

URBACT III **2015**

- CITIZENS' SUMMARY



European cities continue to face numerous and far reaching challenges ranging from issues linked to demographic change such as aging populations to environmental challenges to reducing their carbon production. The crisis has left many cities dealing with high unemployment and a weakened economy. Under austerity policies and because of a reduced tax-take, cities find themselves with fewer resources with which to combat greater needs.

Since 2002, URBACT has provided alternative solutions to addressing key urban challenges by **promoting sustainable integrated urban development through exchange and learning**. URBACT uses European Structural Funds to **contribute to the delivery of the EU 2020 strategy** by providing cities with tools and methods to develop strategies and solutions to high priority urban issues shared across Europe.

URBACT does not finance physical investments, nor does it carry out pilot projects, URBACT uses resources and know-how to strengthen the capacity of cities to build solid strategies and action plans that respond to all the different kind of economic, environmental and societal challenges they are facing today. The **main target participants** include urban practitioners, city managers, elected representatives and stakeholders from other public agencies, the private sector and civil society.

The **total eligible budget** of the URBACT III programme is 96.3 M€ for a programming period 2014-2020. The programme will finance up to 70 transnational networks during its 7 year lifetime.



2015

saw the launch of the first call for proposals for cities to work

together in networks. The aim of these networks, labeled Action Planning Networks, is to reinforce the capacity of cities to respond to the urgent challenges they are facing in an integrated and participative way. As a partner in such networks, cities exchange and share experiences, problems and possible solutions, generating new ideas to create together an Integrated Action Plan for their city.

In response to the first call for proposals a total of 99 network applications were submitted bringing together more than 500 cities covering a wide range of urban related challenges.

21 Action Planning Networks were approved for funding with a maximum budget of 750.000€ over a three year period. These networks involving more than 110 cities across Europe started their activities in September 2015 covering a wide range of topics and reflecting the trends in European cities today.



Information on all the approved projects including full details of all city partners can be found on the [URBACT website](#) but here you can find some highlights:

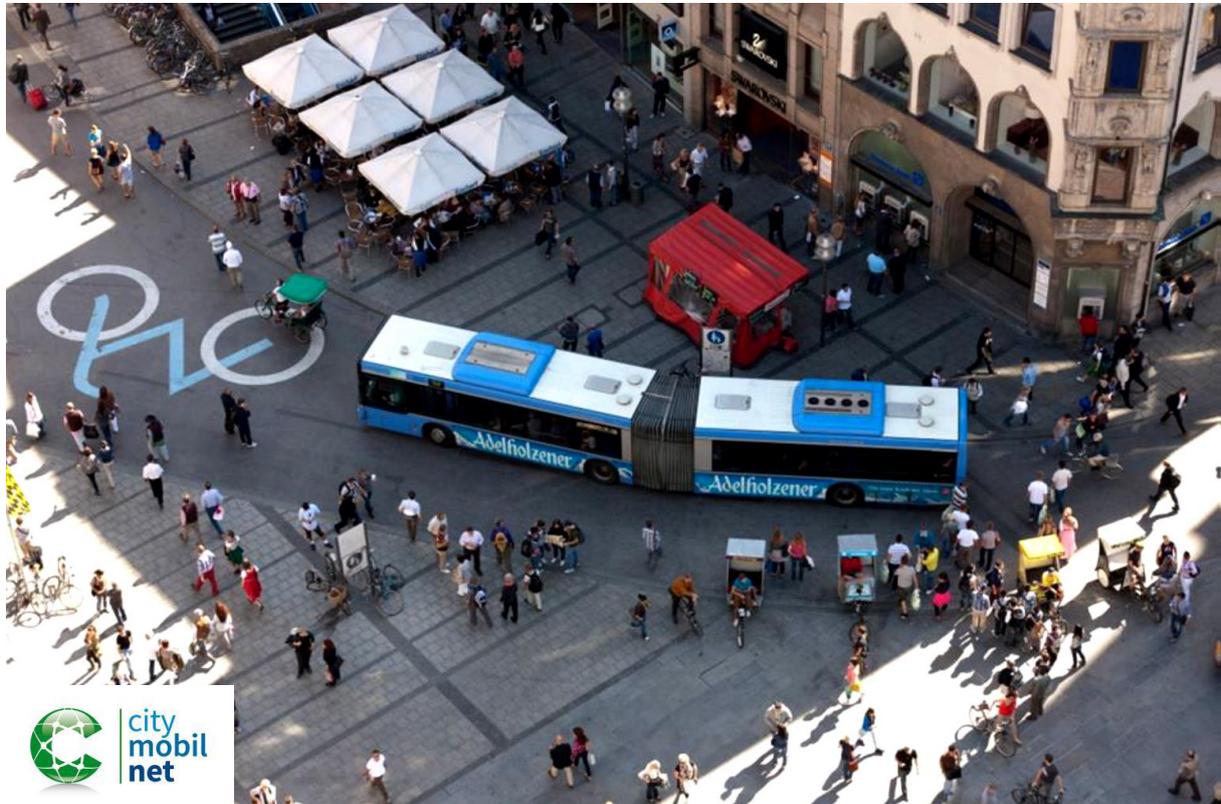
Four Action Planning Networks are proposing to deal with the issue of **abandoned spaces** and **how can cities recover these unused assets and integrate them into the**

public sphere: “Second chance”, intending to rehabilitate underused buildings in city-centres; “MAPS” (Military Assets as Public Spaces), focusing on abandoned military sites; “sub>urban” and “Refill” exploring new planning practices to increase urban density, including temporary use. Close to this cluster of network, the “Vital Cities” project will allow partner cities to rethink the design of public spaces for recreation, targeting the less active and deprived urban inhabitants.



European cities are more and more active in the field of economic development, exploring ways to support local businesses and entrepreneurship so as to foster local employment. At least 5 networks will gather cities to develop integrated action plans to enhance local urban economies, whether focusing on specific sectors (eg food in the “Agri-Urban” network, the digital economy in “TechTown”, retail in “Retailink”), smart specialisation strategies (“IN Focus”), targeting specific groups (eg young people in the “Gen-Y-City” network and neighbourhood communities in “Urban Green Labs”) or specific areas (eg city centre in “CityCentreDoctor”).

Environmental issues are also very present with networks dealing with involvement of local communities for green spaces ("Urban Green Labs"), sustainable transport (focus on freight in "Freight Tails" or wider mobility strategies such as in the "City Mobil Net"), food chain and urban-rural relationships ("Agri-Urban").



Last but not least, URBACT will support cities in dealing with 2 crucial and global urban challenges: **increasing cities' resilience**, with the "Resilient Europe" network and **managing growing migrant populations in cities**, with the "Arrival cities" network.

2016 will be full of activities for URBACT: two different calls for proposals will be launched, capacity building events will be organized, all while continuing to act as an observatory on urban hot topics and trends.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

All information related to the URBACT activities can be found at:

- <http://urbact.eu/>

Do not hesitate to contact us and we will answer you as soon as possible.

- <http://urbact.eu/contact>