



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

## CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

### Selection of an Entrusted Entity for the indirect management of the European Urban Initiative (EUI)

#### **1. INTRODUCTION – BACKGROUND**

This call for expression of interest concerns the selection of an Entrusted Entity for the indirect management of the European Urban Initiative (hereinafter the ‘EUI’) within the meaning of Article 154 of the Financial Regulation<sup>1</sup>. The legal basis is yet to be adopted but is referred to in Article 10 of the European Commission’s proposal for the European Regional Development Fund/Cohesion Fund Regulation<sup>2</sup>.

As required in Article 154(1) of the Financial Regulation, the entrustment of indirect management tasks implies for the selected entity having proper financial and operational capacities, and in the specific case of the EUI, a demonstrated track record in managing resources from the European Regional and Development Fund (ERDF) in several countries. The present call for the expression of interest is thus restricted to the existing Managing Authorities in charge of interregional or transnational ERDF programmes under the European Territorial Cooperation goal, in the meaning of Article 2(2) and 2(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013<sup>3</sup>.

Subject to the approval by the co-legislators of the above-mentioned legal basis, the ERDF budget available for the tasks entrusted under the EUI is set at EUR 400 million<sup>4</sup> over the period of 2021-2027. In accordance with Article 154(3) and (4) of the Financial Regulation, prior to signing a contribution agreement, the selected entrusted entity’s systems, rules and procedures will be assessed in order to ensure a level of protection of the financial interests of the Union equivalent to the one that is provided for when the European Commission (hereinafter ‘the Commission’) implements the budget. To anticipate this process, applying Managing Authorities are invited to submit a first information on their systems, rules and procedures by filling in annex D. It is worth highlighting that the submission of that information is not a prerequisite nor eligibility requirement to apply to the present call. In the same way, this information will be treated separately from the expression of interest itself and will not be considered as part of its evaluation. Annex D will be used exclusively to facilitate the launching of the pillar assessment for the selected entity only upon instruction by the Commission in this sense.

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<sup>1</sup> Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union repealing Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012, OJEU L196 of 28.01.2018

<sup>2</sup> The European Regional Development Fund/Cohesion Fund Regulation is foreseen to be adopted in the second half of 2021. Please consult annex A (‘Explanatory Memo’) for a more exhaustive overview of the relevant provisions within the forthcoming legal framework for Cohesion policy in the period 2021-2027.

<sup>3</sup> OJEU L347 of 20.12.2013

<sup>4</sup> Budget expressed in 2018 prices as per Art. 104(5) of the future Common Provisions Regulation (political agreement in trilogue of 1.12.2020). In current prices, the ERDF allocation will be approx. EUR 450 million for the period 2021-2027.

As such, it should not be understood either as an invitation to undertake spontaneously such a pillar assessment.

The EUI will be launched as part of Cohesion policy's support to sustainable urban development in the 2021-2027 period. The initiative is sought to provide coherent support to cities by supporting innovative actions, capacity and knowledge building, territorial impact assessments, policy development and communication. The EUI shall also support the Urban Agenda for the EU (hereinafter the 'UAEU'), and upon request from Member State(s), it may support the intergovernmental cooperation on urban matters.

In the next sections of this document, the main elements of the EUI subject to the call for the expression of interest are described. The Annex A to the present call titled 'Explanatory Memo' contains the detailed information on the activity areas of the EUI<sup>5</sup>.

## **2. CONTENT OF THE EUROPEAN URBAN INITIATIVE**

### **2.1. Overall objectives of the EUI**

The overall objectives of the European Urban Initiative are to strengthen integrated and participatory approaches to sustainable urban development and to provide a stronger link to EU policies, and in particular, to Cohesion policy and investments in urban areas as part of the funding earmarked for these areas under Article 9 of the future ERDF/CF Regulation and beyond. The initiative is aimed to offer coherent support to cities to overcome the current landscape of manifold initiatives, programmes and instruments in support of cities under Cohesion policy, and in particular, by maximising synergy and complementarity with the interregional cooperation programme URBACT IV<sup>6</sup>.

As part of its strategic approach, the EUI shall cover all urban areas, including large cities, small and medium-sized cities, as well as functional urban areas. It shall support the UAEU, and upon a request from Member State(s), the EUI may support the intergovernmental cooperation on urban matters. In this context, the goal is to generate effective interconnections and synergies between the activities of the EUI and of the UAEU and the intergovernmental cooperation on urban matters.

### **2.2. Specific objectives of the EUI**

The European Urban Initiative includes two strands: (a) support of innovative actions, and (b) support of capacity and knowledge building, territorial impact assessments, policy development and communication.

The specific objectives of the strand (a) support of innovative actions are:

- i. To identify and support the *testing of transferable and scalable innovative solutions* to address issues relating to sustainable urban development at Union level;
- ii. To collect and share *results from experimentations* and support *transfer activities*, in view of *fostering innovation capacities and knowledge building* for all EU

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<sup>5</sup> The Explanatory Memo (Annex A) serves as guidance to help eligible candidates for a future Entrusted Entity to better understand the content of the initiative as well as the tasks and responsibilities related to the EUI indirect management and prepare their expression of interest. As such, the document presents EUI activities to the extent that these can be described at this stage to allow candidates to position themselves but its content should not be read as an exhaustive, definitive and binding presentation of all the underlying tasks for the selected Entrusted Entity.

<sup>6</sup> Article 3 of the future European Territorial Cooperation Regulation.

urban areas and of mainstreaming innovative solutions in sustainable urban development, under Article 9 of the ERDF/CF Regulation and beyond.

The specific objectives of the strand (b) support of capacity and knowledge building, territorial impact assessments, policy development and communication are:

Capacity building part (sub-strand b.1.)

- i. To improve *the capacities of cities* in the design of sustainable urban development policies, strategies, and practices in an integrated and participative way;
- ii. To improve *the design and implementation* of sustainable urban development policies, strategies, and action plans in cities.

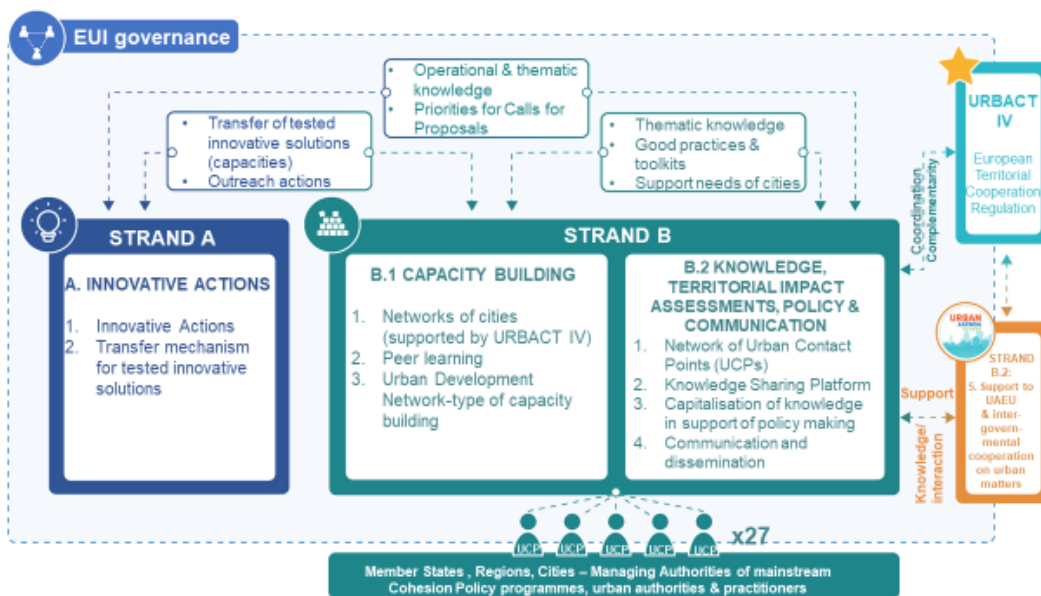
Knowledge building, territorial impact assessments, policy development and communication part (sub-strand b.2.)

- iii. To develop into *the knowledge base* in support of better sustainable urban development policy and strategy design, implementation and mainstreaming;
- iv. To ensure *easier access* to horizontal and thematic knowledge and to *share knowhow* on sustainable urban development;
- v. To support *the Urban Agenda for the EU*, and upon request from Member State(s), to possibly support *the intergovernmental cooperation* on urban matters.

When designing, initiating and implementing activities to reach the above-mentioned specific objectives, the goal is to create an effective value-chain between the two strands (a) and (b). This will result in stronger coordination, synergies and complementarities between the urban support tools for the benefit of cities in Europe.

**2.3. Overview of the EUI work streams**

The EUI includes ten work streams (figure 1). They are embedded in two strands: (a) support of innovative actions, and (b) support of capacity and knowledge building, territorial impact assessments, policy development and communication. Furthermore, as a final component, the EUI governance brings together the organisational and management aspects of the initiative.



**Figure 1.** Work streams of the EUI (the intervention logic).

The Figure 1 displays the underlying principle of the EUI intervention logic. The principle is a creation of an effective value chain between the two strands (a) and (b) that surfaces as links and input/output flows between the two strands and the corresponding work streams of the EUI. In concrete terms, this means that when designing, initiating and implementing activities of the EUI, a systematic uptake (as inputs) of the outputs produced by different (pertinent) work streams of the EUI intervention logic need to be ensured. This will result in stronger coordination, synergies and complementarities between the urban support tools for the benefit of cities in Europe.

Another imperative principle of the EUI intervention logic is the strengthening of the value chain between the EUI and the Article 9 cities of the ERDF/CF Regulation as well as other cities benefiting from the mainstream Cohesion policy funds. This issue is pertinent for all the work streams of the EUI. It is particularly relevant for the work streams on the capacity building as the EUI aims to improve capacities of cities in the design and implementation of sustainable urban development policies and strategies. Enhancing the interconnection between the EUI and Article 9 cities of the ERDF/CF Regulation as well as mainstream Cohesion policy programmes is also highly important for the work streams on the EUI-Innovative Actions and the related Transfer Mechanism. These two work streams are aimed to enhancing the innovation capacities of cities, as well as the transfer/replication and scaling up of tested innovations through mainstream Cohesion policy programmes.

## 2.4. Description of the EUI work streams in relation to the specific objectives

### *Strand (a) of the EUI – support of Innovative Actions*

Under the EUI strand (a) support of Innovative Actions, **two work streams** contribute to achieving the specific objectives described in section 2.2. The detailed descriptions of these work streams are provided in Annex A ('Explanatory Memo').

Fostering the transformative role of cities and deploying proof-tested urban innovations, through Cohesion policy and investments in particular, is a central ambition of the EUI. The objective is that a minimum share of 75% of the ERDF budget for the tasks entrusted over the period 2021-2027 is dedicated to the strand (a) of the EUI<sup>7</sup>.

The starting point for achieving the two specific objectives mentioned in section 2.2 for EUI strand (a) is the Urban Innovative Action's initiative (hereinafter 'UIA'), currently under implementation for the 2014-2020 programming period under indirect management by the French Region Hauts-de-France, and its legal delivery frame<sup>8</sup>. The future Entrusted Entity of the EUI will be charged to upgrade the UIA model in the light of the findings and recommendations from the UIA assessment study published in December 2020<sup>9</sup> as per instructions further detailed in Annex A ('Explanatory Memo').

Under **the first work stream 'Identification and support for the testing of transferable and scalable innovative solutions'**, the future Entrusted Entity of the EUI will be responsible for carrying out regular calls for proposals, select innovative actions

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<sup>7</sup> See section 7 of the Explanatory Memo (Annex A) for further details on the indicative budget distribution per the EUI strands.

<sup>8</sup> Article 8 of Regulation (EU) No 1301/2013 (OJEU L 347 of 20.12.2013), Commission's delegated regulation (EU) No 522/2014 (OJEU L 148 of 20.05.2014) as modified by Commission's delegation 2017/2056 (OJEU L 294 of 11.11.2017), UIA Guidance – version 5 of 16.09.2019 (<https://www.uia-initiative.eu/en/call-proposals/guidance>).

<sup>9</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/information/publications/studies/2021/assessment-study-of-the-urban-innovative-actions-2014-2020-final-report](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/publications/studies/2021/assessment-study-of-the-urban-innovative-actions-2014-2020-final-report)

in agreement with the Commission, sign grant agreements with beneficiaries and undertake subsequent monitoring, audits and payments thereof.

As a first step, the EUI Entrusted Entity will present to the Commission:

- a proposal and corresponding supporting guidance for applicants concerning the organisation of EUI-Innovative Actions calls for proposals, selection procedure and delivery cycle based on a ‘minimum upgrade’ of the UIA model, as described in Annex A;
- an opportunity and feasibility analysis of options flagged as ‘*a one step further scenario*’ in the reform of that model, as described in Annex A.

Under this work stream, tasks of the Entrusted Entity will also include:

- Prepare, publish on a dedicated section of the EUI web-portal and update as required, an EUI-Innovative Actions guidance for applicants and beneficiaries<sup>10</sup> (in English) informing on the eligibility rules, the selection procedure and criteria, the modalities for Innovative Actions’ implementation (e.g. reporting, payments). The guidance and its updates will be subject to Commission’s approval prior to their publication;
- Organise EUI-Innovative Actions calls for proposals: as regularly as agreed with the Commission (at least once a year), the Entrusted Entity will organise calls for proposals based on the themes defined by the Commission. The calls shall be transparent and duly publicised in all Member States. In particular, decentralised (outside Brussels) dedicated event(s) shall be organised with the launch of each call to help diversifying the geographical origins of applications<sup>11</sup>. In the same way, online assistance shall be offered to enable applicants from all parts of the EU to participate in the calls. Unless duly justified, the first call for proposal shall be launched within 12 months from the signature of the contribution agreement;
- Check the eligibility of applicants and of project proposals: once applications have been received, the Entrusted Entity shall assess the eligibility of applications against the criteria defined in the call and/or in the EUI-Innovative Actions guidance. Applicants may apply in one of the EU official languages. However, a translation to English of the application shall also be submitted;
- Set-up an external experts’ panel to assess and rank project proposals and make recommendations concerning EUI-Innovative Actions to be selected. These experts should cover all the sectorial and operational expertise required, especially in view of the themes of the calls (hence, the expert panel may differ from one call to another). The Entrusted Entity shall ensure that the external experts’ panel is gender and geographically (i.e. composed of nationals from different Member states) balanced and does not give rise to a conflict of interest;
- Select EUI-Innovative Actions in the light of the recommendations from the external experts’ panel and in agreement with the Commission;
- Sign with EUI-Innovative Actions’ beneficiaries a grant agreement setting out the conditions for support. The Entrusted Entity shall prepare grant agreement template(s)<sup>12</sup> for the approval of the Commission. The grant agreement between the

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<sup>10</sup> See the current UIA Guidance (op. cit.) as an example

<sup>11</sup> The network of EUI Urban Contact Points will be tasked to promote the calls in Member States and provide information support to applicants (see strand b below)

<sup>12</sup> One of the options for analysis by the Entrusted Entity (see Annex A ‘Explanatory Memo’) includes the feasibility of introducing two types of grants/implementation periods. If such an option materialises, the Entrusted Entity will have to propose two grant agreement templates with payment and control arrangements that may differ according to the different funding intensities envisaged.

Entrusted Entity and the beneficiary shall, as a minimum, set the ERDF co-financing rate and payment arrangements (i.e. an advance payment on signature of the grant agreement, interim payment and/or payment of the final balance on the basis of a proper reporting and audit opinion on financial statements and underlying accounts). It shall also specify that the beneficiary will have its communication material for local stakeholders and citizens in its own language;

- Examine the reports submitted by the beneficiaries and execute payments to the beneficiaries: during the implementation and at the time of the project closure, the beneficiaries have to provide reports on the progress (both on the substance of the actions and on the financial execution, including the control issues). The template for these reports has to be designed by the Entrusted Entity. Each report has to be examined by the Entrusted Entity and the payments processed and recorded in an accounting system;
- Monitor individual EUI-Innovative Actions: the progress of individual actions has to be monitored through reports and on-the-spot visits;
- Provide assistance to the beneficiaries during the implementation of their EUI-Innovative Actions. In particular, the Entrusted Entity will contract expert(s) for each project or group of projects as relevant. The tasks of these experts would be: (a) to provide ongoing advice and guidance on the substance of the action, especially regarding the innovative content and transfer activities; (b) to assist in the development of documentation and outputs that will capture and disseminate lessons learnt, good practices, etc. to the European wide audience; and (c) to ensure that the action remains on track and is in line with the grant agreement;
- Audit individual EUI-Innovative Actions to ensure that they are implemented in full compliance of legal requirements and sound financial management;
- Disseminate the results in agreement with the Commission<sup>13</sup>: the knowledge generated by EUI-Innovative Actions will represent many outputs that can be used as inputs based on which to build capacities of cities and on which to capitalise to foster innovative and evidence-based policy making on sustainable urban development as defined under strand (b) of the EUI (see below).

Under the second work stream ‘**Establishment and functioning of an UIA/EUI-Innovative Actions Transfer Mechanism**’, the Entrusted Entity will work in close cooperation with authorities responsible for the interregional cooperation programme URBACT IV, and with the UIA Permanent Secretariat<sup>14</sup> as far as needed, for the establishment and implementation of a transfer mechanism at the exit of UIA projects 2014-2020 and of EUI-Innovative Actions 2021-2027.

As a first step, the Entrusted Entity will together with URBACT IV authorities:

- Contribute to the update of an ‘UIA/EUI-Innovative Actions transfer mechanism’ building on the lessons learnt from the ongoing pilot scheme<sup>15</sup> and on the previous transfer networks<sup>16</sup> supported by URBACT III;
- Contribute to the planning of timely calls for proposals of the transfer mechanism over the period 2022-2027 (within the overall EUI-URBACT IV programming and

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<sup>13</sup> Communication and dissemination of the outcomes and results of the EUI-Innovative Actions will be undertaken by the pertinent work streams of the EUI strand (b)

<sup>14</sup> The UIA Permanent Secretariat was established by the French Region Hauts-de-France for the implementation of the UIA in the 2014-2020 period

<sup>15</sup> See for more details <https://urbact.eu/uia-transfer-mechanism-five-pilot-projects-ready-take>

<sup>16</sup> See *inter alia* the URBACT transfer study from December 2020 at <https://urbact.eu/lessons-urbact-study-transfer-networks>

implementation cycle as well as scheduled completion dates of UIA projects and EUI-Innovative Actions).

Under this work stream, tasks of the Entrusted Entity will also include to:

- Contribute to the preparation of calls for proposals and selection procedures, especially as concerns inputs needed to raise awareness on transferable contents of UIA/EUI-Innovative Actions (e.g. projects outline, ‘market place’ inputs);
- Raise awareness of the eligible UIA/EUI-Innovative Actions project promoters on the opportunities offered by the calls of the transfer mechanism, and encourage their participation (e.g. by providing guidance, facilitating contacts with URBACT IV technical secretariat, etc.);
- On demand from URBACT IV’s authorities, make available representatives of the EUI Secretariat to be part of the assessment panels selecting and proposing for funding transfer networks;
- Contribute to publicising the calls and outputs from transfer networks through the pertinent work streams of the EUI strand (b) channels.

*Strand (b) of the EUI – support of capacity and knowledge building, territorial impact assessments, policy development and communication*

### **B.1. Support of capacity building**

Under the capacity building part (b.1) of the EUI strand (b), **three work streams** contribute to achieving the specific objectives described in section 2.2. The detailed descriptions of these work streams are provided in Annex A (‘Explanatory Memo’).

#### **1. Networks of cities supported by URBACT IV**

The intervention logic of the EUI includes a **work stream ‘Networks of cities supported by URBACT IV’** under the sub-strand (b.1.) (see figure 1). The URBACT IV programme will continue its activities as part of the European Territorial Cooperation Regulation in the post-2020 period. As specified in the regulatory framework of Cohesion policy, the URBACT IV should complement the EUI in a coordinated way<sup>17</sup>. The specific aim of this work stream is:

- i. Create a strong interconnection between the EUI and the URBACT IV, and in particular, between the EUI and the transnational networks of cities supported by the URBACT IV.

Transnational networking of cities remains the focus of the URBACT IV programme, and the core of such activity will be the exchange of experiences, innovative approaches and capacity building in relation to the identification, transfer and capitalisation of urban good practices on integrated and sustainable urban development.

As a first step, the EUI Entrusted Entity will prepare the cooperation with the URBACT IV Managing Authority that enables the coordination and complementarities between the two instruments in the operational day-to-day delivery of activities. Such preparatory activities are expected to result in a ‘technical coordination mechanism’ between the EUI and the URBACT IV<sup>18</sup>.

Under this work stream, as the next step, tasks of the Entrusted Entity will include:

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<sup>17</sup> Article 3 of the ETC Regulation and Article 10 of the ERDF/CF Regulation

<sup>18</sup> Annex A ‘Explanatory Memo’ provides further details of the coordination and complementarities between the EUI and the URBACT IV. Activities of the ‘technical coordination mechanism’ will be included in annual EUI Work Programmes.

- Implement the activities of the technical coordination mechanism that directs both the Entrusted Entity and the URBACT IV Managing Authority to deliver operationally the EUI and the URBACT IV in a coordinated and complementary manner.

Implementing the activities of the EUI-URBACT IV technical coordination mechanism means that the outputs and results from transnational networks of cities supported by the URBACT IV as well as from the other capacity building and knowledge sharing activities of the URBACT IV feed into the implementation of the EUI. This task also entails that the activities and related outputs and results of the EUI contribute to the implementation of the URBACT IV.

## **2. Peer learning**

The intervention logic of the EUI includes a **work stream ‘Peer learning’** under the sub-strand (b.1.). By building on the experience of the Urban Development Network (2014-2020), the ambition is to offer enhanced support to peer learning activities. The peer learning will be a demand-driven activity in which cities can express their interest. The specific aims of this work stream are:

- Provide targeted and short-term support for challenges linked to the implementation of sustainable urban development under Cohesion policy;
- Facilitate exchange of knowledge, good practices and solutions on sustainable urban development among urban practitioners, i.e. ‘peers’ typically working in cities of different Member States.

As a first step, the EUI Entrusted Entity will prepare the content and procedural practices of peer learning activities<sup>19</sup>, and in this context, it will review the existing peer learning tools. Based on the inventory, the Entrusted Entity will design the tools/modules for peer learning activities. Under this work stream, tasks of the Entrusted Entity will include:

- Provide support for city2city exchanges (i.e. ‘twinning of cities’ from two different Member States) that focus on the peer advice on working methods and innovative approaches in the area of sustainable urban development;
- Provide support for peer reviews of cities (workshops in one Member State or in/for a cluster of Member States with all the relevant stakeholders) that focus on the specific needs and challenges in the area of sustainable urban development.

On the one hand, the implementation of peer learning activities will depend on the expressions of interest received from cities, and on the other hand, on the available budgetary resources of the EUI. The content of peer learning activities will correspond to the implementation cycle of Cohesion policy investments as the need for and interest in such activities vary depending on the milestones of the policy cycle.

## **3. Urban Development Network (UDN)-type of capacity building**

The intervention logic of the EUI includes a **work stream ‘Urban Development Network (UDN)-type of capacity building’** under the sub-strand (b.1.). In the 2014-2020 period, the UDN supported information exchange between cities implementing integrated strategies under the sustainable urban development part of Cohesion policy and cities leading the Urban Innovative Actions. In the context of the EUI, these activities will be continued in an upgraded format based on the experience gained. The specific aims of the UDN work stream are:

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<sup>19</sup> Due to the ‘on-demand-by-cities’ approach of this work stream, a provisional framework for peer learning activities will be included in annual EUI Work Programmes as detailed number and sequence of activities will not be known



- i. Develop towards the stimulation of a ‘capacity building community’ (in the long-term) and a ‘space for exchange’ on sustainable urban development with all the relevant stakeholders;
- ii. Provide support and access to knowledge and know-how on this topic;
- iii. Showcase synergies between Cohesion policy, UIA/EUI-Innovative Actions, the URBACT IV and the UAEU.

As a first step, the EUI Entrusted Entity will prepare the UDN activities. Under this work stream, tasks of the Entrusted Entity will include:

- Set up a ‘space for exchange’<sup>20</sup> on sustainable urban development with all the relevant stakeholders;
- Organise events that are either country-specific, cluster of Member States-specific, or EU-wide;
- Prepare supporting material, e.g. handbooks, toolkits, videos, etc. aimed at building the capacities of cities as well as benchmarking good practices.

The content of UDN activities will correspond to the implementation cycle of Cohesion policy investments as the need for and interest in such exchanges vary depending on the milestones of the policy cycle. In the implementation of these tasks, effective coordination and complementarities between the EUI and the URBACT IV must be ensured<sup>21</sup>.

## **B.2. Support of knowledge building, territorial impact assessments, policy development and communication**

Under the knowledge building, territorial impact assessments, policy development and communication part (b.2.) of the strand (b), **five work streams** contribute to achieving the specific objectives described in section 2.2. The detailed descriptions of these work streams are provided in Annex A (‘Explanatory Memo’).

### **1. Establishment and functioning of a network of Urban Contact Points (UCPs)**

The intervention logic of the EUI includes a **work stream ‘Establishment and functioning of a network of Urban Contact Points (UCPs)’** under the sub-strand (b.2.) (figure 1). The network of UCPs will function as an ‘information and knowledge sharing nexus’ between the actors from national, regional and local levels and the EUI. The specific aims of the UCP work stream are:

- i. Increase the number of urban policymakers and practitioners at local, regional and national levels in the activities of sustainable urban development;
- ii. Improve the capacities of urban policymakers and practitioners at local, regional and national levels in sustainable urban development;
- iii. Incentivise national actors, in particular, Managing Authorities, to benefit from the support and opportunities offered by the EUI.

As a first step, the EUI Entrusted Entity will prepare a Terms of Reference for the establishment of the UCP network that describes the detailed tasks of the UCPs. Once the Terms of Reference are available, each Member State will be requested to appoint an UCP entity based on the specific national institutional context that best enables the

<sup>20</sup> The space for exchange will be hosted by the Knowledge Sharing Platform of the EUI

<sup>21</sup> See the work stream ‘Networks of cities supported by URBACT IV’ and its ‘EUI – URBACT IV technical coordination mechanism’

appointed entity to fulfil its tasks as part of the network<sup>22</sup>. In parallel with the appointment process of UCPs, the Entrusted Entity will prepare the activities of the UCP network. Under this work stream, tasks of the Entrusted Entity will include:

- Manage and support the activities of the UCP network.

The network of UCPs will inform, match needs and disseminate the EUI activities and outputs to national, regional and local levels. It will feed the EUI on national, regional and local contexts. The activities of the UCPs will comprise, inter alia, the outreach and communication on the EUI, and in particular, on the calls for proposals and project implementation under the strand (a) support of innovative actions<sup>23</sup>, organisation of capacity building and capitalisation activities for local, regional and national actors as well as contributions to the EUI Knowledge Sharing Platform. In the implementation of these tasks, effective coordination and complementarities between the EUI and the URBACT IV must be ensured.

## **2. Establishment and functioning of a Knowledge Sharing Platform**

The intervention logic of the EUI includes a work stream ‘**Establishment and functioning of a Knowledge Sharing Platform**’ under the sub-strand (b.2.). The Knowledge Sharing Platform will congregate the knowledge outputs of the other EUI work streams and will provide knowledge inputs for their activities. The specific aims of this work stream are:

- i. Develop into the knowledge base in support of better sustainable urban policy and strategy design, implementation and mainstreaming;
- ii. Ensure access to horizontal and thematic urban knowledge as well as know-how.

As a first step, the EUI Entrusted Entity will design and set up a EUI web-portal section for the Knowledge Sharing Platform based on the provided conceptual specifications<sup>24</sup>. The ‘mock version’ of the web-portal section should be completed within 12 months after the signature of the contribution agreement between the Entrusted Entity and the Commission. In the short to medium term, the priority focus of the Platform will be the consolidation of knowledge produced by Cohesion policy. In the medium to long term, the expectation is that the Platform will gradually interconnect with the other (most important) knowledge-related urban initiatives and programmes in the EU and internationally. Under this work stream, tasks of the Entrusted Entity will include:

- Maintain and further develop the interactive Knowledge Sharing Platform that hosts the outputs of the other EUI work streams and provides inputs for them, carries out knowledge collection, consolidation and data mining as well as information and knowledge sharing<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> The URBACT IV Programming Committee decided to maintain the National URBACT Points in the 2021-2027 period. The optimal set-up for these different networks of Contact Points, preferably combining the EUI Urban Contact Points, the National URBACT Contact Points and the National Contact Points as referred to in the Implementing Document of the New Leipzig Charter will need to be developed in the most efficient way, including a fitness check of such Contact Points. The EUI will provide financial support to the EUI UCPs irrespective of the outcome of the final network set-up of Contact Points at the EU level, and the Entrusted Entity will be solely responsible for the activities of the EUI UCPs.

<sup>23</sup> National Info Days of calls, guidance, training events, project results, etc.

<sup>24</sup> The conceptual specifications of the Knowledge Sharing Platform will be prepared by the Commission with the support of external expertise by end of 2021

<sup>25</sup> The Knowledge Management Strategy of the UIA (2014-2020) is one important reference document for the preparation of the conceptual specifications of the Platform, and it should be updated and further elaborated for the use of the EUI knowledge sharing activities; [https://www.uia-initiative.eu/sites/default/files/2020-07/UIA\\_knowledge\\_management\\_strategy\\_0.pdf](https://www.uia-initiative.eu/sites/default/files/2020-07/UIA_knowledge_management_strategy_0.pdf)

- Implement every two years a forward-looking survey on the pressing urban challenges as well as on support and knowledge needs of cities<sup>26</sup>.

The Knowledge Sharing Platform will foster the interconnections between innovative actions, capacity building, capitalisation of knowledge, territorial impact assessments, and policy development regarding the mainstream Cohesion policy, national urban policies and practices, the Urban Agenda for the EU as well as other (most important) EU initiatives and programmes and beyond (internationally). In the implementation of these tasks, effective coordination and complementarities between the EUI and the URBACT IV must be ensured.

### **3. Capitalisation of knowledge in support of evidence and experience-based policymaking**

The intervention logic of the EUI includes a **work stream ‘Capitalisation of knowledge in support of evidence and experience-based policymaking’** under the sub-strand (b.2.). This work stream will capture, consolidate and enable the uptake of outputs and results produced by the different activity areas of the EUI. The aim of the capitalisation of knowledge work stream is:

- Provide urban policymakers and practitioners with consolidated knowledge in a format assisting them in the evidence-based policymaking and in the quality of programming as well as in designing and implementing public investments, in particular, under Cohesion policy.

As a first step, the EUI Entrusted Entity will prepare the capitalisation of knowledge activities that will take a format of organising a series of policy labs. Under this work stream, tasks of the Entrusted Entity will include:

- Organise ‘Knowledge for Policy Labs’ (lab activities extending over a period of a few months);
- Organise ‘Focused Policy Labs’ (one-off lab activities);
- Prepare ‘Thematic Reviews for Policy’ (policy briefs) that consolidate the outcomes of the policy lab activities and integrate other pertinent knowledge inputs.

The capitalisation of knowledge activities will follow the sequence of the different knowledge outputs produced by the other EUI work streams. During the first phase of the capitalisation activity, the outputs of the EUI-related activities undertaken in the 2014-2020 period will be used as inputs. In the implementation of these tasks, effective coordination and complementarities between the EUI and the URBACT IV must be ensured.

### **4. Communication and dissemination**

The intervention logic of the EUI includes a **work stream ‘Communication and dissemination’** under the sub-strand (b.2.). This work stream will ensure that the initiative is known and visible for direct and potential beneficiaries of the EUI but also in the broader context in the EU, and internationally. The specific aims of the communication and dissemination work stream are:

- Increase awareness of urban policymakers and practitioners at all levels of the EUI, of its support tools and knowledge available in the area of sustainable urban development;
- Communicate and disseminate effectively the outputs and results the EUI is producing.

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<sup>26</sup> The network of Urban Contact Points will be tasked to promote the survey in each Member State that is targeted at urban policymakers and practitioners

As a first step, the EUI Entrusted Entity will prepare a communication and dissemination strategy accompanied with an annual activity plan<sup>27</sup>. These documents will outline both the strategic aims and operational activities that capture the communication and dissemination needs in relation to the overall initiative and its different work streams. Under this work stream, tasks of the Entrusted Entity will include:

- Implement the communication and dissemination strategy and its annual activity plans;
- Design, set up and maintain the EUI web-portal as an overall interface of the initiative that embeds, inter alia, the Knowledge Sharing Platform;
- Organise the CITIES Forum every two years (provisionally foreseen in 2024 and 2026);
- Organise sessions at the annual European Weeks of Regions and Cities;
- Prepare generic and specific communication and dissemination material, including social media, audio-visual content, etc.

The communication and dissemination activities will maximise the profile and visibility of the EUI by promoting its activities in a coherent manner to the widest possible audience. In the implementation of these tasks, effective coordination and complementarities between the EUI and the URBACT IV must be ensured.

#### **5. Support to the Urban Agenda for the EU and the intergovernmental cooperation on urban matters**

The support to the UAEU and the possible support to the intergovernmental cooperation on urban matters will be embedded in the activities of the EUI. The intervention logic of the EUI includes a work stream ‘**Support to the Urban Agenda for the EU and the intergovernmental cooperation on urban matters**’ under the sub-strand (b.2.). The Commission has supported the Urban Agenda for the EU (UAEU)<sup>28</sup> since its launch in 2016 by the Pact of Amsterdam. It is an innovative multi-level working method promoting cooperation between Member States, cities, the Commission as well as the other EU institutions and stakeholders. The UAEU is aimed at increasing the involvement of cities as well as the urban dimension in the design and implementation of policies at the EU and national levels leading to better regulation, better funding and better knowledge for cities in Europe. The EU Presidencies support the intergovernmental cooperation on urban matters. In the frame of this cooperation, the New Leipzig Charter was adopted in November 2020. The UAEU is considered as a key vehicle for the implementation of the Charter. Under this work stream, the specific aims of the EUI support to the UAEU are<sup>29</sup>:

- i. Operationalise the principles of the New Leipzig Charter;
- ii. Continue developing the UAEU by involving urban authorities from cities of all sizes in achieving better regulation, better funding and better knowledge to improve the consideration of the urban dimension in policies at all levels;
- iii. Interlink better the work done under the UAEU with the other urban-related activities under Cohesion policy, notably, through the EUI, and beyond.

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<sup>27</sup> The Knowledge Management Strategy of the Urban Innovative Actions (2014-2020) will contribute to the preparation of this strategy and activity plan

<sup>28</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/urban-agenda>

<sup>29</sup> The specific objectives and the future scope of the EUI support to the Urban Agenda for the EU will reflect the principles identified in the Pact of Amsterdam, in the New Leipzig Charter (including in its Implementing Document), in the priorities of the upcoming EU Presidencies as well as in the regulatory framework of the EUI under cohesion policy

While working towards these objectives, the aim is also to valorise and build on the work of the 14 Thematic Partnerships that have been launched since 2016, and to continue supporting the implementation of the Partnerships' actions, including the clustering of actions and themes. The scope of the support to the UAEU will be delimited taking into consideration the final proposed budget of the EUI, the final provisions of the Cohesion policy regulatory framework regarding sustainable urban development and the EUI, and the outcome of the ongoing deliberations on the operationalisation of the Implementing Document of the Leipzig Charter.

As specified in the Cohesion policy regulative framework for 2021-2027, based on the identified needs, the EUI may support intergovernmental cooperation on urban matters, if such support is requested by Member State(s), and if agreed upon between Member State(s) and the Commission. Such support should have an EU added value and should aim at (i) strengthening multi-level cooperation on sustainable urban development, and (ii) reinforcing the link between the EU and the urban policies at the appropriate level in the different Member States.

As a first step, the EUI Entrusted Entity will prepare - together with the Commission and the intergovernmental cooperation actors - the scope and content of the support to the both groupings. Under this work stream, tasks of the Entrusted Entity will include in the area of the UAEU:

- Support to the setting up of new Partnerships including the ex-ante assessments of Partnership proposals or other forms of multilevel governance cooperation;
- Support to the implementation of the UAEU through Partnerships or other forms of multilevel governance cooperation;
- Support to capitalisation and dissemination activities on the outcomes of the UAEU.

As for the possible activities in support of the intergovernmental cooperation on urban matters, the specific scope of such activities is currently under discussion by the Commission and the intergovernmental cooperation actors. Nevertheless, the support should have EU added value and be relevant for the UAEU as well as for the EUI.

## **2.5. Setting up of the EUI monitoring system and reporting**

**A monitoring system** will be set up for the EUI that effectively measures the performance of the EUI at the level of the initiative and at the levels of its two strands (a) and (b) as well as its support to the UAEU and intergovernmental cooperation. As a first step, the Entrusted Entity will develop a proposal for the monitoring system for the 2021-2027 period. In this context, tasks of the Entrusted Entity will include the management of the monitoring system that captures, through its key performance indicators<sup>30</sup>, the outputs, results and impacts of the EUI in relation to its overall and specific objectives. The monitoring system will systematically collect the required data for the review of the EUI Steering Group as well as for the biennial reporting to the Council and the European Parliament.

In line with the specifications of the Cohesion policy regulatory framework, the Commission will submit **a report every two years to the European Parliament and to the Council** on developments in connection with the EUI. The Entrusted Entity will provide the material needed for the report, and in particular, the key data and information on the activities implemented as well as on the main achievements. Before the submission of the report to the Parliament and the Council, the EUI Steering Group will be consulted on the content of the report.

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<sup>30</sup> Examples of indicative formulations of both the result and output indicators are provided in Annex 1 'Explanatory Memo'

To operationalise the work streams of the EUI, the Entrusted Entity will **prepare annual EUI Work Programmes**. A Work Programme will define on an annual basis how the EUI delivers its activities under each work stream<sup>31</sup>. It will include a section on the crosscutting issues of the EUI and will describe how an effective value-chain functions between the two strands and the work streams therein. The Work Programme will also contain an indicative roadmap as an annex for the activities planned for the consecutive year. Annual EUI Work Programmes will be subject to the consultation of the EUI Steering Group and to the subsequent approval by the Commission.

The Entrusted Entity will also prepare **annual Implementation Reports** that provide information on the activities implemented, and in particular, in view of contributing to the achievement of the overall and specific objectives and related key performance indicators of the EUI. The annual Implementation Reports will be subject to the consultation of the EUI Steering Group and to the subsequent approval by the Commission.

## **2.6. Governance structure of the EUI<sup>32</sup>**

An effective governance structure will be established for the EUI. The specific aims of **the EUI governance structure** are:

- i. Enable a participatory process for the strategic direction of the initiative by involving all the relevant stakeholders;
- ii. Ensure operational management for the execution of EUI activities.

In relation to these aims, two governance bodies will be established<sup>33</sup>: (i) a Steering Group, and (ii) a Supervisory Board. These two bodies will be supported by the EUI Secretariat. The governance model of the EUI shall include the involvement of Member States, regional and local authorities and cities and shall ensure appropriate coordination and complementarities with the URBACT IV programme under Article 3 of the European Territorial Cooperation Regulation.

The composition of **the Steering Group** will be as follows: one representative per Member State from the EU Trio Presidency, one representative of the Commission, one representative of the EUI Entrusted Entity, one representative of the European Committee of the Regions and two representatives of EU level city associations (CEMR and EUROCIITIES)<sup>34</sup>. In addition, one representative from the URBACT IV Managing Authority and Secretariat (respectively) will participate in the Steering Group to ensure effective coordination and complementarities between the EUI and URBACT IV. The Steering Group is envisaged to convene at least once a year. It will be a consultative body, and in this role, it will provide strategic advice for the implementation of the two strands of the EUI. In parallel, the UAEU and the intergovernmental cooperation on urban matters will continue to be governed under the multilevel governance structure put forward by the Pact of Amsterdam.

**The Supervisory Board** will consist of one representative of the European Commission, one representative of the Entrusted Entity and Secretariat (respectively). The role of the Supervisory Board is to oversee efficient and qualitative implementation of the EUI in relation to its overall and specific objectives. It will also ensure that the strategic advice of the Steering Group is integrated, where relevant, into operational activities.

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<sup>31</sup> During the launching phase of the EUI in the first implementation year, the annual Work Programme will integrate the preparatory activities of each work stream as well as the first activities

<sup>32</sup> A more detailed description of the EUI governance is provided in Annex A 'Explanatory Memo'

<sup>33</sup> In the functioning of these bodies, the Commission will ensure the appropriate conversion of activities from the strategic level to the operational one

<sup>34</sup> Other observers may also be invited to join the meetings on an ad-hoc basis

As a first step, the EUI Entrusted Entity will set-up a **Secretariat** for the indirect management of the initiative to carry out the day-to-day activities of the EUI including the support to the EUI governance structure. The Secretariat must have adequate infrastructural resources as well as professional competencies and appropriate qualifications necessary to implement the activities of the EUI. In this context, tasks of the Secretariat include, inter alia:

- Prepare annual EUI Work Programmes integrating the activities of all the work streams;
- Deliver day-to-day activities of the EUI;
- Prepare annual Implementation Reports on the EUI activities;
- Provide the information needed for the biennial report to the European Council and the Parliament<sup>35</sup>;
- Support the organisation of meetings of the EUI governance structure.

The Secretariat will also deliver the support to the UAEU, and the intergovernmental cooperation on urban matters within the scope defined by the Commission.

The official language of correspondence between the Commission and the Entrusted Entity as well as the Secretariat shall be English. The Secretariat should also have the ability to communicate with the applicants and beneficiaries of the EUI in other EU official languages as far as feasible and to translate communication material into other official EU languages to assist applicants, final beneficiaries and stakeholders across the EU in understanding of the material.

### 3. TIMETABLE

	<b>Steps</b>	<b>Date and time or indicative period</b>
(a)	Publication of the call for expressions of interest	<i>05/05/2021</i>
(b)	<b>Deadline for submitting expressions of interest</b>	<i>05/07/2021 at 18:00 Central European Time (CET)</i>
(c)	Evaluation period	<i>06/07/2021 to 06/09/2021</i>
(d)	Information to applicants	<i>as of 07/09/2021</i>

### 4. BUDGET AVAILABLE

The total ERDF budget earmarked for the European Urban Initiative is set at EUR 400 000 000<sup>36</sup> according to modalities to be defined in the contribution agreement (see template in Annex C).

The availability of such a funding is subject to the approval and entry into force of the future Common Provisions Regulation<sup>37</sup> as well as of the corresponding Commission's Financing Decisions.

<sup>35</sup> To be submitted by the Commission every two years

<sup>36</sup> Budget expressed in 2018 prices as per Art. 104(5) of the future Common Provisions Regulation (political agreement in trilogue of 1.12.2020). In current prices, the ERDF allocation will be approx. EUR 450 million for the period 2021-2027.

<sup>37</sup> Commission's proposal COM(2018) 375 final of 29.5.2018

The Commission expects to select only one expression of interest for the entrustment of EUI indirect management functions. The Commission also reserves the right not to delegate to the Entrusted Entity the entire amount of the allocation available. The remuneration of the Entrusted Entity by the Contracting Authority for the implementation of the activities to be implemented under this Agreement shall be maximum 7% of the final amount of eligible direct costs of the Action to be reimbursed by the Contracting Authority. This remuneration will comprise all eligible costs that while necessary and arising as a consequence of implementation, are supporting the implementation of the Action and not considered part of the activities that the European Union finances, including corporate management costs or other costs linked to the normal functioning of the Organisation, such as horizontal and support staff, office or equipment costs.

## 5. ADMISSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

In order to be admissible, expressions of interest must be:

- sent no later than the deadline for submitting expressions of interest referred to in section 3;
- submitted by e-mail, using the application form (AF) available in Annex B; and
- drafted in English;
- signed by a duly authorised representative of the Managing Authority expressing interest.

## 6. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

### 6.1 Types of entities allowed to participate in the call

To be eligible, a candidate for the Entrusted Entity should be a **Managing Authority**, as designated as such under Article 123(1) of Regulation (EC) No 1303/2013, in charge of one or more **interregional or transnational ERDF programme(s)** in the meaning of Article 2(2) and 2(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013.

### 6.2. Eligible activities under the EUI

Eligible activities are those, non-exhaustively described in section 2.4. and Annex A ('Explanatory Memo') of the present call, that will contribute to the fulfilment of the EUI general and specific objectives.

In particular, the following activities of the EUI work streams should be delivered during the first year of the EUI implementation:

#### *Strand (a) of the EUI – support of innovative actions*

- Prepare and submit for approval to the Commission a proposal and corresponding supporting guidance for the organisation of EUI-Innovative Actions calls for proposals, selection procedure and delivery cycle based on a 'minimum upgrade' of the UIA model (as described in Annex A);
- Prepare an opportunity and feasibility analysis of options flagged as '*a one step further scenario*' in the reform of that model (as described in Annex A);
- Prepare and publish in accordance with the Commission the first call for proposals of the EUI-Innovative Actions;
- Refine together with the URBACT IV Managing Authority, the 'Urban Innovative Actions/EUI-Innovative Actions transfer mechanism' (as described in Annex A)



based on the pilot supported by URBACT III, and contribute to the publication of the first transfer network call of URBACT IV.

*Strand (b) of the EUI – support of capacity and knowledge building, territorial impact assessments, policy development and communication*

- Prepare together with the URBACT IV Managing Authority the EUI - URBACT IV technical coordination mechanism that will direct the two instruments to deliver operationally their activities in a coordinated and complementary manner;
- Prepare the peer learning activities by making an inventory of the existing peer learning tools/modules and by setting up a procedural system for peer learning, launch the on-demand peer learning activities;
- Based the experience gained from the UDN activities in the 2014-2020 period, prepare and organise at least one UDN event in an upgraded format at the EU level;
- Prepare the Terms of Reference for the network of Urban Contact Points, organise the appointment process of the UCPs, and prepare the activities of the UCP network;
- Design the technical content of the Knowledge Sharing Platform based on the conceptual specifications provided by the Commission and launch the mock-version of the Platform in month 12 as part of the EUI web-portal;
- Prepare the capitalisation of knowledge activities including a series of Policy Labs and Thematic Reviews for Policy ('policy briefs'), launch the first 'Knowledge for Policy Lab';
- Prepare a communication strategy and activity plan for the EUI as well as the web-portal of the EUI;
- Prepare together with the Commission and the intergovernmental actors the support to the UAEU and the possible support to intergovernmental cooperation and start the delivery of support activities.

*Other priority activities beyond the work streams of the EUI strands (a) and (b)*

- Prepare and operationalise the monitoring system of the EUI;
- Prepare the reporting system of the EUI, and in particular, a first annual EUI Work Programme;
- Prepare and organise the first annual meeting of the EUI Steering Group.

## **7. SELECTION CRITERIA**

To be potentially entrusted with indirect management responsibilities under the EUI, eligible managing authorities shall demonstrate complying with the following selection criteria.

### **7.1. Minimum experience in managing calls for proposals covering several countries**

The EUI involves the management of resources from the ERDF across the EU, and for an important share of it (in particular under strand (a)), organising calls for proposals covering several countries. The applying eligible Managing Authority shall thus demonstrate having organised, as a minimum, over the period 2014-2020:

- At least two calls for proposals, with a minimum budget of EUR 20 million each, covering several countries;
- Each of these calls should have led to the funding of projects in at least five different countries.

## **7.2. Minimum experience in supporting urban authorities**

The whole EUI intervention logic is geared towards reinforcing the sustainable urban development support function under Cohesion policy. The applying eligible Managing Authority shall thus demonstrate having undertaken through their ERDF programme(s) over the period 2014-2020 specific actions in support of urban authorities covering at least two of the following dimensions:

- Funding support to urban authorities;
- Capacity building for urban authorities;
- Policy learning and/or communication and dissemination activities on sustainable urban development.

## **8. ASSESSMENT CRITERIA**

The expressions of interest from applicants complying with eligibility and selection requirements previously mentioned will be evaluated and ranked against the following assessment criteria.

### **8.1. Proposed approach to consider urban innovation trends within the EUI management**

As explained in Section 2, the EUI aims at offering an integrated set of services to support urban innovation, capacity and knowledge building as well as evidence-based policy making on sustainable urban development. The applicants should explain how they will take into account current and future urban megatrends in the EU and globally, describe the capabilities that urban authorities must develop to adapt and to raise their innovation profiles and the metrics they would use to assess cities' innovation capabilities and to measure impacts of urban innovation, in the implementation of EUI activities.

### **8.2. Proposed approach concerning EUI support towards achieving sustainable urban development goals under Cohesion policy**

The intervention logic of the EUI includes the identification and testing of transferable and scalable innovative solutions that could become a viable way to use Cohesion policy funds in urban areas, especially through ERDF investments under the Policy Objective 'Europe closer to citizens' in the 2021-2027 period. The intervention logic of the EUI comprises the support of capacity and knowledge building as well as policy development for urban authorities in view of their key role in the design and implementation of integrated sustainable urban development strategies under Article 9 of the ERDF/CF Regulation, and beyond. Applicants should thus explain how they will approach the specific challenges implicating the use of EU funds via integrated sustainable urban development strategies and tools (i.e. Integrated Territorial Investments, Community-led Local Development, other tools). Applicants should also describe the EUI services they would propose to support Article 9 cities and beyond, benefiting local authorities from all city sizes, in reaching Cohesion policy objectives for the 2021-2027 period in urban areas.

### **8.3. Proposed approach concerning the setting-up of a EUI Secretariat and launching of priority actions**

Applicants should describe the way they envisage to set-up a EUI Secretariat (structure, staffing, accounting system, etc.), and frame it in operational steps<sup>38</sup> that would include

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<sup>38</sup> The Gantt chart of Annex B (point 4.2) is to be used as part of the description of operational steps.

the delivery of the priority activities described in section 6.2 for the first year of the EUI implementation and the rollout of the overall EUI activities for the subsequent two years. A particular attention<sup>39</sup> should be paid to the composition of a proposed team of the Secretariat (including the indication of full-time equivalents per staff profiles according to needs), competencies already available (operational, sectorial, languages) and/or those competences that would need to be acquired. As far as necessary, applicants should propose how they will build on existing services of the interregional or transnational programme(s) for which the Managing Authority is responsible. The candidate should also detail the steps<sup>40</sup>, including the validation steps by the Commission, it needs to undertake to operationalise the priority activities of the EUI, and describe any associated risks and mitigating measures proposed.

## **9. PROCEDURE FOR THE SUBMISSION AND ASSESSMENT BY THE COMMISSION OF EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST**

With this call, the Commission intends to identify ERDF Managing Authorities of interregional and/or transnational programmes interested in and best qualified to undertake the indirect management of the European Urban Initiative 2021-2027, in the conditions set out in Article 154(1) of the Financial Regulation<sup>41</sup>.

The Commission reserves its right to select and to entrust the described function to one of the Managing Authorities fulfilling the conditions of this call. In the event an expression of interest of a candidate is selected, a contribution agreement based on the template attached to this call (Annex C) detailing the terms, conditions and responsibilities will be sent to the Managing Authority together with the information on the procedure to formalise the agreement between both parties. Only the signature of that contribution agreement will create corresponding legal obligations on the part of the Commission.

### ***Step 1 - Submission***

Expressions of interest must be submitted by the deadline set out under section 3 (b).

Expressions of interest must be submitted using the application form (AF) available in Annex B.

Expressions of interest must be sent by email exclusively to the following address: REGIO-URBAN-TERRITORIAL@ec.europa.eu

### **➤ Contacts**

European Commission

Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy

Mr. Marek Teplansky, Head of Unit DDG01.03 'Inclusive growth, urban and territorial development'

B-1049 Brussels

BELGIUM

E-mail: REGIO-URBAN-TERRITORIAL@ec.europa.eu

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<sup>39</sup> Under point 4.1 of the AF (Annex B).

<sup>40</sup> Under point 4.2 of the AF (Annex B)

<sup>41</sup> Op.cit.

Any question concerning the call for expression of interest and associated documentation should be sent to the above mentioned e-mail address. All information related to the call, including replies to applicants' questions, will be published online at: [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/fr/newsroom/funding-opportunities/calls-for-expressions-of-interest](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/fr/newsroom/funding-opportunities/calls-for-expressions-of-interest).

**Step 2 – Confirmation of the admissibility, eligibility and selection criteria fulfilment**

As soon as the deadline for submission is reached (see the timeline in section 3), the expressions of interest will be checked against the admissibility requirements (section 5), eligibility (section 6) and selection criteria (section 7).

The expressions of interest from applicants that do not fulfil these admissibility, eligibility and selection criteria will not be evaluated. Concerned applicants will be informed accordingly.

**Step 3 – Evaluation of the expressions of interest**

The expressions of interest meeting the admissibility, eligibility and selection criteria will be evaluated and ranked using the criteria referred to in Section 8 and the assessment grid below.

References in Call/AF <sup>42</sup>	Assessment criteria	Weighting (maximum points)	
Section 8.1 Point 3.1 of AF	1. Relevance of the approach to take into account urban innovation trends within the EUI management	0-20	
Section 8.2 Point 3.2 of AF	2. Relevance of the approach concerning EUI support to achieving sustainable urban development goals under Cohesion policy	0-20	
Section 8.3	3. Quality of the proposal concerning the setting-up of a EUI Secretariat and launching of EUI priority actions	0-60	
Point 4.1 of AF	<i>Sub-criterion 3.1:</i> Clarity and reliability of the organisational arrangements and staffing requirements for the EUI-Secretariat set-up	subtotal	0-30
Point 4.2 of AF	<i>Sub-criterion 3.2:</i> Clarity and reliability of the timetable for the launching of EUI priority actions	subtotal	0-30
Total score		0-100	

The evaluation will be carried out by a selection and evaluation panel consisting of the staff members of DG Regional and Urban Policy of the European Commission. Based on

<sup>42</sup> Acronym 'AF' refers to the application form (Annex B)

a comparative analysis of merits, the expressions of interest will be ranked in a priority order.

#### ***Step 4 – Information to the applicants***

The shortlist and ranking will not constitute a binding commitment on the part of the Commission to entrust the indirect management tasks to the best ranked Managing Authority. The final decision to enter into a dialogue regarding the signature of a contribution agreement with a selected Managing Authority on the shortlist will be taken by the Commission. All applicants will be informed accordingly.

➤ **Annexes:**

- Annex A: EUI Explanatory Memo
- Annex B: Application form (AF)
- Annex C: Contribution agreement template
- Annex D: Pillar assessment information