and based on themes identified in the Urban Agenda for the EU;
  - Call 1 : New European Bauhaus
  - Call 2 : Greening cities, Sustainable tourism, Harnessing talent in shrinking cities
  - Call 3: Energy Transition & Technology in Cities (closes Oct 14th) - €90m available with up to 20 projects funded*

Capacity Building Opportunities

EUI Capacity Building

One target: EU cities of all sizes involved in Sustainable Urban Development

Two objectives: accompany cities in their road towards sustainable urban development & improve the design and overall implementation of sustainable urban development strategies, policies and practices

Examples: City-to-City Exchanges, Peer Reviews and Events

City-to-City Exchanges

Brings together a city facing a specific problem related to sustainable urban development ('the applicant')

And another 1-2 cities from a different EU Member State with expertise to help tackle this challenge ('the peer')

Simple application form, quickly implemented visit (between 2 and 5 days)

Depends entirely on city needs and the challenge they wish to put forward!

Open to all cities (in category DEGURBA 1 (urban) or 2(suburban))

Ongoing Call – Apply when you need.

City-to-City Exchanges

Funding to support applicants and peers:

Type of cost	Applicant City	Peer City
Travel, accommodation & subsistence	Up to 4 people	Up to 2 people
Daily rate covering staff time	No	Up to 2 people

External stakeholders can participate if it is duly justified in the application form.

Expertise: EUI can appoint **a moderator to facilitate exchange and learning process**

Peer identification: EUI can facilitate contact with urban authorities around Europe

Peer Reviews

- What: an activity aimed at helping cities to design/improve their Sustainable Urban Development strategies

- How (method): throughout exchange and joint work with peers around Europe

- Who, 2 possible roles: City under Review or Peer Reviewer

- Main milestone: 2-day event that brings together 3 Cities under Review, each with their group of 6 Peer Reviewers

- It's a process, goes beyond the actual event

- More details: About EUI Peer Reviews

Summary-EUI calls

Innovative Actions

Innovative, participatory, measurable, sustainable, transferable and scalable!

Up to €5m ERDF w/max co financing rate of 80%.

Implementation period is 3.5 years.

Target audience: urban localities w/population of 50k+

New call launched in May 2024

City-to-City Exchanges

Brings together an urban authority facing an implementation challenge, and another one or two, who can help tackling this challenge with their expertise and experience.

Target audience: urban and sub-urban localities of all sizes.

Call now open on a **continuous** basis.

Peer reviews

Art. 11 and Art. 7 Cities review their SUD strategies and get recommendations from peers during a 2-day event. Experts guide cities during the whole process.

Target audience: urban and sub-urban localities of all sizes.

New call envisaged in q4, 2024-likely October.

Eligibility-general comment

The applicant local administrative unit ("LAU" - of which Ireland has 166) should be classified as urban or sub-urban (this classification is provided by Eurostat - first informed by census data).

This criterion is important for both Innovative Actions and Capacity Building (CB) activities. Article 11 "cities" (includes towns…) are eligible for CB.

A further criterion for Innovative Actions' projects is a population of 50k+ inhabitants in the urban/suburban location applying to the call. Reach out for more precise determination re eligibility. **Population is not a barrier for CB activities.**

You can read more here about: [EUI opportunities and how they relate to Ireland](#)

Capacity Building Events

Bring together **urban authorities, managing authorities** and **key stakeholders** to exchange information with each other and with European Commission on policy issues related to Sustainable Urban Development

Objectives:

▷ provide a 'space' for exchange

▷ facilitate the creation of a growing community of cities

▷ provide easier access to knowledge and capacity building

Geographical scope: EU-level, Cluster of Member States, Country-specific

Examples of events in 2023

7-9 June 2023
Cluster event, Timisoara,
"Delivering high quality community-led local development in urban areas"

24-25 October 2023
Country-specific event, Zadar,
"Delivering high-quality ITIs in Croatia"

21 November 2023
Country-specific event, Budapest,
"Cooperation across Functional Urban Areas in Hungarian cities"

4-5 July 2023
EU-wide event, Ljubljana,
"Supporting integrated approaches to Sustainable Urban Development"

8-9 November 2023
EU-wide event, Tourcoing,
"Reshaping policy, unleashing talents, shifting minds for the Green Transition"

Knowledge capitalisation objectives & [Portico](#)

portico

The gateway to urban learning

To develop the knowledge base to support better design, implementation and mainstreaming of sustainable urban development policies and strategies

Capture, analyze, systematically disseminate and optimize access to operational and thematic knowledge generated within the EUI (e.g. via Portico*, its 3 pillars, and other communication channels)

Provide urban policy makers and practitioners with consolidated knowledge in a format that supports evidence-based policy making and quality programming, as well as the design and implementation of public investments, in particular, under Cohesion policy.

The Urban Matchmaker

In line with the existing application form for C2C Exchanges, urban authorities looking for a peer with expertise, or those with expertise willing to share are required to identify themselves through Creating a challenge form or Publish your solution.

Portico then suggests matches between urban authorities having analysed the information about urban authorities and their challenges, solutions, project ideas against the existing information in its database, and considered the eligibility criteria for EUI - IA and CB – C2C Exchange. It is possible to save the suggestions and directly contact the author of the challenge/solution.

The Urban Agenda for the EU-what is it?

A working method, for urban policy and practice, promoting cooperation between Member States, cities, the European Commission and other stakeholders.

Cities "at the core"

Multi-stakeholder & multi-level

Informal intergovernmental cooperation

How is the UAEU implemented?

Topics are decided by the Member States through the Directorate General on Urban Matters (DGUM)

Experts run **Ex-Ante Assessments** (EAA) to define in more details the thematic area

Thematic Partnerships are formed gathering stakeholders from different levels and different sectors

Action Plans are being drafted and implemented by the Thematic Partnerships to address the challenges

How do Thematic Partnerships work?
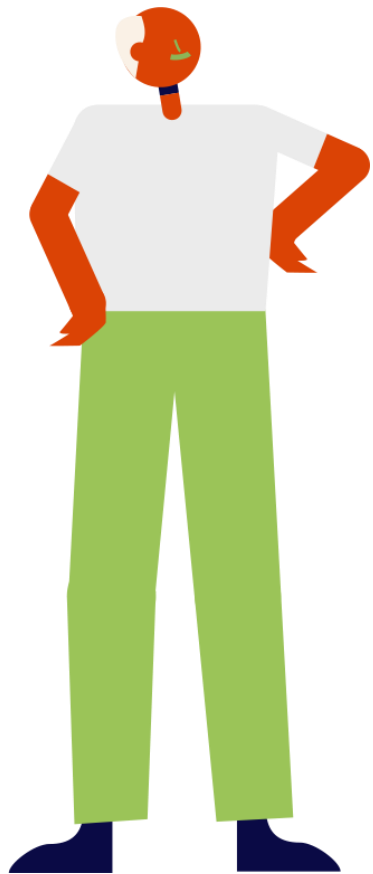
Duration: 3 years (including development & implementation of Action Plan)

Overall guidance by Coordinators

Orientation > Draft Action Plan > Action Plan > Implementation

Actions contributing to UAEU pillars (better regulation, funding, knowledge)

- Actions are commonly defined
- Action leaders are coordinating the work on specific actions

In average 2 in-person **meetings** and 4 – 6 online meetings per year

Working language is **English**.

Partnerships are supported by the **European Urban Initiative**

What support is offered by the European Urban Initiative?

- Thematic Partnership Officer

- Travel and accommodation support for urban authorities

- Provision of external expertise

- Communication & dissemination

- Guidance and advice regarding planning, managing and monitoring

EUROPEAN URBAN INITIATIVE

Find more details in the factsheet on Urban Agenda website

URBAN AGENDA FOR THE EU

Some past topics…

URBAN
AGENDA
FOR THE EU

Launched before 2022

Culture and Cultural Heritage

Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees

Public Procurement

Launched in 2022

Sustainable Tourism

Greening Cities

Launched in 2023

Cities of Equality

Food

What are the new topics?

Call is open **28 August to 2 October 2024**

URBAN
AGENDA
FOR THE EU

Water Sensitive City

Link to the Thematic
Partnership webpage

**Building Decarbonisation:
Integrated Renovation
Programmes and Local
Heating and Cooling Plans**

Link to the
Thematic Partnership webpage

Water Sensitive City

- Start from the perspective of managing water quantity

- Link from there with the other topics and sectors

- Focus on how to design water sensitive cities

➡️ *For more information see Background Document and Ex-Ante Assessment Report*
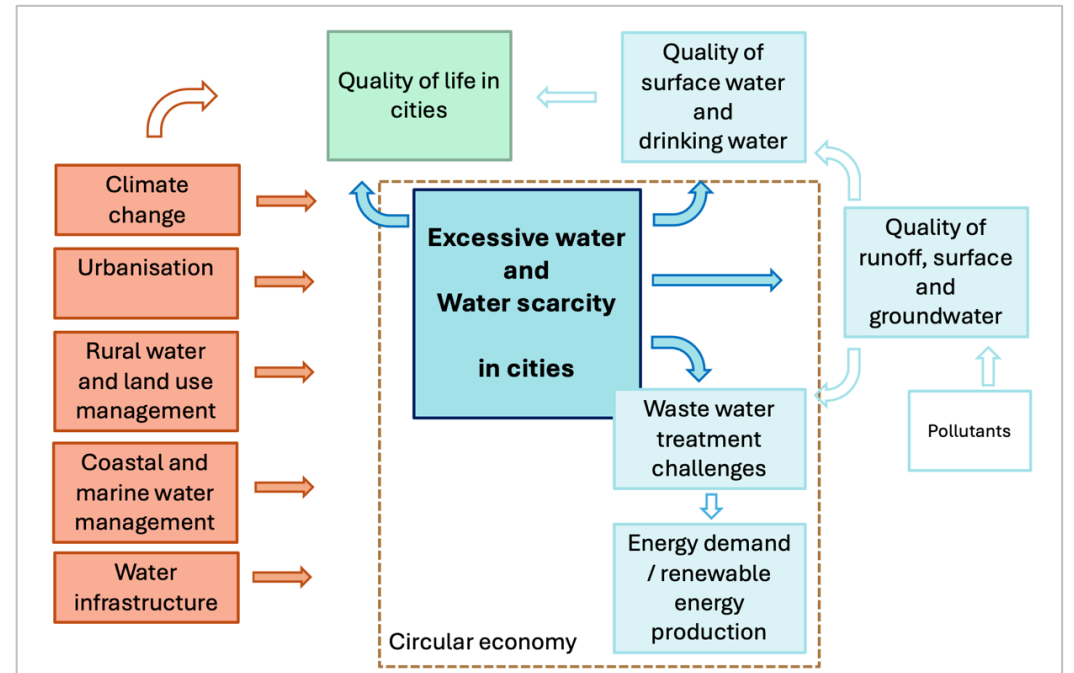
Building Decarbonisation: Integrated Renovation Programmes and Local Heating and Cooling Plans

- District and neighbourhood approaches to integrated renovation programmes

- Local heating and cooling plans as local development documents

- Future electricity market design that supports decarbonisation of buildings

- Cost effectiveness of renovations of spatially related buildings
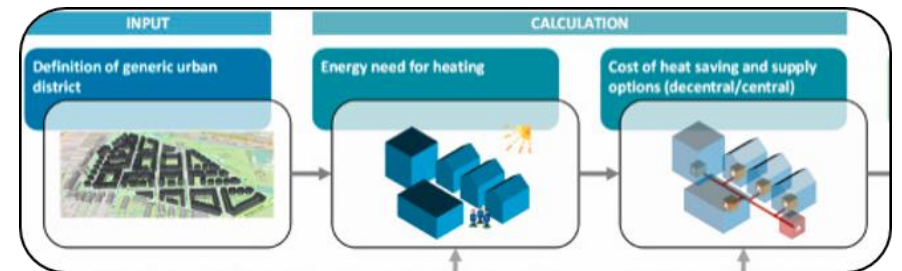
For more information see Background Document and Ex-Ante Assessment Report

EUROPEAN
URBAN
INITIATIVE

URBACT

Co-funded by
the European Union
Interreg

IRELAND - ÉIRE

URBACT

URBACT: A European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) programme co-funded by ERDF-promoting sustainable urban development in cities and towns around Europe. Budget of €79,7M from 2023-2029

Since 2002

Over 1000 cities involved

more than 150 networks

Themes are diverse: regeneration of deprived neighborhood, culture and heritage, digital transition, integration, inclusion, health, local economic development etc. are just some examples!

Beneficiaries of URBACT

Mainly municipalities from the EU, Switzerland, Norway

&

Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia

& Ukraine, Moldova (since 2024)

How does URBACT work?-the networks!

EUROPEAN
URBAN
INITIATIVE

URBACT

Co-funded by
the European Union
Interreg

IRELAND - ÉIRE

ACTION PLANNING NETWORKS

Cities and local stakeholders co-produce an **Integrated Action Plan** to tackle their common policy challenges.

TRANSFER NETWORKS

Cities share and adapt a successful Good **Practice** that has already been implemented in their Network's lead city.

INNOVATION TRANSFER NETWORKS

Cities adapt the experience of a successful **Urban Innovative Actions'** project and develop an investment plan to implement it.

<u>Key expected</u> result

Integrated Action Plan (IAP)

An IAP will offer towns & cities a concrete response to their urban policy challenge.

The IAP follows an intervention logic which aims to design and implement actions based on testing.

The IAP will link the town/cities actions to the broader Cohesion Policy funds to support long term implementation and lasting change.

The URBACT method

Integrated approach
Considering all dimensions of sustainable development (different policy areas and levels of governance)

Participation in practice
Engagement of relevant stakeholders and citizens through a ULG (URBACT Local Group)

The URBACT method

Transnational exchange
Connecting cities and learning from peers across Europe

Tailor-made support
Network experts, methods & tools, learning by doing. See more re the URBACT Toolbox!!

EU City Labs

- URBACT (in conjunction with EUI) also organize EU City Labs which see a sharing of knowledge on an URBACT/EUI Good Practice and how these practices have been transferred to and adapted by other localities around Europe.

- Food (local food systems) and Energy Transition both have a series of labs ongoing.

- Details on the next Food Lab (#3) in Milan 23-24 October: https://urbact.eu/events/eu-city-lab-land-strategies-feed-city

- Details on the next Energy Transition Lab (#2) in Bucharest 20-21 November: https://urbact.eu/events/eu-city-lab-funding-energy-transition

URBACT coverage in Ireland

Coverage: the geographical spread continues to improve

- Red dot denotes the participants of the National Practice Transfer Initiative –NPTI (June 2021)

- Coverage has improved further under URBACT IV (green dot)-Action Planning Networks (May 2023)

- Dublin saw two further applications successful under the recent ITN call (orange x)-Innovation Transfer Networks (will begin in October 2024)

Snapshot: current URBACT Action Planning Networks in IE

- Biodiversity (Limerick): scientific, measuring urban Biodiversity by exploring different community-based approaches, greening plans and pro environmental behaviours

- GREENPLACE (Limerick): restoring forgotten urban spaces and making such places welcome to resident, using existing resources and in an environmentally friendly way

- UR-IMPACT (Longford): ensuring social inclusion and community development during times of urban renewal/regeneration

- Cities at Heart (Sligo): trying to reverse loss of attractiveness in cities and towns of different sizes and backgrounds

Snapshot: current URBACT Action Planning Networks in IE

- EcoCore (Fingal): focusing on green growth and transition in small cities along the respective transport corridors, especially regarding the use of energy and transportation

- Econnecting (Clare) *seeks to help create strong links and the involvement of citizens in developing proximity strategies for rural-urban functional areas.*

- In4green (Meath): overcoming barriers preventing transition to greener economics while staying inclusive and competitive!

Some past URBACT networks in Ireland

Focus: Cork City & the Playful Paradigm

- Cork City was initially a partner of the Playful Paradigm network lead by Udine, Italy

- The practice aimed to increase the opportunities for play throughout a city. The practice was modular, i.e. cities could implement as few or as many of the practices, and at a variety of scales, as their inclination and resources permitted.

- Cork successfully implemented the Good Practice, and the original action plan was in fact surpassed.

- Cork later engaged in a NPTI (a pilot transfer network) which saw its Good Practice transferred to five partner towns in Ireland (Rathdrum, Donegal, Rush, Sligo and Portlaoise). Population ranged between 1,663 to 22,050!

- Initiative occurred for 18 months (June 2021 – Dec' 2022) with a final event in Sligo seeing 65 attendees & national and international keynotes, as well as play demonstrations on the streets of Sligo!

Some URBACT testimonials across Europe

"Thanks to the ==plurality of ideas and experiences we offered each other, out-of-the box thinking== and the use of unconventional methods to work on our SUMPs, we all grew richer in terms of knowledge and capacities and became friends by our joint work."

"Being part of the URBACT community gave us the opportunity to meet with and learn from many like-minded cities across Europe. ==It also raised our profile== as a medium-sized city and enabled us to share our experience of progressive procurement in a way that would not have been possible without our participation in the URBACT programme."

"==URBACT is offering concrete tools to work with on local level -== very useful. Also inviting & sharing the experiences of networks and cities with good practices is highly useful - a good example is the best way to learn."

Upcoming timeline of calls

2023

January- March
Call for Action
Planning
Networks

2024

10 January- 20 March
Call for Innovation Transfer Mechanism

15 April- June
Call for Good Practices

EUROPEAN URBAN INITIATIVE

2025

April - June
Call for Transfer Networks

2026

Call for Action Planning Networks

Summary of calls

EUI
- Innovative Actions-deadline is 14th October (Energy Transition & Technology in Cities)
- City to City Exchanges- for foreseeable, the call is continuous
- Peer Reviews-call anticipated for early October

Urban Agenda for the EU
- Call for Thematic Partnerships- deadline is 2nd October (Water Sensitive City and Building Decarbonisation)

URBACT
- Call for Transfer Networks envisaged between April and June 2025-we will learn the good Practices approved (potential network topics and Lead Partners) late October 2024.

Thanks for your attention!

Please stay in touch

Please follow us on "X", formerly Twitter: @URBACT_IE

Subscribe to our newsletter

Read more about both programmes in Ireland at URBACT Ireland and EUI Ireland.

www.urban-initiative.eu   www.urbact.eu