

URBAN INNOVATIVE ACTIONS

Cities need to do more with less, responding to growing challenges but with lower budgets. This calls for innovative approaches. However, whilst research on urban issues is well developed - with many universities, urban planners and the cities themselves proposing new ideas, these potential solutions are not always put into practice. One of the reasons is that cities are reluctant to use their taxpayer's money to fund ideas that are totally new, unproven and hence risky.

This lack of experimentation is one of the reasons why the Commission decided to create a new instrument called Urban Innovative Actions. The need for innovation never disappears and therefore there should be space in which cities throughout Europe feel free to experiment with potential solutions to the challenges that cities will face in the future. It is important to see how these potential solutions work in practice - and the way to do this is through financing innovative ideas to test how they respond to the complexity of real life. Therefore Urban Innovative Actions should primarily be seen as a source of new knowledge through real investments.

Cities should seize this opportunity to prepare fascinating projects! Cities should not waste this new and unique opportunity by submitting a 'normal' project. They should be creative, be ambitious and seek to impress their fellow cities in Europe.

Key elements

- The total budget for Urban Innovative Actions is **EUR 371 Mio** over the period 2015-2020.
- Projects will be selected through **calls for proposals**.
- The eligible authorities are urban authorities belonging to an urban area of more than **50.000 inhabitants**. In addition, to accommodate the situation of Member States which do not have large cities, it is also possible for several urban authorities to come together and submit a joint-bid (provided they represent 50.000 inhabitants altogether).
- ERDF contribution shall not exceed **EUR 5 Mio per project**.
- In order to encourage experimentation there will be a **unique co-financing rate of maximum 80%**.
- The **maximum duration for each project is 3 years**.
- The **topics of the calls** will be defined annually by the Commission.
- The **selection criteria** are:
 - (1) **Innovativeness** (projects should be super innovative, with things that have not been done before in Europe. Please use your imagination - in other words, a project that is looking for funding to finance the normal activities of cities will not be selected);
 - (2) **Quality** (projects still have to have to meet certain standards such as clear objectives, evidence of proper preparatory work, realistic ambitions according to the timeline and funding, etc.);

- (3) **Partnership** (projects usually benefit from sources of external expertise such as universities, NGOs, private companies or other levels of government; this is why there should be evidence of the active involvement of these type of stakeholders; this does not mean that cities have to find other cities to bid - as would be the case under URBACT -: it only means that the individual cities should seek expertise through the relevant partners);
- (4) **Measurability** of the results (as the aim is to experiment, as in a scientific experiment, one should know what worked and what did not, and why so, what should be done differently, etc.);
- (5) **Transferability** of the solutions (solutions have to be beneficial to as many cities as possible across Europe and therefore they should not only fit to a local context).