



LJUBLJANA AGREEMENT

**URBAN AGENDA FOR THE EU -
THE NEXT GENERATION**



INFORMAL MEETING OF MINISTERS
RESPONSIBLE FOR URBAN MATTERS

26 NOVEMBER 2021





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P R E A M B L E

The EU Ministers responsible for Urban Matters gathered at Brdo pri Kranju (Slovenia) on 26 November 2021 for the Informal Ministerial Meeting. The meeting was also attended by the European Commissioner for Regional Policy and representatives from the European Parliament (EP), Committee of the Regions (CoR), European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), European Investment Bank (EIB), Eurocities and Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), as well as Norway and Switzerland and several observers.

Today's global challenges are complex and intertwined. They require a multi-level and multi-sectoral response, combining urban and territorial interventions. In times of disruption, it is in towns and cities where place-based, citizen-centred responses emerge and are applied. Whether it is the mitigation of and adaptation to climate change, countering the loss of biodiversity, or managing health crises like the current pandemic: a fair recovery should be based on a green and digital transition. Many cities are leading this process of change and pursuing the principles for just, green and productive cities. The New Leipzig Charter rightly emphasises the transformative power of cities for the common good. National urban policies, developed in close collaboration with urban authorities and other stakeholders at regional and local level, can contribute considerably to the implementation of the New Leipzig Charter and Urban Agenda for the EU and therefore ensure improvement of the quality of life for all European citizens.

Cooperation on urban matters in Europe is a case in point: the goal of achieving climate-neutrality by 2050 requires a multi-level and multi-stakeholder approach to urban development. Building on decades of informal intergovernmental cooperation on urban matters, the Pact of Amsterdam launched the Urban Agenda for the EU (UAEU), and ushered in a new phase. For the first time, cities of different sizes were at the centre of an initiative that aimed to find joint solutions in direct dialogue with Member States, the European Commission, and other stakeholders. In that context the chance to develop this approach in cooperation with different initiatives such as the new Horizon Europe Mission to achieve 100 climate neutral cities by 2030 is very welcome.

The UAEU has introduced new working methods to urban policy and practice. It is viewed by urban stakeholders as a remarkable case and indeed experience of multi-level governance, one that has enabled cities to explain the impacts and challenges they face on the ground, highlight their daily implementation bottlenecks, and to put forward tangible actions to improve regulation, funding and knowledge exchange. At the same time, the UAEU is in a transition towards a new phase. As agreed under German Presidency with the adoption of the New Leipzig Charter and its document on 'Implementing the New Leipzig Charter through multi-level governance' (Implementation Document), our common goal is to make the UAEU more impactful and efficient.

With this declaration we state our political support for continuation and further development of the Urban Agenda for the EU in full respect of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, and we acknowledge the efforts and commitments of all parties involved to promote the urban dimension of sectoral policies for integrated and sustainable development of European cities of all sizes.

WE, THE MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR URBAN MATTERS:

1. **Reaffirm** the value of the Pact of Amsterdam that established the Urban Agenda for the EU (UAEU) and enabled stronger multi-level and multi stakeholder cooperation on urban issues in the EU. Through direct dialogue with Member States and the European Commission the EU cities and regions are reinforced in their contribution to the EU policy making.
2. **Recognise** the Bucharest Declaration, emphasising Member States' commitment to the continuation, implementation and improvement of the UAEU.
3. **Acknowledge** the New Leipzig Charter, with its set of principles and Implementation Document and consider it as a key strategic reference for the UAEU, in line with its aim of strengthening the urban dimension of EU policies.
4. **Acknowledge** the Territorial Agenda 2030 as an important policy framework promoting territorial cohesion, highlighting the importance of all places and the place-based approach for quality of life and coherent development.
5. **Underline** the importance of the Council conclusions on urban and territorial development, as approved by the Council on 14 December 2020.
6. **Recognise** the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN, the New Urban Agenda (Habitat III) and other global development documents emphasising the role of cities for a better and sustainable future.
7. **Highlight** the importance of cities of all sizes, including small and medium-sized cities and towns, and cities facing challenges of deprived areas to pursue the common interest of all citizens by bringing infrastructure, accessible services and goods close to everyone.
8. **Recognise** the European cities and regions of all sizes as determining drivers for the future of Europe and their active role in implementing priority policies and achieving goals set in *inter alia* the European Green Deal, the European Digital Strategy, the European Pillar of Social Rights, the Renovation Wave, the New European Bauhaus initiative, the Recovery and Resilience Facility of the Next Generation EU, Cohesion Policy, Horizon Europe's Mission for 100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities by 2030 and the Long-term Vision for Rural Areas. We recognise the work done and contributions by urban authorities in the UAEU.
9. **Reaffirm** the fourteen priority themes set in the Pact of Amsterdam and the Bucharest Declaration, as a consolidated thematic framework underlying the UAEU. While existing priority themes offer further opportunities to be addressed in the future, the UAEU can and should also be enhanced with new priority themes dealing with new challenges, priorities and needs identified by the cities and regions.
10. **Acknowledge** the participatory multi-level governance process of the UAEU, the work of the fourteen UAEU Thematic Partnerships (Partnerships) and their positive impact on improving regulations, identifying funding opportunities and improving knowledge about urban areas at all levels.
11. **Recognise** the importance of promoting the creation and reinforcement of the national and regional urban policies, *inter alia* as a means to strengthen the urban dimension of sectoral policies and enhance the policy dialogue and multi-level cooperation at national, regional and local level. We pay special attention to post COVID-19 recovery plans and European Cohesion programmes and their potential to transform European cities into more just, green and productive environments for all citizens.

12. **Recognise** the work done by the European Commission supporting the UAEU Partnerships, monitoring of the implementation and outputs of the UAEU and its efforts to include the urban dimension and Partnerships' recommendations into policies and programmes on EU level.
13. **Acknowledge** the role and work of many cities and their representative organizations EUROCITIES, CEMR and CoR in the development and advancing of the UAEU process.
14. **Recognise** the role of the European Parliament, EIB and EESC in supporting and advancing the UAEU process.
15. **Acknowledge** the work done and involvement of other relevant actors in the UAEU process, especially URBACT Programme, European Urban Knowledge Network (EUKN), JPI Urban Europe, European Spatial Planning Observation Network (ESPON), Urban Innovative Actions, European Council of Spatial Planners (ECTP) and other stakeholders.
16. **Welcome** the efforts of the past Presidencies to foster multi-level cooperation and their efforts to lead inclusive and open dialogue for a better future of all European cities.

**WE, THE MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR URBAN MATTERS
AGREE ON THE FOLLOWING:**

17. The **Pact of Amsterdam** remains valid and will remain the operational framework of the UAEU, while the strategic framework will be aligned with the New Leipzig Charter.
18. The **Multiannual Working Programme**, annexed to this declaration, provides a framework for planning, implementation and monitoring of the UAEU for the period 2022 – 2026. The DGUM is invited to suggest amendments for approval by the Ministers responsible for Urban Matters already before 2026 if relevant.
19. In light of the Pact of Amsterdam and the New Leipzig Charter Implementation document the **three pillars** – better regulation, better funding, better knowledge – remain the focus of the UAEU. We perceive these three pillars as the core objective of the UAEU for strengthening the urban dimension in policies.
20. The **Better Regulation pillar** will be strengthened for a better alignment of UAEU priorities with the EU regulatory landscape and policy cycles in order to ensure effective and timely actions and to establish close links to the Better Regulation Agenda.
21. In order to strengthen the **Better Funding pillar**, the UAEU will contribute to improving the knowledge of urban authorities of better access, simplification, management and blending of different funding sources, use of different financing instruments and conditions, as well as addressing obstacles in preparation and implementation of projects.
22. The **Better Knowledge pillar** will continue to play an important role in the exchange of knowledge and experience of urban authorities for leading effective, evidence-based and place-based urban policies, also by taking into account governance aspects. It will contribute to raise the awareness of the EU policy makers on the challenges urban authorities are facing.

23. The following new themes are added to the existing list of **UAEU priority themes**:
- Cities of Equality
 - Food
 - Greening Cities
 - Sustainable Tourism.
24. Priority themes of the UAEU should be revised in 2023. A new approach can be tested to support the explorative process for revising priority themes by **linking** them to the New Leipzig Charter principles, EU policy priorities, work of previous Partnerships, global agendas, other emerging urban policy trends, initiatives and needs of the cities.
25. **Cross-cutting issues** will continue to frame the activities of the future forms of the UAEU multi-level cooperation and should be better reflected in their work. The list from Pact of Amsterdam will be revised according to the principles of good urban governance deriving from the New Leipzig Charter and EU policies and priorities together with the revision of the priority themes.
26. **Partnerships** remain the key delivery mechanism of the UAEU as set in the Pact of Amsterdam. The working method of the Partnership will be improved to allow for the deployment of a pragmatic, effective and result-oriented approach aiming at increasing the impact of future UAEU deliverables. The flexibility in the work and decision taking of Partnerships however has to be secured according to the spirit of the UAEU.
27. When a more specific and targeted approach is needed, when an urban topic requires faster delivery, a targeted or quick response, a specific focus on one pillar, priority or emerging question can be pursued through **other forms of multi-level and multi-stakeholder cooperation (OFC)**.

In this respect we welcome the initiative of Partnerships, their members and other stakeholders to experiment on methods and formats, following the operational framework for the OFC in the Multiannual Working Programme. We invite them to report on their explorations to the UDG and DGUM.

28. The next generation Partnerships and other forms of cooperation will **build on** the recommendations, knowledge, expertise and experience gained in the first generation Partnerships whenever possible and relevant. Partners from the first generation Partnerships are invited to support future UAEU multi-level and multi-stakeholder cooperation with their active involvement.
29. The **voluntary, action-oriented, flexible and bottom-up** nature of multi-level cooperation in the frame of the UAEU as set in Pact of Amsterdam shall be maintained.
30. All parties involved will explore different possibilities within their competences and capacities to allocate resources to the UAEU as set in the Multiannual Working Programme, taking into account the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. The European Commission and Member States are invited to **support the work and involvement of urban authorities** within the UAEU process, Partnerships and other forms of cooperation, including small and medium-sized cities and towns, according to available resources.
31. It is crucial to keep the UAEU process alive by continuing multi-level cooperation with the **next generation** of Partnerships and other forms of cooperation.

Therefore the process for establishing a first set of pilot Partnerships in 2022 will be launched on the following two themes:

- Greening Cities
- Sustainable Tourism.

The ex-ante assessment (EAA) will be performed in 2022 as an experimental process and will be followed by an open call.

32. The UAEU shall maintain its connection to **intergovernmental cooperation on urban matters**, focusing on assuring its coherence and strategic alignment with the New Leipzig Charter, urban and territorial policies across the EU and the global development agendas and goals. The intergovernmental cooperation will also foster the exchange of experiences and discussions on urgent matters contributing to the overall EU-wide debate on urban matters.

National and regional urban policies developed in an inclusive and cooperative spirit can contribute significantly to the implementation of the New Leipzig Charter and the UAEU.
33. The main **governance** structure of the UAEU will remain the Directors General on Urban Matters (DGUM). It will continue to coordinate, validate and decide on the activities of the UAEU. The Urban Development Group (UDG) will remain the monitoring and advisory body to the DGUM and assume operational steering of the UAEU. The Urban Agenda Technical Preparatory Group (UATPG) will continue its work as the support structure for the UDG and DGUM.
34. The Commission will continue to **support** the UAEU through the European Urban Initiative (EUI). Dedicated support for intergovernmental cooperation will be also provided through this means in a format that has EU added value and is relevant for the UAEU as well as for the EUI.
35. The **recommendations and key messages** of the Partnerships or other forms of cooperation of the UAEU will be discussed regularly at the UDG and DGUM meetings, possibly at least once per Trio Presidency. When relevant, these messages shall be discussed at a higher level preferably in existing forums.
36. The inclusion of **small and medium-sized** urban authorities and their participation in the UAEU processes and multi-level cooperation should be further stimulated and supported.
37. The future process of the UAEU should strive to **reach out** to a wider circle of cities and stakeholders. Future Presidencies together with the European Commission are invited to lead a discussion on communication and dissemination of the UAEU process in the next two years.
38. The **National Contact Points** could assist in the communication, dissemination and capitalisation activities of the UAEU and support relevant outreach. According to the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, and taking into account the administrative arrangements and distribution of competences in each Member State, the definition and establishment of the NCP should be based on an individual decision of the Member State in question.
39. The linkages between the UAEU and the **Territorial Agenda 2030** will be further explored and strengthened to ensure a balanced development of the European territory and contribute to quality of life of all citizens. The Trio Presidencies are invited to plan at least one joint session on UAEU and Territorial Agenda 2030 in their Programmes.
40. The future Presidencies and European Commission are invited to **jointly** steer and support the UAEU process and multi-level cooperation according to the Multiannual Working Programme and in the spirit of the New Leipzig Charter principles.



MULTIANNUAL WORKING PROGRAMME

**FOR THE URBAN AGENDA FOR THE EU -
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INTRODUCTION

FROM THE PACT OF AMSTERDAM TO THE LJUBLJANA AGREEMENT

The Working Programme of the Urban Agenda for the EU (UAEU) describes the Operational Framework of the UAEU in detail: the working method, concrete actions and the themes of the UAEU. It supports the Pact of Amsterdam (2016) for the period 2016–2021.

The New Leipzig Charter and its Implementation Document reaffirmed the Pact of Amsterdam and call for continuation of cooperation, coherence and continuity within and between Trio Presidency Programmes. A Multiannual Working Programme has therefore been prepared for the period 2022–2026. It provides a framework for the planning, implementation and monitoring of the UAEU. The DGUM can already suggest amendments for approval by the Ministers responsible for Urban Matters before 2026 if relevant.

THREE PILLARS OF THE UAEU

To enhance the impact of the UAEU at the EU level, the UAEU should be better linked with EU agenda setting, policymaking and legislative processes at different levels. When relevant, links to existing EU initiatives should be pursued on an ad-hoc basis, for example bringing up cities' perspective in the Fit for Future Platform, encouraging cities to join Horizon Europe's Mission for 100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities by 2030, and enabling an active collaboration between Partnerships and the Regional Hubs of the Committee of the Regions.

The participation of relevant sectoral Directorates-General (DGs) of the European Commission and national or regional ministries is crucial and should be ensured, for example by involving them in the set-up and work of the Partnerships and Other Forms of Cooperation (OFC) from the beginning.

Systematic and early engagement from the European Investment Bank and European Parliament and other stakeholders in future Partnerships/OFC will further strengthen the UAEU.

For Partnerships it is recommended that all three pillars are addressed while, when focusing on selected pillars, OFC should be the primary approach. The DGUM however can decide differently.

STRENGTHENING THE BETTER REGULATION PILLAR

In order to strengthen the Better Regulation pillar, knowledge and awareness of the EU policy-making and legislative processes will be addressed more closely, using also the outcomes and results of the Better Regulation Initiative. At the same time, the Better Regulation pillar will be complemented by improving the knowledge of policymakers and other stakeholders about urban challenges and territorial specificities through the Better Knowledge pillar.

With the ex-ante assessment carried out prior to the start of work of the Partnerships potential links to the EU policy cycle will be identified. It will help the Partnerships/OFC to:

- a. Participate and contribute in ongoing policy processes and consultations on EU legislation that are relevant for the UAEU priority themes.
- b. Contribute to the ongoing and future priorities of EU policy.

The engagement of relevant European Commission DGs in Partnerships/OFC shall be sought to facilitate early and informal exchange of views on regulatory issues in the pursuit of simpler and better EU laws.

Partnerships/OFC are strongly recommended to use available EU feedback opportunities, such as public consultations, to make their views on EU policies and legislation known to the European Commission and the general public.

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SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED CITIES AND TOWNS

To stimulate the participation of small and medium-sized urban authorities in the UAEU processes and multi-level cooperation:

- a. Partnerships or OFC should consider, when relevant, the challenges of small and medium-sized cities and towns;
- b. Participation of national associations that represent local and regional governments should be further encouraged by Member States;
- c. National associations representing local governments can also be involved to foster outreach to small and medium-sized cities and towns on national or regional level;
- d. Selection criteria for partners should motivate and encourage small and medium-sized urban authorities to get involved in the UAEU multi-level cooperation;
- e. Challenges faced by small and medium-sized cities and towns could be addressed specifically by the future UAEU multi-level cooperation.

To support the participation of small and medium-sized urban authorities in the UAEU activities:

- a. Voluntary support of mentor cities that were involved in the first Partnerships to accompany small and medium-sized cities and towns in the process;
- b. CoR, CEMR, Eurocities and Eurotowns can serve as mentor organisations to involve cities with less resources and expertise;
- c. The use of digital tools, for example part of the Partnership or OFC meetings could be online meetings, to reduce travel costs;
- d. Additional support for small and medium-sized cities and towns should, where possible, be enabled by the European Commission and Member States, based on available resources (for example as regards travel costs, overcoming language barriers; outreach activities).

1.

GOVERNANCE OF THE URBAN AGENDA FOR THE EU

I / DELIVERING OF THE UAEU

The UAEU parties involved are invited to continue to contribute to and support the UAEU process and activities according to their commitments, competences and capacities. The strategic orientation should aim to secure an efficient operationalisation of the UAEU governance including continuous verification of the process according to urban development priorities set in the New Leipzig Charter, EU policy priorities, in particular Cohesion Policy, and global goals with a clear urban dimension.

In order to support European, national and urban leaders in defining further evolutions of the Urban Agenda for the EU shared responsibilities and actions, a Cities Forum will be held ideally every two years. This event gathers all levels of governance, and presents multiple opportunities for discussing sustainable urban development, which makes it an important milestone for communicating about the UAEU, and increasing its outreach.

The DGUM should seek to strengthen an early debate on relevant issues with an urban dimension in the Council Working Parties using recommendations from the UAEU and intergovernmental cooperation.

The best use of the knowledge already created within the framework of the UAEU should be secured. For that purpose, first generation partnerships will be encouraged to support the knowledge and experience dissemination process further, for example as mentors or active partners in the next generation of Partnerships/OFC; ambassadors of the UAEU.

The content of the existing web page (FUTURIUM) should be kept and stay accessible to enable the connections between past and future UAEU discussions and maintain a transparent flow of information.

All UAEU parties involved will strive to:

- Ensure the further development of the UAEU via dedicated support to future Partnerships and OFC under the UAEU;
- Secure coherence and continuity between (Trio) Presidencies on urban matters;
- Use the existing inter-governmental cooperation and decision-making bodies (UDG, DGUM) to facilitate and enhance the policy dialogue on urban matters;
- Enable the equal involvement of cities of all sizes in the UAEU;
- Improve the coordination between the Territorial Agenda 2030, national urban policy frameworks, the Urban Agenda for the EU and the urban dimension of Cohesion Policy.

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THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

The European Commission, with the help of the European Urban Initiative secretariat (EUI Secretariat), when it becomes available and based on available resources, will aim to strengthen multilevel cooperation on urban matters in the EU by:

- Linking the UAEU to EU policymaking and funding cycles;
- Monitoring and assessing UAEU Partnerships/OFCs;
- Supporting UAEU Partnerships;
- Promoting the UAEU's results;
- Organising the Cities Forum.

For the future delivery of the UAEU, the Partnerships and OFC will need communication, expertise, management, and organisational support. This support may contain:

- Organisational support to the Partnerships and OFC in their working phases (duration, number of meetings, necessary consultations, dissemination, etc);
- Provision of dedicated expert support;
- External communication;
- Internal communication and cooperation within and between the Partnerships and OFC and key actors;
- Monitoring of actions, when relevant.

The European Commission, with the help of the EUI secretariat, when it will be available and based on available resources, will aim to support the intergovernmental cooperation on urban matters in areas that bring EU added value and are relevant for the UAEU as well as for the EUI by:

- Providing, upon request, expert support to the policy dialogue led by the UDG and DGUM based on an analysis and synthesis of urban policy developments;
- Supporting Member States in exchanging experiences related to their national urban policies and providing linkages with the broader European and global objectives, in particular the Sustainable Development Goals;
- Providing, upon request, expert support to the coordination between urban and territorial policy.

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MEMBER STATES

The UDG/DGUM are the ideal context to foster intergovernmental cooperation and knowledge exchange on national urban policy and implementation practice, including forms of communicating and translating the UAEU at the national level, successful examples of policy initiatives and tools and national frameworks of multi-level cooperation on urban development. Member States are invited to inform the UDG/DGUM on national urban policies, implementation of the New Leipzig Charter and the UAEU related activities, as well as to discuss urgent urban issues, searching for better solutions at all governance levels, thus contributing to the overall EU wide debate on urban matters.

Opportunities to better explore the reciprocity and overlay between the UAEU and the Territorial Agenda 2030 should be created. For this purpose, a dedicated event should be jointly organised by the UDG/DGUM and/or NTCCP/DGTC at least once per Trio Presidency, for example a joint session, workshop or seminar. The mutual connections between the UAEU Partnerships/OFC and the Territorial Agenda 2030 pilot actions can be a specific object of exchange. A joint form of cooperation could also be established especially in relation to cross-cutting issues, for example climate adaptation, urban-rural relationships or housing.

For the future delivery of the UAEU, the Partnerships/OFC, the Member States will strive to continue to allocate or mobilise their resources, considering national circumstances and opportunities¹:

- To the organisation of UAEU meetings or events in their country/region (e.g. Partnership/OFC meeting or event);
- To minimise language barriers when required (e.g. translations of important documents or their summaries, information);
- To support the implementation of the Action Plans especially when actions are addressed to the national level;
- To stimulate and support the participation of cities and towns of all sizes in Partnerships/OFC (e.g. technical or expert support);
- Support the information, dissemination and outreach of the UAEU on national/regional level, possibly via National Contact Points or/and other communication channels.

In order to facilitate European, national and urban leaders to define a common agenda, shared responsibilities and actions, a regular high level political meeting on urban issues should be held. The involvement of cities in policy making on urban matters, in line with the partnership approach of the UAEU, should be part of this process. The European Commission is invited to facilitate this within the Cities Forum.

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CITY ORGANISATIONS

The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), EUROCITIES, and other bodies representing Urban Authorities at European and national level (e. g. Eurotowns) will contribute to the further development of the Urban Agenda for the EU and the exchange of good practices, and to make use of the outcomes of the Urban Agenda for the EU actions, especially the work of the Partnerships/OFC.

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EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

As the key urban representative body in the European Parliament, the Urban Intergroup is asked to play an advisory role in the UAEU process. The Members and the Committees of the European Parliament are also invited to be informed and to follow the work of Partnerships/OFC and to exchange on their recommendations.

¹ Member States have provided support to the first generation Partnerships in different ways and according to their capacity and availability of different resources. It is not expected of MSs that they contribute only financially and to all Partnerships/OFC. Resources can be human, financial, technical etc.

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COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

As the EU institutional body representing local and regional authorities, the Committee of the Regions is asked to provide input and support, within its competences, to the next generation Partnerships/OFC established under the UAEU, through dissemination activities aiming to involve a broader range of stakeholders in the process.

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EUROPEAN INVESTMENT BANK

The European Investment Bank (EIB) plays an important role in the financing of investments in areas covered by the UAEU, in grant-loan blending for urban investments, and in advising Member States and cities about urban project preparation and financial instruments.

The EIB is invited to support the development of better funding approaches in the urban context, including through financial instruments, through the existing and new Partnerships/OFC.

The EIB is invited to reflect, where relevant, the principles and outcomes of the UAEU as appropriate in its urban lending, grant-loan blending and advisory services approach in the urban context, including in its activities in support of the European Green Deal and the implementation of its Climate Bank Roadmap. This should take into account the need to support sustainable urban development projects and strategies without jeopardising its financial discipline.

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EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE

As the EU institutional body representing organised civil society (NGOs, employers' organisations and trade unions), the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) is asked to provide input and support, within its competences, to economic and social aspects linked to the UAEU and the territoriality of the development, to the next generation Partnerships/OFC, and support for the dissemination to and involvement of a wide range of stakeholders in the process, as well as to actively participate in the operational steering of the UAEU.

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OTHERS

The URBACT programme is invited to continue to contribute to the priority themes with its activities. It can especially contribute to the multilevel governance process with its expertise via active participation of URBACT cities in Partnerships/OFC, direct participation as a relevant actor in the UAEU process, supporting the Partnerships'/OFC work by using URBACT knowledge and expertise, as well as by looking for the opportunities to support better knowledge actions within URBACT IV programme.

II / URBAN AGENDA TECHNICAL PREPARATORY GROUP (UATPG)

- a. Mandate: UATPG has the mandate to support operational steering of the UAEU by providing technical guidance and support to the UDG and the DGUM. UATPG will perform the following activities:
- Steer the UAEU operational workflow, including ex-ante assessments, calls for Partners;
 - Follow the delivery of the UAEU, its monitoring, and the provision of technical guidance and support to Partnerships and OFC;
 - Share information and discuss the UAEU outreach, communication and dissemination activities of the different stakeholders;
 - Support the rotating Presidencies and the European Commission in the preparation of the documents to be submitted under the UAEU strategic steering agendas of the UDG and DGUM, including Multiannual Working Programme proposal and review.

The DGUM can mandate the UATPG with additional activities.

- b. Composition: The standing members of the UATPG are the following UDG members:
- representatives of the current Presidency;
 - representatives of the two former Presidencies;
 - representatives of the three future Presidencies;
 - representatives of the European Commission (DG REGIO);
 - representatives of the European Committee of the Regions (CoR);
 - representatives of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR);
 - representatives of Eurocities.

The UATPG shall work as an informal and flexible structure. The Presidency and European Commission can open meetings of the UATPG up to the representatives of other Member States, EU institutions, cities and organisations, or regroup key stakeholders in dedicated task forces/working groups, when needed and relevant.

- c. Meetings/workflow: Meetings are called by the Presidency and the European Commission. It is advisable that at least one UATPG meeting is arranged prior to the UDG and DGUM meetings. Reporting on UATPG work to the UDG could elaborate on the mobilisation required from UDG members and other UAEU or external stakeholders. Reports from the UATPG meetings should be delivered to all UDG members after the UATPG meetings.

III / MONITORING AND REPORTING

Periodic reports on the state of play of the Partnerships or OFC actions on Better Regulation, Better Funding and Better Knowledge will be submitted with a lower intensity than stipulated in the Pact of Amsterdam. Partnerships or OFC should present their progress to the UDG around midterm and at the end of their work.

Regular exchanges between the Partnerships and the UDG should continue and be strengthened, to debate the UAEU's implementation and take stock of its policy achievements. It should

foster multi-level cooperation (and when relevant the place-based approach) for coherent development and the reflection on the follow-up of the UAEU recommendations' impacts on EU and national urban policies. The bottlenecks that a Partnership/OFC experience can also be brought to the attention of the UDG and DGUM outside reporting periods.

Exchanges with the relevant European Parliament committees and the Urban Intergroup with the UDG and DGUM should be organised jointly.

IV / OUTREACH, COMMUNICATION AND DISSEMINATION OF THE UAEU

Outreach, communication and dissemination of the UAEU will be improved to increase the awareness, accessibility and uptake of information and outputs of the UAEU for external stakeholders, as well as seeking their input and involvement. The UAEU stakeholders should contribute to outreach, communication and dissemination activities. The European Week of Regions and Cities and the Cities Forum will continue to provide opportunities to communicate and disseminate the UAEU.

The future process of the UAEU should strive to reach out to a wider circle of cities and stakeholders at local, regional, national and EU level to maximise benefits of the Partnerships and the overall UAEU process results.

Outreach to relevant stakeholders in the UAEU (JRC, Eurostat, EIGE, ESPON, JPI UE, EUKN, URBACT, EIB, EPRS, Urban Innovative Actions etc.) for their expert and other forms of involvement should be continued and strengthened. When looking for external input activities should be ad-hoc and flexible and should respond directly to the need of Partnerships or OFC or UAEU governance structures.

THE NATIONAL CONTACT POINT (NCP)

The UAEU dissemination and communication should take advantage of and be built upon the urban networks and structures available on the EU level and in each Member State, according to the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, taking into account the administrative arrangements and distribution of competences in each Member State.

The future network of NCPs could provide opportunities and channels to increase the overall awareness and enhance the impact of the UAEU, EUI, URBACT and other urban related information at national, regional and local levels.

2. PRIORITY THEMES

The fourteen UAEU priority themes remain valid: inclusion of migrants and refugees; air quality; urban poverty; housing; circular economy; jobs and skills in the local economy; climate adaptation (including green infrastructure solutions); energy transition; sustainable use of land and nature-based solutions; urban mobility; digital transition; innovative and responsible public procurement; culture and cultural heritage; security in public spaces.

The following four themes were added to the list of priority themes by the Ljubljana Agreement on the basis of co-creative process lead together by the Slovenian Presidency, Eurocities, CEMR, CoR and other urban stakeholders in 2021. The four themes are linked to the New Leipzig Charter, EU policies, other emerging urban development trends and needs of cities²:

- **CITIES OF EQUALITY**

Despite the progress that has been made in protecting the fundamental and social rights of citizens, inequalities persist based on characteristics such as gender, age, disability, sexual orientation and identity, ethnicity, migration status. This is hindering social inclusion which is an important part of the EU's vision. Focus could be on education, labour market participation, service provision, safety, urban planning and design, including accessible and safe public spaces.

- **FOOD**

Food production, distribution and consumption are all important sectors of the economy, which are at the same time linked to complex social and ecological challenges. Cities are the centres of food distribution and consumption which makes local authorities key actors in the food supply chain. Focus could be on food resilience and sustainability, fair and sustainable production, urban-rural linkages, local food supply chains, innovative procurement, health and quality food.

- **GREENING CITIES**

Cities are at the forefront of the interlinked climate change and biodiversity crises. They face frequent flooding, drought, heatwaves, intense rain events and other climate-related hazards and are suffering increased air pollution, water scarcity and growing food insecurity. Focus could be on urban forests and green space development; providing carbon storage and sequestration; reducing air pollution; purifying water; halting biodiversity loss; improving physical and mental health of citizens.

- **SUSTAINABLE TOURISM**

Cities are increasingly dealing with issues of unregulated (over-)tourism that has led to unintended consequences such as the rise of a low-quality tourism industry, undermining the resilience of the sector and bringing adverse consequences to the quality of life in cities. Focus could be on challenges of unregulated and low quality tourism, resilience and sustainability of tourism, impact on community and quality of life, housing, digitalisation of the sector and use of data, new demands related to COVID-19 pandemic, and the revitalisation of city centres.

² Descriptions of four themes are for illustrative and discussion purposes only. The descriptions will not in any way restrict the process of the ex-ante assessment or place limitation on future Partnerships.

Priority themes already explored by the Partnerships can be further addressed from a different perspective, with challenges that have not been addressed yet, priority issues that need to be further explored or issues shared by a cluster of several of the fourteen already explored themes.

A “linking matrix” can be used as an instrument for defining the priority themes. It should help cities, Member States and the European Commission to explore together the new priority themes for the UAEU by linking them to the New Leipzig Charter principles and dimensions (the just, green and productive city and the transformative power of cities for the common good), EU policy priorities (for example European Green Deal, European Pillar of Social Rights, European Digital Strategy, the Renovation Wave, Cohesion policy, Long-term Vision for Rural Areas, New European Bauhaus), the Territorial Agenda 2030, other emerging urban relevant policy trends and initiatives as well as global agendas (for example 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, New Urban Agenda). Suggestions for new themes should be based on the identified needs of cities.

Besides the search for new priority themes, the “linking matrix” can help revise the existing UAEU priority themes or cluster of themes according to new challenges and priorities and revise them for future UAEU cooperation. The revision process should follow a bottom-up and inclusive approach and should allow wider participation of European cities and other stakeholders.

The process to determine new UAEU priority themes remains in line with the Pact of Amsterdam. The DGUM can review the list of priority themes annually and provide guidance based on contributions from the bottom-up approach. New themes or other amendments to the list of priority themes are revised by the Ministers responsible for Urban Matters.

Cross-cutting issues should continue to frame the activities of the future UAEU multi-level cooperation. The revision of the cross-cutting issues should be taken according to the principles of the New Leipzig Charter and EU policies and priorities, together with the revision of the priority themes in 2023. A “linking matrix” can be used for the revision.

3.

WORKING METHOD OF THE PARTNERSHIPS AND OTHER FORMS OF COOPERATION

Partnerships or OFC shall not be established on all agreed priority themes at the same time but should be initiated sequentially through the whole UAEU process.

All forms of multi-level and multi stakeholder cooperation in the framework of the UAEU need to be initiated by a well-reasoned proposal linked to an already determined UAEU priority theme or cluster of themes. The proposal can be based on an initiative from cities, regions and/or one or more stakeholders of the UAEU.

The proposal should be submitted to the UDG and DGUM. The DGUM can take a decision to launch the ex-ante assessment on the basis of a proposal followed by an open call for partners.

I / EX-ANTE ASSESSMENT (EAA)

The main aim of EAA is to enable the deployment of a pragmatic, effective and result-oriented approach aiming at increasing the impact of future UAEU deliverables.

EAA will look at the proposal to help optimise focus, timing and activities of the multi-level cooperation and safeguard suitable level of partners' thematic and procedural expertise. However, it should still allow the flexibility in the work and decision making of Partnerships according to the spirit of the UAEU.

The purpose of the EAA is:

- To ensure the relevance and focus of the theme in the policy and regulatory context;
- To guide and ease the work of the Partnership in stocktaking and preparatory actions phases;
- To secure suitable level of partners' expertise in Partnership;
- To optimise the workflow of the Partnership.

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CONTENT OF THE ASSESSMENT

The EAA of the proposed theme will be carried out according to a series of criteria chosen to establish its relevance in terms of scope and timing. The criteria are:

1. Multi-level governance;
2. Policy environment;
3. Regulatory environment;
4. Existing identified gaps and recommendations;
5. Trends and evidence from EU cities.

In a second part, findings and recommendations based on additional research and analysis should provide the following elements:

- Deliver recommendations to help interpret and focus the thematic scope of the subject;
- Identify the most suitable form of multi-level cooperation (Partnership/OFC);
- Recommend the timing for successful implementation;
- Identify the suggested type of expertise of the members;
- Identify potential institutions/stakeholders of interest, relevant and related to the thematic issue, to be involved in the multi-level cooperation set-up;
- Identify the type of support that will be required for the implementation;
- Provide an assessment on the opportunity for a Partnership/OFC.

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EXPECTED RESULTS

The final report will provide a detailed assessment according to the proposed criteria as well as recommendations. The results will serve as:

- Input for open calls for partners;
- Proposal of the most suitable form and outline of conditions to be met for successful implementation of the multi-level cooperation (expertise, type of partners etc.);
- Proposal of institutions to be involved and secure involvement of relevant stakeholders (EC DGs, relevant national ministries, other organisations);
- Guidelines for the Partnership for the Stocktaking and Preparatory actions phases of the Working Method of the Partnerships as in Working Programme of the UAEU (2016);
- Proposal for the type of support to the multi-level cooperation when established.

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RESPONSIBILITY AND PROCESS

Member States and the European Commission are responsible for jointly conducting EAA.

To keep EAA as an open and collaborative process, the UATPG should steer its preparation in active collaboration with the UDG and with expert support. The UATPG should consult with the proposers of the new Partnership if required.

When relevant, the EUI secretariat should be available by request to support the EAA with an expert support.

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TIMING AND DURATION

The EAA process is launched by a DGUM decision and precedes the open call for partners.

An EAA should be performed within 6 months, starting with the designation of an expert. Should the EAA not be concluded in due time, the process of selection of partners could be launched and Partnership/OFC will be allowed to start its work on the basis of a DGUM decision.

As this is a new experimental step, adjustments could be made in the future depending on the experience and feedback on this new process.

II / SELECTION OF PARTNERS

A balanced composition of Partnerships/OFC should be ensured continuously in terms of geographical and institutional balance, between representatives of the Commission, Member States, urban authorities and other stakeholders. A balanced and competent representation of urban authorities of all sizes needs to be secured to account for the rich diversity of the urban and regional fabric in Europe. It is recommended that at least one Coordinator of the Partnership/OFC is an urban authority.

The selection of partners representing urban authorities will be based on an **open call** for expression of interest³. EUROCITIES and CEMR may still each nominate one representative of the secretariat of their own organisation.

Selection of the partners representing Member States will continue to be based on the nominations by Member States. The nominations should be targeted to the relevant national institutions as recommended in the EAA.

Selection of members representing other stakeholders should from now on also be based on the EAA recommendations. This means that the nomination procedure as defined by the Working Method of the Partnerships can be followed in the future (Working Programme of the UAEU, 2016).

Criteria for selection of partners should be clear and part of the open call. Suggested criteria for partners are expertise, capacity and motivation based on the outcomes of the ex-ante assessment but all the following aspects should be considered:

- Interest of partner in participation;
- Commitment of partner to be actively involved;
- Capacity and readiness of partner to dedicate resources;
- Experience and sufficient expertise of partner on the topic (link with the EAA);
- Ability of partner to connect (e. g. membership of networks, organisation);
- Readiness of partner to assist in the debate about the topic and Partnership within their territory (local, regional, national level);
- Geographically balanced composition of the Partnership;
- Balanced representation of urban authorities of all sizes in the Partnership.

To ensure more active involvement from small and medium-sized cities and towns, adjusted criteria could be applied during the call:

- The readiness of partner to participate in the technical work with own resources should not be the prevailing criterion (additional support by the European Commission and Member States should be available if needed for small and medium-sized cities and towns);
- Readiness of partner to participate with experience and expertise on one particular aspect of the topic addressed should be sufficient.

If no small and medium-sized urban authorities are selected in the open call, a nomination of small or medium-sized urban authorities can follow. Nominations can be proposed by Member States, Committee of the Regions and URBACT (upon approval of the Monitoring Committee) to the DGUM. The nominator has to present and explain that nominated urban authority has the expertise capacity and interest to actively participate in the Partnership. The DGUM can select a maximum of two additional partners from the nominated list.

³ Regions, Partner States, city consortiums or national city umbrella organisations can also apply at the open call and be selected instead of an Urban Authority as partner in the partnership (as was possible for nomination in Working Program of the UAEU (2016)).

The DGUM decides to start the open call for partners and is a decision-making body in the following selection process.

The calls will be steered by the UATPG in close cooperation with the UDG.

The network of UDG members and National Contact Points, if established, and other possible communication channels should be used for a dissemination of the call.

In case of institutional change within the Partnership/OFC, the Coordinators shall inform the DGUM.

III / OTHER FORMS OF COOPERATION (OFC)

When a more specific and targeted approach is needed, for example when an urban topic requires a quicker response, targeted delivery or a specific focus on one pillar of the UAEU and/or question/issue, OFC can extend opportunities for the UAEU multi-level and multi-stakeholder cooperation besides Partnerships.

The OFC operational framework is to be kept limited and flexible, so there is room for innovation and experimentation:

- Initiation of an OFC is by a justified proposal submitted to the UDG/DGUM, explaining also why an OFC is more appropriate than a Partnership. The DGUM can launch an EAA on the submitted proposal if needed. Establishing an OFC can also be based on the recommendation of an EAA.
- The scope of the OFC should be a specific issue, one pillar of the UAEU, a cluster of themes or a cross-cutting issue. The scope should link to the actions needed at the EU, national, regional or local level and in underlining the benefits of multilevel cooperation.
- The recommended timeframe for operation of OFC is less than 18 months; however it should not exceed three years.
- Organisation of OFC membership can follow the nomination of Urban authorities and others as in Working Programme of the UAEU (2016), or an open call can be organised based on the decision by the DGUM.
- The recommended composition is less than 15 members. Membership should show high expertise, capacity and interest for cooperation, followed by geographical, institutional and size balance.
- An OFC should also have a coordinator, chosen among members after establishment of the OFC. It is recommended that a coordinator is an urban authority.
- The role of partners is the same as for members of Partnerships defined in the Pact of Amsterdam and Working Programme of the UAEU (2016).
- Expected outputs are concrete recommendations, proposals, tools or actions related to the issues or questions addressed.
- The OFC could benefit from support by the EUI Secretariat on ad-hoc basis. All parties involved should contribute according to available resources.

The DGUM has the mandate to establish OFC and agree upon the members of the OFC.

IV / SUPPORT TO PARTNERSHIPS AND OTHER FORMS OF COOPERATION

Organisational elements that require support should be defined at the initial phase through the EAA of each Partnership/OFC. Such support should be provided by all parties involved according to their commitments, roles and available resources.

Requirements for technical support for Partnerships and OFC:

- Providing templates of Action Plans, securing consultation method for draft Action Plan and facilitate reporting to UDG/DGUM;
- Maintaining a website and social media communication effort for Partnerships/OFCs follow up;
- Providing adequate expert support in cooperation with Partnership/OFC;
- Providing specific support in defined cases, for example in regards to small and medium-sized cities and towns or deprived cities, in order to secure the participation of members in the Partnership/OFC;
- Organising ideally an annual coordinators' – and if relevant – action leaders' meeting (CALM).

Other potential elements of technical support required by Partnerships:

- Translation of finalised Action Plans into national language when organised by an individual Member State;
- Calls for contributions, evaluations;
- Administrative support for Partnerships/OFC;
- Support for communication and outreach activities, such as:
 - Providing a visual identity for UAEU and corresponding materials to be used by Partnerships/OFC;
 - Hosting webinars and online outreach activities;
 - Surveys and peer reviews;
- Case studies.

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REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
**MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT
AND SPATIAL PLANNING**

