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|  | URBACT III Operational Programme(2014-2020) |

COVER

**CALL FOR PROPOSALS FOR THE CREATION OF**

**URBACT ACTION PLANNING NETWORKS**

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**Introduction:**

The URBACT III Operational Programme (CCI 2014TC16RFIR003) was officially adopted on 12th December 2014 by Commission Implementing Decision C(2014) 9857. The adopted OP can be found on the URBACT website[[1]](#footnote-1)

The URBACT III Monitoring Committee adopted the present Call for Proposals for Action Planning Networks on 10th March 2015.

**In this context, the “Commissariat Général à l’égalité des territories” (CGET) (France), Managing Authority of the URBACT III Operational programme, issues a**

**CALL FOR PROPOSALS FOR THE CREATION OF UP TO 20 ACTION PLANNING NETWORKS.**

**This Call for Proposals is open from XXX March 2015 until 16 June 2015, 03 pm CET[[2]](#footnote-2).**

**Section 1: The URBACT III Programme**

The URBACT III Programme is part of the European Territorial Cooperation Objective of the Structural Fund policies for the period 2014-2020. The URBACT III Programme is financed through the ERDF, for which principles and regulations are laid down in EU Regulations N° 1303/2013, 1301/2013 and 1299/2013.

URBACT is a know-how programme that promotes exchange and learning between cities. It uses European Structural Funds to achieve its goals. It does not finance investments nor does it carry out pilot projects.

URBACT’s mission is to enable cities to work together and develop integrated solutions to common urban challenges, by networking, learning from one another’s experiences, drawing lessons and identifying good practices to improve urban policies.

As stated in the Operational Programme, URBACT III is driven by the following specific objectives:

* To improve the capacities of cities to manage sustainable urban policies and practices in an integrated and participative way
* To improve the design of sustainable urban strategies and action plans in cities
* To improve the implementation of sustainable urban strategies and action plans in cities
* To ensure that practitioners and decision-makers at all levels (EU, national, regional and local) have increased access to URBACT thematic knowledge and share know-how on sustainable urban development

The main strand of activities of the URBACT III Programme is represented by the transnational exchange and learning networks. URBACT transnational exchange and learning networks aim to impact local policies and practices in the perspective of designing and implementing sustainable and integrated urban policies. For Action Planning Networks (object of the present Call for Proposals) the impact on local policies and practices shall be ensured through the creation of URBACT Local Groups and the production of the Integrated Action Plans (see section 2.1).

The principles and regulations for transnational exchange and learning networks to be implemented within the programme are laid down in the URBACT III Operational Programme.

In addition to the Operational Programme the URBACT III Programme has developed a series of Fact Sheets to be included in the official Programme Manual[[3]](#footnote-3). These Fact Sheets were approved by the URBACT III Monitoring Committee in February and March 2015. In particular the following Fact Sheets are recommended reading for potential candidates:

* Fact Sheets 2A Action Planning Networks
* Fact Sheet 2D Network Creation
* Fact Sheet 2E Network Management

In addition, a series of Guidance documents[[4]](#footnote-4) are also available for Applicants. These include:

* Guide to Action Planning Networks
* Guide to Network creation and submission
* Guidance notes on project management

**Section 2: Action Planning Networks**

**2.1 Main objectives and expected results**

Building on the experience of Thematic Networks funded under URBACT II, Action Planning networks are a key element of the Exchange and Learning activities of URBACT III for 2014-2020.

The main objective of Action Planning Networks is to improve the capacity of cities to manage sustainable urban policies and more especially to strengthen the capacity to design integrated strategies for sustainable urban development.

Action Planning Networks are expected to support an organised process of exchange and learning among peers across Europe, with a view to improving local policies through concrete action planning.

By taking part in an Action Planning Network, cities exchange and share experiences, problems and possible solutions, generating new ideas to address challenges related to sustainable urban development.

As a starting point, cities willing to get involved in Action Planning Networks shall identify a policy challenge they want to address at local level. Then, they shall commit to develop an Integrated Action Plan that will address this challenge. This Integrated Action Plan will thus be both a driver of the exchange and learning activities, and a key concrete output of their participation in the Action Planning network.

Cities willing to get involved in Action Planning Networks shall also commit to work on their policy challenges using a participatory approach that is involving all relevant stakeholders (from within the local administration and also outside, civil society, private sector, associations, etc.) in the action-planning process. These key stakeholders will be gathered in an URBACT Local Group. They will be actively involved in the transnational exchange activities and in the development of the Integrated Action Plan to be produced by the city. The participatory approach shall improve the action-planning process and the subsequent delivery of the local policies (strengthening the evidence base, ensuring ownership of the problems identified and of the solutions/ policies developed, creating the conditions for a successful delivery, etc.).

**2.2 Beneficiaries**

For transnational exchange and learning activities (and thus for Action Planning Networks), the URBACT III Operational Programme identifies the Programme area and defines two categories of beneficiaries: the main beneficiaries (city partners) and other beneficiaries (non-city partners).

The URBACT III **programme area** consists of:

* The 28 EU Member States
* Partner States Norway and Switzerland. Partners from Norway and Switzerland cannot make use of ERDF allocations, but as official partner states in the URBACT III programme cities are co-financed at 50% by national funds.
* Instrument for Pre Accession (IPA) countries. Partners from IPA countries can participate in operations using IPA funding, without receiving ERDF co-financing
* Other countries. Partners from other countries, anywhere in the world, can participate with their own funding.

The **main beneficiaries (city-partners)** for Action Planning Networks shall be cities from EU 28 Member States, Norway and Switzerland willing to develop integrated strategies and action plans for sustainable urban development.

Under URBACT III, the beneficiary “city” refers to the public local authority representing:

* Cities, municipalities, towns;
* Infra-municipal tiers of government such as city districts and boroughs in cases where they are represented by a politico-administrative institution having competences for policy-making and implementation in the policy area covered by the URBACT network concerned in which they are willing to get involved;
* Metropolitan authorities and organized agglomerations in cases where they are represented by a politico-administrative institution having delegated competences for policy-making and implementation in the policy area covered by the URBACT network.

There is no limit of size (population) for cities wishing to participate in URBACT activities.

In addition to city partners, Action Planning Networks can also include a limited number of **other beneficiaries (non-city partners).** The list of other eligible beneficiaries (non-city partners) is defined as follows:

* Local agencies defined as public or semi-public organisations set up by a city, partially or fully owned by the city authority, responsible for the design and implementation of specific policies (economic development, energy supply, health services, transport, etc.)
* Provincial, regional and national authorities, as far as urban issues are concerned;
* Universities and research centres, as far as urban issues are concerned

In order to be eligible, other beneficiaries (non-city partners) must be public authorities or Equivalent Public Bodies[[5]](#footnote-5).

For Action Planning Networks, other beneficiaries can join the partnership only after the first approval for Phase 1. The final partnership for Phase 2 can include a maximum of 3 non-city partners

**2.3 Transnational partnerships**

Transnational partnerships are cornerstones of URBACT Action Planning Networks.

Each network has to appoint a **Lead Partner**. Lead Partners are key actors of transnational partnerships for Action Planning Networks. They take over the full responsibility for management, coordination of activities among the involved partners, implementation of work programme and communication on the project and dissemination of project outputs. The Lead Partner also bears financial and legal responsibility and liability for the whole partnership towards the Managing Authority.

Only cities (according to the definition provided under section 2.2) from the 28 EU Member States and from Switzerland and Norway (Partner States) can be Lead Partner of Action Planning Networks.

A city may not be Lead Partner in more than one project at a time (this includes also participation as Lead Partner in Transfer and Implementation networks).

**Transnational partnerships for Action Planning Networks** shall be constituted in two steps, following the two-stage approach of project creation in URBACT III (approach described under section 4).

An **initial partnership** shall be set up for the submission of the Phase 1 Application (details on the composition of the initial partnership for Phase 1 are provided under section 5). If the project proposal is approved for funding of its Phase 1, initial partners will have to complete the partnership during Phase 1, in order to commit for the Phase 2 Application.

A city may not be partner in more than two approved Action Planning Networks at a time.

The **final transnational partnership** for Action Planning Networks must be composed by a minimum of 8 up to a maximum of 12 partners from at least 3 different Member and Partner States.

The final transnational partnership can include a maximum of 3 other beneficiaries/“non-city partners” (as defined under section 2.2). Non-city partners included in the final partnership must be public authorities or equivalent public authorities.

The final partnership shall be balanced with candidate from Less Developed and More Developed Regions, with 4 partners from Less Developed Regions[[6]](#footnote-6) minimum.

A beneficiary (city and non-city partners) may not be partner in more than two approved Action Planning Networks at a time.

**2.4 Main activities for Action Planning Networks**

The **activities** to be implemented by Action Planning Networks, in each of the 2 phases, are organized around work packages. Each work package has specific objectives, defined actions and related expected deliverables.

Phase 1 shall be structured around 2 work packages:

* Work package 1 – Project management and coordination
* Work package 2 – Project development

Phase 2shall be structured around 4 work packages:

* Work package 1 – Project management and coordination
* Work package 2 – Transnational exchange and learning
* Work package 3 – Impact on local governance and urban policies
* Work package 4 – Communication and dissemination

In order to support the implementation of the activities of Action Planning Networks, the URBACT Programme provides to each approved Action Planning Network with an additional specific budget for the **appointment of experts** (see section 6.3 for budgetary elements). Experts support partners in implementing their transnational activities with both thematic content and methods for exchange and learning.

More especially, the expertise envelope should provide all partners with a package of services including:

* Expertise for the design and delivery of transnational exchange and learning activities
* Thematic expertise
* Expertise support to partners in designing and delivering integrated and participatory policies

Detailed information concerning specific objectives, activities and expected outputs under each Work Package as well as concerning the additional expertise available for Action Planning Networks are provided in the Fact Sheet 2A of the URBACT III Programme Manual and in the ‘Guide to Action Planning Networks’.

**Section 3: Thematic coverage**

As defined in the URBACT III Operational Programme, the thematic coverage of the URBACT III Programme 2014-2020 is in line with the Thematic Objectives (TO) of the EU Cohesion Policy for 2014-2020 and thus strongly linked with the pillars of the Europe 2020 strategy for innovative, sustainable and inclusive growth.

The URBACT III thematic coverage includes the following Thematic Objectives:

* Strengthening research, technological development and innovation (TO1)
* Enhancing access to and use and quality of ICT (TO2)
* Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs (TO3)
* Supporting the shift towards a low carbon economy in all sectors (TO4)
* Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management (TO5)
* Protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency (TO6)
* Promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructures (TO7)
* Promoting employment and supporting labour mobility (TO8)
* Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty (TO9)
* Investing in education, skills and lifelong learning by developing education and training infrastructure (TO10)

A detailed description of the urban dimension of the 10 Thematic Objectives for EU Cohesion Policy 2014/2020 is available in the Fact Sheet 1 of the URBACT III Programme Manual.

Over the Programming period 2014-2020, URBACT III will concentrate 70% of resources for exchange and learning activities on Thematic Objectives 1, 4, 6, 8 and 9.

Nevertheless the present Call for Proposals for Action Planning networks is open to all 10 Thematic Objectives.

When considered from an integrated approach perspective, all 10 topics are strongly inter-related. Fostering economic competitiveness goes hand in hand with improving social inclusion, and vice-versa. It is expected that the thematic objective chosen will be the main entry point into the network while allowing partners to explore connections with other thematic objectives.

Candidates should also take stock of the available results and knowledge from existing networks in URBACT II and other programmes.

**Section 4: 2-phase approach for of Action Planning Networks**

In order to improve the quality of networks approved for funding, the URBACT III Programme foresees a two-phase process for Action Planning Networks. The process includes:

* **Phase 1**: Action Planning Networks approved by the Monitoring Committee enter in the 6-month Phase 1. The main aim of Phase 1 is to provide partners of Action Planning Networks with time and resources to ensure:
	+ the development of a common vision of the policy challenges/issues to be addressed through the Integrated Action Plan,
	+ the enlargement of the initial partnership and the consolidation of a coherent final partnership
	+ the elaboration of a shared methodology for the exchange activities.

These elements shall be included in the Proposal for Phase 2 to be submitted at the end of initial 6-month Phase 1.

* **Phase 2**: Action Planning Networks approved by the Monitoring Committee enter in the 24-month Phase 2 for the implementation of the activities at transnational and local level as foreseen in the Phase 2 Proposals

As a consequence of the 2-phase approach, the creation of Action Planning Networks in URBACT III is a two-stage process described below:

**a) Submission of Phase 1 Applications**

The submission of the Phase 1 Applications is the first stage. Its purpose is to select and approve projects to enter a 6-month Phase 1.

The main information to be provided by applicants in the Phase 1 Applications is introduced under Section 5 of the present Call for Proposals and detailed in the “Guide to Action Planning Networks”.

Detailed information on how to create and submit a Phase 1 Application through the online system Synergie-CTE 14-20 is provided under Section 7 of the present Call for Proposals and in the “Guide to Network Creation and Submission”.

Phase 1 Applications are checked against the eligibility criteria by the Secretariat and assessed by an independent panel of experts, the *External Assessment Panel* (EAP). Eligible applications, assessed by the EAP, are submitted to the URBACT Monitoring Committee for approval. Only Action Planning Networks approved by the Monitoring Committee will receive funding to implement the activities planned for Phase 1.

Eligibility and assessment criteria for the selection of Action Planning Networks for Phase 1 are presented under section 7 of the present Call for Proposals.

**b) Submission of Phase 2 Applications**

The submission of the Phase 2 Applications at the end of Phase 1 is the second stage. Its purpose is to assess the quality and relevance of project proposals, improve the quality of projects whenever necessary, and approve projects to enter a 24-month Phase 2.

Phase 2 Applications are checked against the eligibility criteria by the Secretariat and assessed by an independent panel of experts, the *External Assessment Panel* (EAP). The EAP may organize hearings of candidate Lead partners and Lead experts as part of the assessment process. Eligible applications, assessed by the EAP along with recommendations, are submitted to the URBACT Monitoring Committee for the final approval. Only Action Planning Networks approved by the Monitoring Committee will receive funding to implement the main activities planned for Phase 2.

Eligibility and assessment criteria for Phase 2 Applications are presented under section 7 of the present Call for Proposals.

**Section 5: Phase 1 Application**

Projects wishing to apply for funding within the frame of this Call for Proposals are invited to complete the Phase 1 Application online, through Synergie-CTE 14-20 in English.

Proposals for Phase 1 mainly cover the initial 6 months (in terms of work programme and budget) but also introduce first thematic and methodological components related to Phase 2 so as to provide elements on what will be implemented if the project is approved.

Here below the list of the main sections to be completed in order to submit a Phase 1 Proposal:

* **Presentation of the project proposal**: applicants shall define the main issue/policy challenge to be addressed by the network, highlighting the link with the EU2020 strategy and the Thematic Objectives for Cohesion Policy 2014 as well as explaining how the project will contribute to the specific objective for Action Planning Networks
* **Presentation of the main approach proposed**: applicants shall describe the methodological approach they want to apply in order to facilitate the transnational exchange activities at transnational level and the local activities for the co-production of Integrated Action Plans. Under this section applicants shall demonstrate how the proposed methodological approach, actions and deliverables are logically interlinked.
* **Presentation of the proposed initial partnership for Phase 1:**  as already stressed above, transnational partnerships for Action Planning Networks shall be constituted in two steps following the 2-stage approach for network creation. In the framework of the Phase 1 Application applicants are requested to present only partners included in the initial partnership. More especially applicants are requested to highlight:
	+ - The local situation of initial partners in relation to the policy issue/topic addressed by the network
		- The experience of initial partners in dealing with the policy issue/topic addressed by the network and their potential contribution to the exchange and learning activities
		- The specific needs and expected results of initial partners

**Initial partnership for Action Planning Networks**

The initial transnational partnership for Phase 1 shall respect a series of principles that form part of the eligibility criteria for the Phase 1 application (See Section 7). Concerning the initial partnership these criteria require that the partnership shall:

* Include a candidate Lead Partner. Only cities can be candidate Lead Partners
* Be composed by minimum 4 and maximum 6 cities including the Lead Partner. Only cities can be included in the initial partnership
* Include cities from at least 3 different Member/ Partner States
	+ Be balanced in terms of cities from Less Developed and More Developed regions, with 2 cities from Less Developed regions minimum
* **Description of the main activities to be implemented during Phase 1**: applicants shall describe how the main activities included under the 2 Work Packages for Phase 1 (WP1 Project Management and Coordination and WP2 Project development) will be implemented. More especially applicants are requested to detail the proposed approach for the enlargement of the initial partnership during Phase 1 as well as for the production of the Baseline study. Detailed information concerning the Baseline study is available in the Guide for Action Planning Networks.
* **Budget for Phase 1:** applicants shall provide information about the budget required to deliver the activities proposed based around 5 budget categories. An individual project partner budget shall also be provided. More detailed information on budgetary issues can be found in section 6 of this document.

For the preparation of the Phase 1 Applications applicants are requested to refer to:

* Fact sheet 2A of the URBACT III Programme Manual
* ‘Guide to Action Planning Networks’ for detailed information concerning the main activities to be implemented during Phase 1 and Phase 2
* ‘Guide to Network Creation and Submission’ for practical instructions on how to complete and submit Phase 1 Proposals through Synergie-CTE 14-20
* Section7 of the present Call for Proposals for information concerning the procedure (including deadlines) for submission of Phase 1 Applications

**Section 6 – Budgetary elements**

**6.1 URBACT III Eligible Intervention rates**

The ERDF co-financing rate for an Action Planning network is calculated at network level on the basis of the different co-financing rates for each partner.

* Partners from ‘more developed’ regions shall be co-financed at up to 70% by ERDF
* Partners from ‘less developed’ and ‘transition’ regions shall be co-financed at up to 85% by ERDF
* Partners from Norway shall be co-financed at up to 50% by Norwegian national funds
* Partners from Switzerland shall be co-financed at up to 50% by Swiss national funds

**6.2 Action Planning Network Budgets**

The total eligible cost for an Action Planning Network shall be between 600.000€ and 750.000€. The total budget shall be calculated based on the number of project partners and the specific identified needs of these partners. Action Planning Networks requesting the higher budget allocation shall be required to justify this request by demonstrating a higher number of project partners or increased project activity. The Monitoring Committee can approve a lower than requested budget should they consider this is justified.

Action Planning Networks shall be financed using European Regional Development Fund and local, regional or national contributions from city partners according to the rates outlined in section 6.1 above.

An Action Planning network shall operate in two phases. The total eligible cost for the network combining Phases I and II shall be between 600 000€ and 750 000€. The initial budget for Phase I shall not exceed a total eligible cost of 100.000€.

Considering the foreseen workload required in Phase I to ensure a well balanced and coherent partnership and a high quality baseline study and Phase II application, the costs incurred for this first phase of work shall be considered eligible for refund regardless of the approval of the project into Phase II.

The budgets for Phase I and II shall be presented using 5 budget categories as follows:

1. **Staff costs**

Expenditure on staff members employed by the partner organisation, who are formally engaged to work on the project

1. **Office and Administration Costs**

Operating and administrative expenses of the partner organisation that support delivery of project activities

1. **Travel and Accommodation Costs**

Expenditure on travel and accommodation costs of staff of partner organisations and associated partners that relate to delivery of the project. This category included travel costs, accommodation costs, costs of meals, visa costs, and/or daily allowances/per diems.

1. **External expertise and services**

Expenditure for external expertise and services provided by a public or private body or a natural person outside of the partner organisation. This category covers costs paid on the basis of contracts or written agreements and against invoices or requests for reimbursement to external experts and service providers that are requested to carry out certain tasks or activities, linked to the delivery of the project. All additional costs related to external experts (e.g. travel and accommodation expense for external experts) should be recorded under this budget category. This category also includes all costs linked to the organisation of meetings.

1. **Equipment**

Expenditure for equipment purchased, rented or leased by a partner, necessary to achieve objectives of the project.

A separate Guidance Note has been developed providing detailed information about the eligibility of costs, the methods for calculation and programme specific rules.

**6.3 Budget for Expertise**

Each network shall have an allocation of € 127 500 maximum to cover the costs of expertise over the lifetime of the project (Phase 1 and Phase 2). This budget available for expertise is additional to the project budget.

As the daily expertise fee for URBACT thematic experts is set at 750 euros/ day all taxes included, this budget corresponds to an envelope of 170 days (including participation to training sessions and other activities at Programme level).

Appointed experts covered by this dedicated envelop shall be selected from the pool of validated URBACT Experts (see Programme Manual Fact Sheet 2A)

The allocation covers days of expertise only. Travel and accommodation costs for Expert shall be covered by the network budget.

Action Planning Networks can contract additional experts for specific tasks (e.g. coordination of the URBACT Local Group, local animation, technical assistance, etc.) through the network budget under the category “External Expertise”.

**Section 7 – Procedure for the creation of Action Planning Networks**

Projects replying to this call for proposals shall be required to follow a structured application procedure and will be subject to a selection process. Each project shall be submitted **twice** to the URBACT III Monitoring Committee:

* firstly in the form of Phase 1 Application
* secondly in the form of Phase 2 Application

Decisions by the Monitoring Committee shall be final.

The procedure shall normally be implemented through a staged approach. The stages are outlined in detail in the Programme Manual (Fact Sheet 2D Network Creation) and can be summarised as follows:

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| 1. Phase 1 Applications |
| Stage 1 | Lead Partner creates and submits Phase 1 Applications and all requested documents to the URBACT Secretariat by ***16 June 2015.*** |
| Stage 2 | URBACT Secretariat performs eligibility check. |
| Stage 3 | External Assessment Panel carries out assessment and ranking of eligible project proposals. |
| Stage 4 | URBACT Managing Authority submits proposal for the approval of up to 20 Action Planning Networks to the Monitoring Committee. Monitoring Committee approves projects for 6-month Phase 1. Action Planning Networks approved for Phase 1 shall receive a subsidy contract that marks the final stage of approval of the project for Phase 1. |
| **SIX MONTHS PHASE 1 FOR APPROVED ACTION PLANNING NETWORKS** |
| 2. Phase 2 Applications |
| Stage 5 | Lead partner submits Phase 2 Application along with requested documents 6 months after the approval for Phase 1. Phase 2 Proposal will be completed as part of the Phase I activities.  |
| Stage 6 | URBACT Secretariat performs eligibility check. |
| Stage 7 | External Assessment Panel carries out assessment of eligible project applications. EAP may interviews candidate Lead partners and Lead experts and issues recommendations for possible improvements of applications if relevant.  |
| Stage 8 | URBACT Managing Authority submits to the Monitoring Committee proposal for the approval of Action Planning Networks for Phase 2. Action Planning Networks approved for Phase 2 shall receive a subsidy contract that marks the final stage of approval of the project. Additional information on the subsidy contract is available in fact sheet 2E ‘Network Management’ of the Programme Manual. The project shall then be fully operational and can start working on Phase 2. |

**Stage 1 – Creation and submission of Phase 1 Application**

Projects wishing to apply for funding within the frame of this Call for Proposals are invited to complete the Phase 1 Application online, through Synergie-CTE 14-20 in English. A ‘Guide to Network Creation and Submission’ is available for technical support.

The following additional documents shall be annexed to the Phase 1 Application:

* Letter of commitment by all partners included in the initial partnership. Letters of Commitment shall be signed by an elected representative of the partner institution
* CV of the Project Coordinator
* CV of the proposed URBACT Expert

The additional document shall be uploaded in Synergie-CTE for submission

Only applications submitted using Synergie-CTE will be accepted. A PDF version of the signature page of the application form shall be uploaded in Synergie-CTE along with the other previously mentioned documents.

**The deadline for the online submission of the Phase 1 Applications is**

**16 June 2015, 03.00 pm CET.**

**After this deadline, the Synergie-CTE system will be closed.**

The submission of the Phase 1 Applications is paper free.

**Stage 2 – Eligibility check of Phase 1 Applications**

The URBACT Secretariat will check all received applications against the eligibility criteria. Eligibility criteria for Phase 1 applications are minimum requirements, all of which must be fulfilled before a project can be declared eligible for further assessment. They cover organisational, administrative and commitment requirements. Only eligible projects can be submitted by the Managing Authority to the Monitoring Committee for approval.

The proposals submitted to the URBACT Secretariat within the deadline and respecting the procedure outlined in the call will be checked for compliance with the eligibility criteria listed below:

Phase 1 - Eligibility Criteria:

* The proposal is submitted in English and respects the procedure outlined in the call for proposals and within the deadline set in the call.
* The proposal is complete including the required documents set out in the call.
* The proposal is complete in terms of information and data required in the documents (all sections in the Phase 1 Application and letters of commitment have been properly filled in according to the instructions)
* All the documents required are signed, dated and stamped by the candidate partners and uploaded into Synergie CTE 14-20
* The proposal fulfils the requirements for Phase 1 partnership bringing together a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 6 cities (as defined in section 2.2) from at least 3 Member/ Partner States, which have designated one of the cities as candidate lead partner.
* The proposed partnership respects the balance between partners from More Developed and Less Developed regions. More especially the proposed partnership includes a minimum of 2 cities from Less Developed regions.
* The candidate Lead partner is candidate Lead partner in one URBACT proposal only.
* All the partners are eligible according to the programme rules.
* The maximum budget for Phase 1 applications (100k total eligible cost) has been respected.

**Stage 3 – Assessment of eligible Phase 1 Applications**

Eligible Phase 1 Applications will be assessed and ranked by the External Assessment Panel. Information about the External Assessment Panel is provided in the Fact Sheet 2D of the URBACT III Programme Manual. The assessment criteria for project proposals are outlined below:

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| **Criterion 1: Relevance of the topic/theme/policy issue addressed** |
| * 1. The proposal contributes to the objectives of the EU2020 strategy and it is in line with one or more of the Thematic Objectives for EU Cohesion Policy 2014-2020
	2. The thematic approach proposed clearly identifies key urban challenges/issues to be specifically addressed by the network
	3. The Phase 1 application proposes an integrated response to the challenge
	4. The proposal documents and demonstrates added value of the proposal compared to previous URBACT networks on related issues. The relationship to existing or previous non URBACT networks is made evident (e.g. Interreg, NGOs. Etc)
 |
| **Criterion 2: Coherence of the general approach proposed**  |
| * 1. The proposed methodology and activities will improve the capacities of cities to design sustainable urban strategies and action plans (Specific Objective 2 for Action Planning Networks in the Operational Programme 2014-2020).
	2. The proposal has a clear focus on exchange of experiences and it builds on partners’ experience and knowledge
	3. The proposed methodology is realistic and coherent (the activities are logically sequenced and linked interlinked)
	4. The proposal shows a clear understanding of what is expected in terms of activities and outputs from Action Planning Networks for Phase 2, especially in relation to the organisation of proposed Transnational exchange and learning activities (Work Package 2) and the proposed Impact on local governance and urban policies ( Work Package 3)
 |
| **Criterion 3: Quality of the proposal for Phase 1** |
| * 1. (Clarity) The work plan for Phase 1 is clearly presented with description of the planned activities and expected outputs
	2. (Coherence) The activities are logically interlinked and in line with the objectives for Phase 1 (enlargement of the partnership, production of the Baseline study, elaboration of the Phase 2 Application)
	3. The methodology for enlarging the partnership is clearly set out (e.g. call for expression of interest, screening questionnaire, selection process)
	4. The Methodology for the production of the Baseline study including its components of State of the Art, partner profiles and synthesis are clearly set out.
 |
| **Criterion 4: Quality of initial partnership** |
| * 1. (Relevance) The urban challenges and types of possible policy response to be addressed by the networks are relevant for each of the cities proposed in the initial partnership
	2. (Diversity) The proposed partnership for Phase 1 covers a range of EU settings. In cases where the geographical coverage is limited, this is clearly justified in the Phase 1 application.
	3. (Coherence) The experience of cities involved in the initial partnership is relevant to address the challenges identified in the Phase 1 application and the cities are able to take steps to address these challenges (e.g. having appropriate competence, resources, political support and motivation)
	4. (Quality of project partner Profiles) Each partner sets out in detail their local situation, their needs and their expected results at local level and these are logically connected
	5. Each local partner has identified an appropriately skilled and experienced local coordinator.
	6. The designated URBACT expert(s) has relevant experience in supporting transnational exchange and learning activities and relevant expertise in relation with the issues to be addressed by the network
 |
| **Criterion 5: Quality of leadership**  |
| * 1. The Lead Partner demonstrates competency in managing EU co-financed projects or can ensure adequate measures for management support
	2. The named person to act for the Lead Partner (project coordinator) has experience (from attached CV) of this type of work
	3. The project coordination of the Lead Partner is well organised and clearly presented (who will do which tasks) Sufficient resources are indicated for the lead partner tasks
 |
| **Criterion 5: Budget and finances for Phase 1** |
| 6.1 The project budget is proportionate to the proposed work plan and the main outputs and results proposed.6.2 The total partner budgets reflect real partner’ involvement (are balanced and realistic)6.3 The project budget is justified, clear and realistic. |

**Stage 4 – Submission to the Monitoring Committee and approval**

Building on the report provided by the External Assessment Panel, the Monitoring Committee shall decide on the approval of projects to enter Phase 1. Decisions by the Monitoring Committee shall be final.

After approval by the Monitoring Committee, the information on approved projects shall be published on the URBACT website to give the opportunity to other potential partners to join the project. The complete partnership shall be finalised during Phase 1 of the project.

Approved applications shall receive a subsidy contract which marks the final stage of approval of the Phase 1 project. Additional information on the subsidy contract is available in Fact Sheet 2E of the URBACT III Programme Manual. The project shall then be fully operational and can start working on Phase 1.

**Stage 5 – Creation and submission of Phase 2 Application**

During Phase 1, the Lead Partner and partners, with the support of the URBACT Expert, shall complete the Phase 2 Application to submit their final proposal for Phase 2. This will be done in English through the online system Synergie-CTE 14-20 by updating and providing additional information to the initial application submitted for Phase 1. Guidelines for the completion of the Phase 2 Application will be provided by the URBACT Secretariat to the projects approved for Phase 1. It shall include, amongst other things, a detailed definition of the project objectives and expected outputs, a work programme including a plan for the use and management of experts and a budget by category and partner.

At the end of Phase 1, the Lead partner shall submit their Phase 2 Application and all requested documents to the URBACT Secretariat. The Phase 2 Application shall be submitted to the URBACT Secretariat no later than 6 months following the approval for the project to enter Phase I. The procedure for the submission of the Phase 2 application will be provided to applicants at the beginning of Phase 1.

**Stage 6 – Eligibility check of Phase 2 Applications**

The URBACT Secretariat will check all received applications against the eligibility criteria. Eligibility criteria for Phase 2 Applications are minimum requirements, all of which must be fulfilled before a project can be declared eligible. They cover organisational, administrative and commitment requirements. Only eligible projects can be submitted by the Managing Authority to the Monitoring Committee for approval.

The proposals submitted to the URBACT Secretariat within the deadline and respecting the procedure outlined in the call will be checked for compliance with the eligibility criteria listed below:

Phase 2 Eligibility Criteria:

* The proposal is submitted respecting the procedure outlined in the call for proposals and within 6 months from approval by the Monitoring Committee for Action Planning Networks.
* The proposal is complete in terms of number of documents required and includes the Phase 2 Application. The list of required documents will be provided to approved projects, along with guidelines for Phase 2 Application. It will include a letter of commitment for the Lead partner and 1 letter of commitment per partner
* The proposal is complete in terms of information and data required in the documents (all sections in the Phase 2 Application, letters of commitment and other documents have been properly filled in according to the instructions).
* All the documents required are signed, dated and stamped by the candidate partners and uploaded into Synergie CTE 14-20
* The proposal fulfils the requirements for Phase 2 partnership bringing together a minimum of 8 and a maximum of 12 public bodies, from at least 3 Member and Partner States, which have designated one of the authorities as candidate lead partner.
* The proposed partnership respects the balance between partners from More Developed and Less Developed regions. More especially the proposed partnership includes a minimum of 4 cities from Less Developed regions.
* The proposed partnership does not include more than 3 non-city partners (refer to the definition of non-city partners provided in the section 2.2 of the present Call for Proposals).
* All candidate partners are beneficiaries of the programme as defined in the Operational Programme.
* The candidate partners are not involved in more than 2 project proposals for Phase 2 under the related call.
* All the partners are eligible according to the programme rules.
* The maximum budget for Phase 1 and Phase 2 applications together (750k €) has been respected

**Stage 7 – Assessment of Phase 2 Applications**

The External Assessment Panel shall proceed to the assessment of eligible Phase 2 Applications, to be submitted to the Monitoring Committee for approval for Phase 2.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA FOR PHASE 2 BEING DEVELOPED

Whereas the assessment of Phase 1 applications is aimed at selecting a number of proposals out of all eligible proposals received, the assessment of Phase 2 Applications shall aim to check the quality of the proposals and to improve these proposals if relevant.

The EAP may seek clarification from the candidate Lead partners and Lead experts by means of interviews and provide recommendations for improvements if necessary.

**Stage 8 – Approval of Action Planning Networks for Phase 2**

Based on the final assessment by the External Assessment Panel, the URBACT Managing Authority shall submit to the Monitoring Committee a proposal of projects to be approved for Phase 2. The Monitoring Committee shall decide on the approval of projects to enter Phase 2.

Decisions by the Monitoring Committee shall be final.

Approved applications shall receive an amendment to their original subsidy contract which marks the final stage of approval of the Phase II project. Additional information on the subsidy contract is available in Fact Sheet 2E of the URBACT III Programme Manual. The project shall then be fully operational and can start working on Phase 2.

**Section 8: Important dates**

Applicants are invited to take note of the 5 following milestones:

* **Submission of proposals**

Phase 1 Applications shall be submitted by **16 June 2015, 03.00 pm CET** latest, following the procedure outlined above in section 7.

* **Approval for Development phase**

Eligible project proposals will be submitted to the Monitoring Committee for approval of funding for Phase 1 on **10th September 2015**

* **Training session at the beginning of Phase 1**

Lead Partners and URBACT Experts of approved projects will be requested to attend the Training Session organized in Paris from **30th September to 2nd October 2015**

NOTA BENE: Lead partners shall foresee that their proposed URBACT expert as well as the persons who will be in charge of project finances and communication (so-called “finance officers” and “communication officers”) attend this training session.

* **Training session on Synergie-CTE for project management**

Projects coordinators and financial officers of Lead Partners will be requested to attend the Training Session organized in Paris on **26-27 November 2015**

* **Training for First Level Controllers**

First Level Controllers will be requested to attend the training session organized in Paris **early 2016** (exact date to be confirmed)

**Section 9: Useful resources**

**a) URBACT Secretariat**

Applicants can submit by email questions to the members of the URBACT Secretariat.

For questions concerning thematic coverage, eligibility of beneficiaries, composition of the partnership, objectives/activities/expected outputs of Action Planning Networks, use of the additional budget for expertise, applicants can contact Raffaele Barbato, Senior Networking Officer (r.barbato@urbact.eu).

For question concerning project management, Synergie CTE 14-20 and budgetary elements, applicants can contact Adele Bucella, Finance Manager (a.bucella@urbact.eu).

**b) Frequently Asked Questions**

A Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section is available on the URBACT website at the following link (The section will be hosted in the new website. The hyperlink will be added as soon as the new website will be available)

**c) Useful Documents**

In preparing their Phase 1 Application applicants are invited to refer to the following documents:

* URBACT III Operational Programme
* URBACT III Programme Manual, and in particular
	+ Fact Sheet 1 – The URBACT Programme
	+ Fact Sheet 2A – Action Planning Networks
	+ Fact Sheet 2D – Network Creation
	+ Fact Sheet 2E – Network Management
* Guide to Action Planning Networks
* Guide to Network Creation and Submission
* Guidance notes on network management
* URBACT Toolkit for Local Support Groups
1. The URBACT III Operational Programme is available at the following link: <http://urbact.eu/fileadmin/general_library/U_III_OP_adopted_12_December_2014.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The online tool for submitting Proposals for Phase 1, Synergie-CTE 14-20, will close **at 3 pm CET** on 16 June 2015. More details on the submission procedure for Phase 1 proposals are provided in the section 7 of the present Call for Proposals [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Link to the Programme Manual will be added after the official approval by MC (approval of Written Procedure n°1) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Guidance document are currently being developed. Hyperlinks will be added as soon the documents are uploaded in the URBACT website (in any case before the launch of the Call)* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Based on EU Public Procurement Law, **equivalent public body** refers to any legal body governed by public or private law :

**1**. established for the specific purpose of meeting needs in the general interest, not having an industrial or commercial character (which does not exclude bodies partly having an industrial or commercial character), and

**2**. having legal personality, and

**3**. a) either financed, for the most part, by the State, or regional or local authorities, or other bodies governed by public law,

 b) or subject to management supervision by those bodies,

 c) or having an administrative, managerial or supervisory board, more than half of whose members are appointed by the State, regional or local authorities or by other bodies governed by public law.” [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Transition regions are a category of their own. Cities from Transition regions are not assimilated to cities from Less Developed regions. A detailed map with eligible areas for EU Cohesion Policy 2014 is available at the webpage DG Regional and Urban Policy of the European Commission. <http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/what/future/eligibility/index_en.cfm> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)