

EUROPEAN
U R B A N
INITIATIVE

Peer Reviews

Call for applications for Cities under Review

4 April – 10 July 2023

Guidance for Applicants



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND	2
1.1. CONTEXT AND RATIONALE FOR THE SUPPORT TO CAPACITY BUILDING UNDER THE EUROPEAN URBAN INITIATIVE	2
1.2. EUI CAPACITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES	3
2. PEER REVIEWS	4
2.1. MAIN FEATURES OF A PEER REVIEW	4
2.2. ELIGIBLE AUTHORITIES	6
2.3. INTERVENTION LOGIC	7
2.4. EXPECTED CONTRIBUTION OF PEERS	13
2.5. EXPECTATIONS FOR HOST CITIES	13
2.6. EXPERT SUPPORT	13
2.7. FINANCIAL SUPPORT	14
3. APPLICATION PROCESS AND SELECTION	16
3.1. APPLICATION DEVELOPMENT AND PROCESS	16
3.2. SELECTION PROCESS	17
3.3. EXCLUSION CRITERIA	20
3.4. COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE	21
4. CONTRACTING	23
4.1. CONTRACTUAL ARRANGEMENTS	23
4.2. CONFIRMATION OF PARTICIPATION	23
5. REPORTING AND TERMS OF PAYMENT	23
5.1. REPORTING PROCEDURE	23
5.2. TERMS OF REIMBURSEMENT	24
6. EXPECTATIONS FOR CITIES UNDER REVIEW AFTER THE EVENT	24
6.1. ACTING AS A PEER	24
6.2. ACTING AS AN AMBASSADOR	24
6.3. EXPECTATION FOR CAPITALISATION ACTIVITIES	25
6.4. EXPECTATIONS ON COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY OF EU FUNDS	25
7. HOW TO GET ASSISTANCE	26
8. KEY DATES	26

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1. CONTEXT AND RATIONALE FOR THE SUPPORT TO CAPACITY BUILDING UNDER THE EUROPEAN URBAN INITIATIVE

The Cohesion policy legislative package for 2021-2027 provides for the establishment of a European Urban Initiative (EUI). This initiative is conceived as an essential tool to support cities of all sizes, to build capacity and knowledge, to support innovation and develop transferable and scalable innovative solutions to urban challenges of EU relevance.

The legal basis of the EUI is included in the European Regional Development Fund/Cohesion Fund Regulation which provides for the main content and strategic framework of the initiative. The overall objectives of the EUI are (i) to strengthen integrated and participatory approaches to sustainable urban development, and (ii) to provide a stronger link to EU policies, and in particular to Cohesion policy. The initiative is aimed at offering coherent support to cities to overcome what may have been perceived in the past a fragmented landscape of manifold initiatives, programmes, and instruments in support of cities under Cohesion policy.

The capacity-building component of EUI seeks to improve the capacities of cities in the design of sustainable urban development (SUD) policies, strategies and practices in an integrated and participative way. It also contributes to the design and implementation of these policies and action plans on a local, regional and national level. This element encompasses the cooperation with URBACT IV networks of cities, as well as peer learning activities and capacity building events which are outlined in the sections to follow.

Sustainable Urban Development within Cohesion Policy should be primarily understood in the context of Article 11 of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)/Cohesion Fund (CF) Regulation¹, in conjunction with Article 28 (*Integrated territorial development*) and Article 29 (*Territorial strategies*) of the Common Provisions Regulation (CPR)². Article 11 provides the regulatory framework for urban authorities to design and implement SUD strategies, and to be involved as decision makers in project design and selection. Building the capacities of urban authorities on these challenges is key to ensuring that SUD strategies and the related ERDF investments (minimum 8% of ERDF resources in each EU Member State) deliver good results.

Sustainable Urban Development is also defined in the context of the New Leipzig Charter which highlights that, to achieve just, green, and productive cities, it is necessary to establish integrated and

¹ Article 11 of [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/1058](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021: "To address economic, environmental, climate, demographic and social challenges, the ERDF shall support integrated territorial development based on territorial or community-led local development strategies (...) that are focused on urban areas, including functional urban areas ('sustainable urban development')".

² Article 28 and Article 29 of [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/1060](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021

sustainable urban development strategies and ensure their implementation for the city as a whole, from its functional areas to its neighbourhoods³.

1.2. EUI CAPACITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES

Building on previous Urban Development Network (UDN) activities, the European Commission Joint Research Centre methodologies, the TAEIX REGIO Peer 2 Peer mechanism as well as UIA capitalisation work, EUI capacity building activities contribute to the following specific objectives:

- To improve the capacities of cities in the design of sustainable urban policies and practices in an integrated and participative way
- To improve the design and implementation of sustainable urban strategies and action plans in cities

The main activities proposed by EUI to contribute to these objectives are as follows:

Types	Activities	Methodological approach	Contribution to objectives
Peer learning activities	City-to-City Exchanges	In-person visits (followed by an online exchange when justified) carried out among groups of two or three cities. Peer cities share new working methods and innovative approaches on specific implementation challenges identified by the applicant city.	Applicant cities directly benefit by improving their capacities to tackle their specific implementation challenge(s) as identified in the application. Peer cities profit from the exchange in terms of networking and may also improve their capacities by increasing their understanding of how their working methods and innovative approaches may be applied in different contexts.
	Peer Reviews	Several article 11 SUD strategies are reviewed simultaneously by peers. Peer reviews may be organised as EU-wide events, events for a Cluster of EU Member States, or country-specific events.	Cities under review directly benefit by improving their capacities to design and implement SUD strategies and practices in an integrated and participative way. Participating peer cities not under review also benefit from the exchange in terms of networking and improve their capacities thanks to the experience of the other peers.
Capacity building events	Events	Urban and managing authorities, and relevant stakeholders exchange information with each other and with the Commission on relevant urban challenges and on the implementation of Article 11 SUD strategies, seeking for	Participants benefit from improved knowledge and knowhow on relevant SUD challenges and on the design and implementation of SUD strategies and action plans.

³ [New Leipzig Charter- The transformative power of cities for the common good](http://europa.eu) (europa.eu)

		<p>synergies and learnings from UIA/EUI-IA, URBACT IV and the UAEU.</p> <p>Organised in various formats (seminars, workshops, trainings) and at different scales (EU-wide, multi-country, or country-specific), mixing expert-led and peer learning.</p>	
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The information provided in this document hereafter refers only to EUI peer reviews.

2. PEER REVIEWS

2.1 MAIN FEATURES OF A PEER REVIEW

2.1.1. Objectives

The overarching objective of a peer review is to improve the design and implementation of the applicants' SUD strategies through a process of benchmarking and peer learning.

Cities under review will benefit from first-hand evaluation experience and use of the peer review outcomes to further improve their own strategies. All participating cities will discuss common issues and challenges related to their current work on integrated sustainable development strategies.

To achieve the capacity building objective of a peer review, peers are expected to share practical knowledge and know-how helping to improve the design and implementation of SUD strategies of the cities under review. While the cities under review are the primary beneficiaries, both cities under review and peers may improve their capacities thanks to the peer learning process.

2.1.2. Thematic scope

A peer review is required to focus on specific challenges related to the design and implementation of SUD Strategies within Cohesion Policy as defined in article 11 of the ERDF Regulation⁴.

Under the current ERDF Regulation (2021-2027), Sustainable Urban Development is defined in article 11. It is understood as integrated, place-based and community-led development, addressing economic, environmental, climate, demographic and social challenges and focused on urban areas (including functional urban areas). **A SUD strategy should hence be understood as a strategy in covering an urban area that adopts an integrated and place-based approach to urban development, where**

⁴ Applicants should also take note of Article 29 of the CPR which outlines that integrated territorial development strategies should be built on:

- The territorial focus or geographical area covered by the strategy;
- An analysis of development needs and the potential of the area;
- A description of the integrated approach addressing the identified development needs and potential; and
- A description of the involvement of the partners in the preparation and implementation of the strategy

integration means a multi-sectoral policy, multi-level and multi-stakeholder governance, and possibly a multi-territorial and community-led strategy.

Challenges addressed in the peer review will be built on the Handbook for Sustainable Urban Development Strategies⁵ which outlines the six building blocks of the EU approach to sustainable and integrated urban development and the expected contents of a strategy.

The main building blocks which characterise the EU approach to sustainable and integrated urban development can be characterised as follows:

- An approach which promotes a strategic vision for the development of urban areas.
- An approach which targets cities of all sizes and promotes integration across scales, from neighbourhoods to wider territories.
- A multi-level governance and multi-stakeholder approach, which coordinates different actors according to their respective roles, skills and scales of intervention, ensuring that citizens are actively engaged.
- An approach which is integrated across sectors and pushes cities to work across policy-areas.
- An approach based on the integration of multiple sources of funding.
- An approach which promotes result-oriented logic and establishes frameworks for monitoring and evaluation.

From an operational point of view, a strategy should contain the following elements:

- a diagnosis of the urban area and a selection of the target area(s) (see Territorial Focus chapter);
- a description of the governance model (see Governance chapter);
- a definition of the general strategic framework, which should include a long-term vision, strategic goals, specific goals, and lines of action, and should specify the intervention logic and plan for periodic review. This requires deep reflection on how goals and lines of action are integrated (see Cross-Sectoral chapter);
- prioritisation of actions to be supported by European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF);
- a monitoring system which links OP indicators with strategy-specific indicators (see Monitoring chapter);
- an action plan that translates the long-term strategy and goals into investments with a budget and a schedule referring to the programming period of the ESIF (see Funding and Finance chapter).

The guiding questions to be defined by cities under review should be based on operational challenges related to these building blocks or the expected elements of a strategy. Applicants are required to refer directly to [the Handbook for Sustainable Urban Development Strategies](#) for more information.

2.1.3. Participants

⁵ The [Handbook for Sustainable Urban Development Strategies](#) was developed by the JRC. The Handbook is based on a **mixed-methods analysis of SUD strategies which were implemented during the 2014-2020 programming period**. Quantitative data were collected using [STRAT-Board](#), which is both a database and an online mapping tool providing an overview of 964 SUD strategies implemented in 2014-2020 across 28 EU countries.

Cities participating in a peer review belong to one of two categories: i) the cities under review (primary beneficiary), ii) the peers (secondary beneficiaries)⁶.

Potential cities under review will be identified via this call for applications. Based on the outcomes of this call for cities under review, a call for peers⁷ will be launched shortly after, identifying the cities under review that have been selected and the three challenges related to each SUD strategy that are to be addressed.

All participants approved within these two linked calls (call for cities under review and call for peers) will constitute a cohort. Cities within a cohort are divided into groups of cities that will follow the process together and participate in an individual peer review event. The present call will select cities under review for the cohort that will participate in peer reviews in autumn/winter 2023.

For both cities under review and peers, the participating staff members are required to be those individuals with responsibility and/or experience in the design and implementation of an integrated, place-based strategy. Stakeholders from cities under review may be invited by their urban authority to join the delegation participating in the peer review session.

2.2. ELIGIBLE AUTHORITIES

2.2.1. Main eligibility requirements

Applicants to this call are urban authorities involved in designing, updating or implementing a SUD strategy in line with Article 11 of the ERDF Regulation⁸ (i.e., “article 11 cities”). Applicants are asked to provide information about their selection or their eligibility to be selected as an article 11 city within their Member State, if known. In any case, EUI PS will verify this information during the eligibility check.

All urban authorities shall be either:

- Local Administrative Units defined according to the degree of urbanisation as city, town or suburb (corresponding to DEGURBA code 1 or DEGURBA code 2 of Eurostat), or
- Associations or groupings of urban authorities with legal status of organised agglomeration composed by Local Administrative Units, where the majority (at least 51%) of inhabitants lives in Local Administrative Units defined according to the degree of urbanisation (DEGURBA) of Eurostat as cities, towns or suburbs (corresponding to DEGURBA code 1 or DEGURBA code 2).

In addition, all Urban Authorities shall be located in an EU Member State.

2.2.2. Priority groups

Applicants from any eligible authorities may apply and be selected. However, the following applicants will be prioritised for support:

⁶ Eligible peers are urban authorities with experience in the design and implementation of integrated, place-based strategies. Article 11 cities and Article 7 cities from the 2014-2020 period are particularly encouraged to apply, as they have demonstrated experience in working on a SUD strategy.

⁷ The call for peers for the autumn/winter 2023 cohort is indicatively expected to launch early June 2023.

⁸ These cities, which have reinforced responsibilities in managing Cohesion Policy funds, are commonly known as article 11 cities. In the previous programming period, they were known as article 7 cities.

- Article 11 cities that were not Article 7 cities in the 2014-2020 period, considering they lack previous experience on developing a SUD strategy,
- Cities with up to 500,000 inhabitants,
- Cities within less developed regions,

Cities that have not benefitted from a peer review organised by the Urban Development Network in the 2014-2020 period,

- Cities from transition regions (second priority).

These priority groups will benefit from a higher prioritisation score to be calculated during the selection process of this call, as defined in Sections 3.2.2 and 3.2.3.

2.3. INTERVENTION LOGIC

2.3.1. Overall logic of the Peer Review

A peer review is a **set of pre-defined activities carried out by a cohort of cities to benchmark their Sustainable Urban Development (SUD) strategies**. The aim is to improve the design and implementation of SUD strategies through a process of peer review and provision of recommendations.

A peer review follows a specific fixed methodology and implementation process. The cities under review define the challenges to be addressed according to their specific needs, but the format and the timing of each implementation step within the activity is pre-defined by EUI.

The peer review methodology was adapted from the methodology developed by the JRC (Joint Research Centre of the European Commission).

2.3.2. Defining the scale of the Peer Review

Peer reviews may be organised at three geographical scales: EU-wide, among a cluster of Member States, or country-specific. The scale of each peer review event will be determined by EUI based on the number and characteristics of the cities under review that are approved.

For **country-specific peer reviews**, the cities under review are from the same Member State, but their peers may be from different Member States.

Cities reviewed in a **cluster of Member States peer review** are grouped based on common thematic interests, on geographical contexts (e.g., as part of a cross-border functional area, or within the same macro-region), or on similarities in territorial delivery mechanism for SUD (e.g., use of SUD programme, SUD priority axis, ITI, CLLD or other).

Cities reviewed in an **EU-wide peer review** may be composed of cities that share a common thematic interest or similar territorial delivery mechanism for SUD and that are not suitable to participate in a country-specific or cluster of Member States peer review.

2.3.3. Matching cities under review with peers

EUI PS will match eligible peers to cities under review with the help of a team of peer review experts. The quality of the peers is important to ensure the success of the peer review. Matches will be based

on the interest and relevance of peers (e.g., similarities in challenges addressed or in urban context). Each city under review will be allocated up to four peers. In addition, EUI PS will take into account the motivation of peers in the selection of peers, in addition to their capacity to address the three guiding questions of the cities under review. Peers, if interested, may apply to review several cities under review within multiple peer review events.

Who are the peers?

Peers are **staff members from urban authorities with experience in the design and implementation of integrated, place-based strategies**. Peers from Article 11 cities and Article 7 cities from the 2014-2020 period are particularly encouraged to apply, as they have demonstrated experience in working on a SUD strategy. Similarly, applicants from cities that benefited from previous peer reviews organised by the Urban Development Network, or the European Urban Initiative are expected to apply to the call for peers since they are familiar with the peer review methodology.

Peers apply as individuals (i.e., the staff member applying commits to participate personally if selected), but the urban authority that they represent remains the beneficiary of the financial support allocated under peer reviews. More than one staff member from the same urban authority may apply and be selected. However, in order to ensure a variety of the expertise is mobilised, **no more than two peers from the same urban authority will be selected for the same Peer Review event**.

2.3.4. Implementation steps and work plan

The peer review methodology follows a five-step process and timeline, once the call for applications for cities under review closes.

1) Evaluation of the applications and confirmation of participations

EUI PS and external peer review experts will evaluate the applications at three specific dates:

- 1) After the 29 May 2023, which will be the first interim cut-off date to evaluate a first set of applications to be a city under review.
- 2) After the 19 June, which will be the second interim cut-off date to evaluate a second set of applications to be a city under review.
- 3) After the closure of this call on the 10 July 2023 to evaluate the last set of applications to be a city under review.

Such process will strive to give more time for applicants to prepare their application and submit it once they are fully ready, while starting the content preparation phase with successful applicants.

Applications will be evaluated according to the eligibility, quality and exclusion criteria defined in section 3.2.2 and 3.3 of the present document. The content of the Application Form is described in Section 3.1 of the present document.

Selected applicants requesting to be a city under review will be informed that they are accepted into the cohort. Following their notification, EUI PS with the support of external peer review experts will organise bilateral calls to have confirmation of their participation, and to advise on the next steps. The selected cities under review will be clustered into groups that will be peer reviewed together in a

specific event. The dates and location of the peer review event will be fixed at this stage of the peer review process and one of the cities under review that expressed their interest will be informed that they have been selected to host each peer review.

Any applicants that are not eligible or unsuccessful will be informed, by the end of June, depending on the number of applications received. They may reapply for the next call for cities under review or may request a city-to-city exchange to self-organise a bottom-up review of their strategy among peers they pre-identify. They will also be invited to consider applying to the call for peers.

2) Call for peers

A call for peers will be launched mid-June following the end of the first phase of evaluation of this call for cities under review. The call for peers will be open until 30 July. Applying peers will complete a number of fields to demonstrate their eligibility. The call for peers will be published on the EUI website and widely disseminated to existing EUI-related networks to maximise the number of relevant applicants. EUI experts will also help mobilise relevant cities to apply to the call for peers.

A follow-up matchmaking survey will be sent to the successful applicants to the call for peers, asking them to select up to four cities for which they would like to take on the role of peer based on the guiding questions of the cities under review. This survey will be open until early September.

3) Content preparation

Cities under review will review their initial analysis carried out with the [Self-Assessment Tool for Sustainable Urban Development strategies](#) (hereafter: SAT4SUD). Based on the weaknesses identified by SAT4SUD, they are expected to finetune their three guiding questions if required. During this period, a city under review is expected to **consult with their stakeholders to contribute to this task**. The outcomes will lead to a **background paper** which is the basis of discussion of the peer review. A template for the background paper will be provided by EUI PS. Cities under review will be asked to share their background paper with EUI two months before the peer review. EUI will then disseminate it to peers. The peers are expected to carefully read the background paper before the preparatory webinar and prepare any questions to share with the cities under review.

For each peer review session, a **preparatory webinar** will be held at least two weeks before the peer review to clarify the expectations for each type of participant during the peer review event and have a first discussion on the guiding questions of cities under review and the background papers. Cities under review and peers are expected to attend the webinar along with the peer review experts who act as facilitators. In this webinar, the cities under review will present their local context, their guiding questions and their expectations for the peer review event. Peers will be able to ask first questions to their city under review and provide a first overview of their relevant experience which led to their selection as peers. Cities under review may provide initial feedback to the peers about which particular insights or uses cases would be most interesting to elaborate further on during the peer review event.

After the webinar, cities under review are expected to update and detail their background paper if needed based on any clarifications requested by peers during the webinar. Cities under review will also adapt their background paper into a presentation. A template presentation will be provided by EUI PS.

All templates provided by EUI PS may be adapted by the city under review if required. However, the minimum content sections of the template must be kept, and the maximum and minimum length indicated in the template must be respected.

4) Peer Review session

Peer Review events will follow a fixed methodology (see below visual). They will be organised through three discussion rounds dedicated to the three questions of cities under review. Each city under review will be reviewed in parallel in a separate breakout session. There will be opening and closing plenaries to orient all participants and share conclusions. An informal networking session and study visits may also be organised.

Each discussion round will focus on one guiding question. The city under review will detail their question. Peers will be then asked to rethink the question (What is the problem behind the problem?). The new question will then be discussed at the table, with peers providing policy advice based on their experiences, sharing lessons learnt and best practices with the city under review.

Each breakout session at the event will be composed of i) up to four representatives from the city under review, ii) up to four peers iii) two experts, trained in the peer review methodology and in charge of drafting the report.



Indicative agenda for a peer review event

For cluster of EU Member States and country-specific peer reviews, sessions may be held in national languages. This would give opportunities for article 11 Cities from the same country to exchange on the design and implementation of SUD strategies within their national context.

5) Follow-up activities

Two weeks after the event, cities under review will receive an **expert report** (drafted by the EUI peer review experts) detailing the discussions, recommendations and insights provided to them during the peer review. Participants are also expected to reply to the **follow-up survey** sent after the peer review event for EUI PS to assess the impact of the peer review and overall satisfaction with the event and process.

Cities under review will then identify with their stakeholders which recommendations they would like to further develop in their SUD strategy. They are required to draft a **follow-up report** explaining to what extent they intend to implement those recommendations. This report should be shared with EUI PS and the peers, **within two months of receiving the expert report**. Upon validation, EUI PS will upload the follow-up report on Portico, the EUI knowledge platform. Once the follow-up report is uploaded,

the city under review may request reimbursement through a Reimbursement Form (see Section 5 on Reporting).

At least six months after the peer review event, EUI will organise a **post-event webinar for participating cities** to discuss their progress in integrating recommendations in their SUD strategies and identifying remaining hindrances or new challenges. Cities under review will share whether the input received brought about any tangible benefits e.g., improvements in the design and implementation of the SUD strategy addressed or related projects, improvements in day-to-day working practices within their institution and among stakeholders.

In parallel to drafting the follow-up report and participating in the post-event webinar, cities under review will be encouraged to submit a **'fast-track' application for city-to-city exchanges** to explore specific recommendations from one or two peers in more detail, if needed. The application can be fast-tracked because all cities under review are confirmed to be eligible also for city-to-city exchanges. Any applications linked to a former city under review can be prioritised among the list of applications pending assessment. If several cities under review share a common interest in a follow-up topic, this request may be considered for a possible EUI capacity building event.

Twelve months after the peer review event, a **follow-up email** is sent to the applicant asking whether there are any new developments to report since the webinar.

As part of the post-event webinar and follow-up email, participants will be reminded to act as **ambassadors** to recommend EUI capacity building activities to other urban authorities in their national or EU network that may be interested to apply.

2.3.5. Expected outputs

The table below presents the expected outputs and workload for cities under review participating in a peer review session.

Steps	OUTPUTS	
	City under review	Peer
Content preparation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Draft of background paper with the assistance of peer review experts 2) Preparation and participation in preparatory webinar 3) Finalisation of background paper 4) Preparation of presentation for peer review event 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Review of background paper from city under review 2) Preparation and participation in preparatory webinar 3) Preparation of content for peer review event (e.g., List of use cases, experience, practices)
Peer Review event	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5) Participation in peer review event (including travel) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4) Participation in peer review event (including travel)
Follow-up	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6) Completion of follow-up survey 7) Dissemination of recommendations within institution and among stakeholders 8) Completion of follow-up report (drafted by peer review experts) detailing which recommendations are most interesting to integrate in SUD strategy 9) Preparation and participation in post-event webinar 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5) Completion of follow-up survey 6) Participation in post-event webinar
Total working days	5 to 10 working days are estimated for a city under review.	5 working days are estimated for a peer.

2.4. EXPECTED CONTRIBUTION OF PEERS

Up to four peers will support each city under review in addressing their three guiding questions. Peers are required to contribute in the following way:

- Review of the background paper of their city under review before the preparatory webinar.
- Participation to the preparatory webinar, during which they will be invited to ask the city under review for specifications and feedback on which insights and use cases to collect.
- Preparation of the peer review event by collecting experiences and use cases on the three guiding questions and sharing this information with EUI PS and the experts allocated to their group.
- Active participation in the peer review event, and active involvement during the three discussion rounds addressing the guiding questions of their city under review. Peers will be asked to rethink the question (What is the problem behind the problem?). The new question will then be discussed at the table, with peers providing policy advice based on their experiences, sharing lessons learnt and best practices with the city under review.
- If desired, participation in a follow-up city-to-city exchange with the city under review to discuss more in-depth one or more specific recommendation(s) provided during the peer review.

2.5. EXPECTATIONS FOR HOST CITIES

In the application form, applicants are invited to indicate whether they would like to be considered as the host city for the peer review event.

Host cities are required to support with the logistical requirements of the event. Such support may take the form of:

- Suggesting possible venues and local service providers to be contracted by EUI,
- Contributing to the development of the plenary agenda by helping EUI PS identify city representatives, and a potential study visit itinerary.

EUI will finance the entire organisation of the peer review. No financial contribution is expected from host cities.

2.6. EXPERT SUPPORT

Each city under review will benefit from the support of two EUI Peer Review Experts that will follow them throughout the preparation, delivery and follow-up of the event (hereafter: Peer Review experts). Peer Review experts will provide the city under review with support throughout the entire peer review process, including on the following tasks:

- Identifying peers via call for peers and via direct contacts as needed,
- Accompanying cities under review with review and preparation of SAT4SUD analysis, background paper, and guiding questions as needed,

- Overseeing preparation of recommendations by peers,
- Organising webinar one month before peer review to prepare event,
- Moderating 2-day peer review event,
- Drafting of follow-up report within ten working days after event including review of EUI PS,
- Participating in follow-up webinars 6 months after peer review event.

For any country-specific peer reviews to be organised in languages other than English, a dedicated separate team of peer review experts with the necessary language skills may be composed via a separate call for experts.

The peer review experts are selected due to their specific skills and experience:

- Experience working with cities on challenges related to the design and implementation of SUD strategies and/or supporting urban authorities and stakeholders with finding possible solutions to urban policy challenges.
- Experience moderating events aimed at facilitating learning among cities.
- Experience with the use of the Joint Research Centre / Urban Development Network Peer Review methodology or similar peer review methodologies.

EUI directly covers all costs related to the activities of EUI Experts (including costs for travel and accommodation).

2.7. FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Financial support is offered to peer review participants. The financial support is provided in the form of lump sums⁹ that are paid directly to each participating urban authority (city under review and peers). The expenses covered are staff costs (only for peers), travel costs and a per diem (covering accommodation and subsistence).

The table below provides an overview of the financial support available for cities under review and peers.

Peer Reviews		
Cost	City under review	Peer ¹⁰
Staff costs	No	Up to 5 days
Travel costs	Up to 4 people, unless hosting the peer review event	Yes

⁹ A lump sum takes the form of a single payment of money. In the case of EUI capacity building activities, the lump sum is a form of simplified cost option and is payable after the submission and approval by EUI PS of the report relating to the activity.

¹⁰ For peer reviews, peers apply individually while representing the urban authority. Two peers from the same urban authority may be involved in the same peer review event, if justified.

Per diem	2 days (plus 1 travel day) for up to 4 people, unless hosting the peer review event	2 days (plus 1 travel day)
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For cities under review, the staff of urban authorities or stakeholders may participate. Financial support is available to cover travel costs and a per diem (covering subsistence and accommodation) for up to four people from cities under review. No co-financing is required. Cities under review that are hosting the peer review event may not request any financial support, as they will not incur any travel, subsistence or accommodation costs. EUI will finance the entire organisation of the peer review event; hosting cities are not expected to provide any financial contribution.

Only urban authorities can request reimbursement from EUI. Financial support for participating stakeholders may be included within the Urban Authority's Reimbursement Form, at the reporting stage (see Section 4.1 of the present document). The urban authority concerned is responsible for arranging the reimbursement arrangements with its stakeholders on how to cover their costs or distribute the funds. EUI cannot intervene in these arrangements nor reimburse stakeholders directly.

The lump sum is payable to the participating urban authorities after the approval of the Reimbursement Form by EUI PS. The lump sum is dependent on the location of the event, the distance between the hosting city and the other participating cities, and the number of staff involved from the Urban Authority that are listed in the Reimbursement Form.

The financial support covers the following expenses:

- Staff costs: Peers are entitled to receive a fixed amount of EUR 350 per working day. Peers may claim up to five working days per peer review. No staff costs are foreseen for cities under review.
- Travel costs: the travel costs of each peer and up to 4 persons for the city under review can be reimbursed. The reimbursement consists of a lump sum based on the distance of a return journey between the hosting city and the participating city concerned. For distances above 400km, the lump sums are calculated on the basis of the following [unit cost amounts per distance band](#). For distances below 400km, the lump sum is calculated by adding together the "intra Member State return journeys" of the Member states of the hosting city and the one of the participating city concerned. If the travel is within one Member state, only the "intra Member state return journey" can be reimbursed.
- Per diem: a per diem for each peer and up to four persons for the city under review can be reimbursed. The per diem is a daily rate that covers accommodation, subsistence and local transportation of the participating cities. The per diem covers the two-day duration of the peer review event plus one day to cover the necessary travel time to the hosting city. The [per diem amounts](#) are based on the European Commission Per diem rates - 25/07/2022.

Note:

- Any city hosting a peer review is not entitled to request any reimbursement for travel or per diem (subsistence and accommodation) costs.
- Participants are responsible for booking their own travel and accommodation arrangements.
- For cities under review, reimbursement is carried out only upon approval of Reimbursement Form, following cross-checking of the list of participants attending the peer review event by EUI PS and submission and validation by EUI PS of the follow-up report.

- For peers, reimbursement is carried out only upon approval of Reimbursement Form, following cross-checking of the list of participants attending the peer review event by EUI PS.
- Payments are made into the bank account of the city under review or peer urban authority. Complete bank account details are required in the Reimbursement Form, along with supporting documents proving the account is the one of the urban authorities.
- Additional participants from the cities under review may join the peer review event at their own expense.

3. APPLICATION PROCESS AND SELECTION

3.1 APPLICATION DEVELOPMENT AND PROCESS

The Call for Applications for Cities under Review will open on **4 April 2023 and close on 10 July 2023 at 12:00 noon (CEST)**. Applicants that submit their application before the **interim cut-off date of the call, on 19 June 2023 at 12:00** will be evaluated before mid-July.

Applicants are required to fill in the application form on EU Survey. A courtesy Application Form in MS word format is available on the EUI website. Applications submitted by email will be deemed ineligible. The Application Form is composed of three sections:

➤ **A. Applicant information.**

In this section, the applicant is asked to provide information on their urban authority. In addition to standard information and contact details, the applicant should provide information of the involvement of the urban authority in SUD strategies and SUD-related EU cooperation.

➤ **B. Challenges and motivation**

In this section, the applicant is invited to provide information on the challenges and motivation. The applicant will provide information on their SUD strategy, including its status and timeline, a description of the three guiding questions to be addressed, the motivation of the applicant, the participating individuals, and date/hosting preferences.

The applicant is also asked to upload in EU Survey [the report obtained after completing the SAT4SUD tool](#)¹¹. The tool can be used by Managing Authorities when assessing sustainable urban development strategies and provides feedback to Local Authorities during the strategy design and implementation processes. The tool aims to assess to what extent the strategy builds on an integrated and participatory approach as set in the New Leipzig Charter and supported in Cohesion Policy 2021-2027. Furthermore, it provides guidance when evaluating the strategy's completeness and quality, from its design and implementation to its monitoring and evaluation.

When describing **their three guiding questions**, the applicant must clarify the references to the six building blocks of the [Handbook for Sustainable Urban Development strategies](#)¹². The three challenges should be also built on the results of your SAT4SUD analysis.

In this section, the applicant is also invited to specify their willingness to act as a host city for a peer review event and indicate their preferred dates for the event. At the application stage, this information is indicative. EUI PS cannot guarantee preferred dates and that selected beneficiaries

¹¹ The Self-Assessment Tool for Sustainable Urban Development strategies is available on the Urban Data Platform Plus developed by the JRC (<https://urban.jrc.ec.europa.eu/sat4sud/en>).

¹² The six building blocks of the Handbook for Sustainable Urban Development strategies are: i) Strategic dimension; ii) Territorial focus; iii) Governance; iv) Cross-sectoral integration; v) Funding and finance; vi) Monitoring.

will be approved to host the event. Dates and hosts will be confirmed by EUI PS after the outcomes of the Call for cities under review, indicatively mid-end June.

➤ **C. Endorsement from the institution.**

In this section, the applicant is asked to confirm the endorsement of the application by an authorised signatory (i.e., with delegation and power to engage the legal person of the urban authority) from the applying urban authority and to provide their contact details. The legal obligations linked to the endorsement of the application are detailed in the Application Form.

3.2 SELECTION PROCESS

Following submission, each application is subject to an evaluation and selection process organised along the following steps:

1. Eligibility check,
2. Quality evaluation, including prioritisation score.

The evaluation and selection process will be started after the interim application deadlines and completed upon the closure of the Call for applications for cities under review, on all applications submitted via EU survey before the deadline. Applications will be evaluated by a team of experts, specialised in the peer review methodology under the supervision of EUI PS who take a final decision on the selection process.

Applicants will be notified of the decision on their application (approved or rejected) following either the interim or final deadline, depending on when they applied

3.2.1 Eligibility check

The purpose of the eligibility check is to verify the compliance of the received Application Forms with the formal eligibility criteria; avoid further assessment of ineligible applications; and ensure equal treatment of all applications to be selected for support. The eligibility check will verify the eligibility of the Application Form and the eligibility of the applicant's institution to be a city under review (as defined in Section 2.2. of the present document).

The eligibility criteria for an application from a potential city under review are the following:

1. The Application Form has been submitted electronically via EU survey before the deadline indicated in the Guidance for Applicants for the call for cities under review.
2. Mandatory fields of the Application Form are completely filled in.
3. The applicant is an urban authority of a Local Administrative Unit defined according to the degree of urbanisation as city, town or suburb (corresponding to DEGURBA code 1 or DEGURBA code 2 of Eurostat).

OR

The applicant is an association or grouping of urban authorities with legal status of organised agglomeration composed by Local Administrative Units, where the majority (at least 51%) of inhabitants lives in Local Administrative Units defined according to the degree of urbanisation (DEGURBA) of Eurostat as cities, towns or suburbs (corresponding to DEGURBA code 1 or DEGURBA code 2).

Only eligible urban authorities as defined in Section 2.2 may submit an Application Form in the framework of the Call for Applications for cities under review. An Application Form submitted by a stakeholder involved in the design and/or implementation of an urban authority's SUD strategy will be declared ineligible.

4. The applicant is located in an EU Member State.
5. The applicant is an urban authority involved in the Article 11 of ERDF Regulation, referred to in the Application Form and Guidance for Applicants as an article 11 city.
6. The person from the urban authority in charge of designing and/or implementing the SUD strategy of the applicant city is involved in the peer review process.
7. The applicant institution complies with the requirements on exclusion from access to funding (more details are provided below in the Section 2.3 "Exclusion criteria for grant applicants").
8. The authorised signatory has confirmed their endorsement of the application and their support to its implementation, if the application is approved.

If not all requirements set out above are complied with, the application is deemed ineligible, and no further assessment is undertaken. Applicants will be notified at the end of the evaluation and selection process of the eligibility of their applications.

3.2.2 Quality evaluation

Applicants that are declared eligible will be subject to a quality evaluation. Quality evaluation includes, but is not limited to, coherence and consistency of the applicant throughout the Application Form.

The quality criteria for the call are the following:

- **Challenge definition & coherence.** This includes the description of challenges, the definition of guiding questions, as well as the coherence and consistency of challenges, guiding questions with the results of SAT4SUD.
- **Consistency with article 11.** The application is consistent with the context and challenges of SUD as understood within article 11 of the Regulation. The SUD strategy to be reviewed is clearly identified, its status and timeline are coherent.
- **Motivation & building of capacities.** The applicant clearly described their motivation and what they expect to gain from the activity. The overarching goal of capacity building and peer learning is well understood.
- **Maturity of the SUD strategy.** SUD strategies should be reviewed at strategic moments in the design and implementation phases. The status and timeline of the applicant's SUD strategy will be assessed to ensure all strategies from approved applications will be reviewed at an impactful and decisive moment of the policy life cycle.¹³

The quality evaluation also includes a **prioritisation score**, in order to give priority to key target groups for EUI capacity building:

¹³ For instance, at the design stage, such moment could be before the final draft of the SUD strategy is officially voted or approved by the urban authority. At the implementation stage, such moment could be before the scaling of a policy implemented within the SUD strategy. These examples are not exhaustive and there are many other decisive moments for a peer review.

- Cities that were not article 7 Cities in the 2014-2020 period, considering they lack previous experience on developing a SUD strategy,
- Cities with up to 500,000 inhabitants,
- Cities within less developed regions
- Cities that have not benefitted from a peer review organised by the Urban Development Network in the 2014-2020 period.
- Cities within transition regions (secondary priority)

As a result of the evaluation and selection process (including the eligibility check and quality evaluation), EUI PS elaborates an evaluation of the applications. They rank all eligible applications based on the scoring of their quality evaluation. The maximum score for the quality evaluation is 8 points. In addition, a maximum of 4 points may be allocated as the prioritisation score to the overall score of the evaluation.

A Selection Committee composed of the experts and EUI PS make the final selection of approved applications. Applicants are then notified of the decision.

3.2.3 Scoring system

A scoring system is used for the evaluation to help the decision-making process. A score of 0 to 2 is attributed to each criterion, which results in an average score per project. The following scoring scale is used:

2 – good

1 – adequate

0 – poor

Please note that if an application scores 0 under any assessment criterion, it is automatically rejected and will not be further processed.

The scoring system is applied considering not only the specific merits of each application but also in the spirit of a competitive process considering comparatively the other applications submitted in the framework of the same Call for application for cities under review.

The prioritisation score will be added to the overall scoring of the quality evaluation. Individual scorings for the priority criteria are described in the table below.

Priority criteria	Scoring scale
Article 11 city that was not an article 7 city	Yes = 1
Level of regional development	Urban authority is from a less developed region = 1 Urban authority is from a region in transition = 0.5

Size of city	Urban authority with up to 500,000 = 1
Beneficiary of peer review organised by the Urban Development Network in the 2014-2020 period	No = 1

3.3 EXCLUSION CRITERIA

In accordance with Financial Regulation¹⁴, applicants may be excluded from the reimbursement procedure if the applying urban authority or persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control within the urban authority, or persons who are essential for the implementation of the project are in one or more of the following exclusion situations:

- bankruptcy, insolvency or winding-up procedures,
- breach of obligations relating to the payment of taxes or social security contributions,
- grave professional misconduct, including misrepresentation,
- fraud,
- corruption,
- conduct related to a criminal organisation,
- money laundering or terrorist financing,
- terrorist offences or offences linked to terrorist activities,
- child labour and other trafficking in human beings,
- irregularity,
- creating or being a shell company.

During the application process, all applicants must confirm with the Application Form a declaration confirming that the urban authority does not fall under one of the exclusion criteria above mentioned. This declaration is included in the Application Form in the EU survey. Please note that the Application must be duly endorsed by an authorised signatory who has delegation and power to engage the legal person of the urban authority for the application to be considered eligible during the eligibility check.

During the selection procedure and prior to the final decision of the Selection Committee on the grant award, EUI PS checks applicants in the Early Detection and Exclusion System (EDES), the system established by the European Commission to reinforce the protection of the Union's financial interests

¹⁴ Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union, amending Regulations (EU) No 1296/2013, (EU) No 1301/2013, (EU) No 1303/2013, (EU) No 1304/2013, (EU) No 1309/2013, (EU) No 1316/2013, (EU) No 223/2014, (EU) No 283/2014, and Decision No 541/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2018/1046/oj>

and to ensure sound financial management¹⁵. If an urban authority is detected in the EDES, EUI PS notifies the applicant, who has then the opportunity to present a defence before the final decision of the Selection Committee, in compliance with the principle of proportionality.

3.4 COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The EUI is committed to providing a high-quality service. A complaint is treated as any expression of dissatisfaction with our service which calls for a response. Complaints will be listened to, treated seriously, and learnt from so that we can continuously improve our service.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction whether justified or not. Complaints can cover:

- the standard of service we provide,
- the behaviour of staff or any action or lack of action by staff affecting an individual, group or organisation,
- the decisional process of supporting and financing European Urban Initiative activities,
- application evaluation related to the eligibility check, quality and operational evaluation,
- financial control procedures,
- the decisional process of the Entrusted Entity/ EUI PS during activity implementation.

Complaints do not cover: matters that have already been fully investigated through this complaints procedure, anonymous complaints, complaints about access to information where procedures and remedies are set out in legislation/regulation e.g. access to documents, general data protection.

All complaints received will be dealt with confidentially. However, we do not expect staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour by complainants. Unacceptable behaviour includes behaviour which is abusive, offensive or threatening. We will take action to protect staff from such behaviour if a complainant behaves in a way that is unreasonably persistent or vexatious.

All complaints must be submitted in English, in writing (post or email) to the following addresses:

The European Urban Initiative – Permanent Secretariat

Les Arcuriales, 45D Rue de Tournai, 7e étage

59000 Lille, France

e-mail: complaints@urban-initiative.eu

The EUI has a two-stage complaints procedure. At each stage, as much clear detail as possible needs to be provided, including (if relevant) any documents and correspondence, and including the statement

¹⁵ Article 142, Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union.

that a complaint is being made in line with the procedure. For complaints concerning project and financing decisions, a complaint can only be made if originating from the main accountable body.

Step 1: Complaints are made to EUI PS. This is the first opportunity to try and get a complaint resolved. EUI PS in liaison with the Entrusted Entity, will examine the complaint and provide answers to the complainant.

Step 2: If the response provided by EUI PS is considered unsatisfactory by the complainant and it is felt the procedures were not respected, then a formal complaint may be filed and a review by a Complaints Panel may be requested. In principle, and depending on the issue addressed, the Complaints Panel is made up of EUI PS and the Entrusted Entity. Impartiality of members of the Complaints Panel towards the case under review will be ensured. The decision if the complaint is justified or to be rejected is taken by the Complaints Panel by consensus. The decision of the Complaints Panel is final, binding to all parties and not subject to any further complaint proceedings.

Complaints must be raised maximum 15 working days following the incident in question. The Permanent Secretariat will then have 20 working days to respond to the complaint. Following the answer to the complaint, the complainant has a maximum of 15 working days from the date of the response, to request that the complaint be progressed to the next step. The review will be undertaken and communicated to the complainant within 20 working days following the request. The aim is to complete all complaints within the timescales above; however, if a complaint is very complex and/or a Complaints Panel is needed to be convened, it may occasionally be necessary to extend the time limit. If this is the case, the complainant will be kept informed of progress with the investigation, the reasons for the delay, and the new deadline. The above complaints procedure and timeframes shall not prejudice the start-up or ongoing implementation of activities financed by the European Urban Initiative.

Complaints regarding application evaluation

Applicants of ineligible or rejected applications are informed in writing about the decision. The notification includes detailed information on the reasons why the application is rejected (eligibility criteria not fulfilled, detailed comments from EUI PS concerning the quality evaluation). Only the applying urban authority can file a complaint. The urban authority can address questions about or raise objections against the eligibility or evaluation decision to EUI PS. Please note that these queries must be made within 15 working days after the first official notification of the non-selection of the application by EUI PS¹⁶. This deadline will not prejudice the start of the activity for the selected applications.

In principle, complaints can only be logged against the following criteria:

- The assessment does not correspond to the information provided by the applicant in the submitted Application Form and mandatory annexes.

¹⁶ The deadline for receiving queries starts counting from the day after the first notification was sent by the Permanent Secretariat. The notifications are dispatched only to the email addresses of the authorised signatory and contact person of the applicant. Therefore, it is responsibility of applicants to provide active email addresses and to check them regularly (including their SPAM folders). Please note that these addresses cannot be changed following submission of the application form. Therefore, the Permanent Secretariat cannot be held accountable in case the notification was not received by the applicant.

- The application evaluation and selection process failed to comply with the specific procedures laid down in the Guidance for the Call for Applications for cities under review that materially affected or could have affected the decision.

In case the complaint is justified, the case will be sent back to the Selection Committee to review the application and its evaluation.

4. CONTRACTING

4.1. CONTRACTUAL ARRANGEMENTS

By applying to the Call for Applications for cities under review or the subsequent Calls for peers, the applicant confirms that the application has been endorsed by an authorised signatory with delegation and power to engage the legal person of the Urban Authority (hereafter: authorised signatory). The Urban Authority commits to support the implementation of the activities if selected. All conditions for support from EUI are listed in the Application Form (Part C “Endorsement by the Urban Authority”). No contract is expected to be signed.

Only applications that include the endorsement from an authorised signatory from the urban authority deemed eligible. In case of any doubt, EUI PS may contact the authorised signatory listed in the Application Form to verify the information provided.

4.2. CONFIRMATION OF PARTICIPATION

Once the evaluation of all applications is completed, EUI PS will notify approved and rejected applicants with a notification letter. The notification letter will be sent to the contact persons defined in the Application Form and to the authorised signatory from the urban authority.

Approved applicants will be contacted by EUI PS for confirmation of participation. During this bilateral exchange, dates and location for the peer review event will be confirmed. Applicants will be asked to reconfirm the three guiding questions of the Application Form, as they will be included in the subsequent Call for peers for the autumn/winter peer reviews.

Upon confirmation of participation, cities under review and peers commit to participate in the peer review event on the agreed date and location. In case of unforeseen and exceptional circumstances to be pre-approved by EUI PS, the city under review may involve fewer or other staff members in the peer review compared to those listed in the application form.

5. REPORTING AND TERMS OF PAYMENT

5.1. REPORTING PROCEDURE

The peer review activities will be implemented by EUI PS in close collaboration with cities under review (as they are the main focus of the activity) and peers (as they are the key component for a successful peer review).

Both cities under review and peers are expected to communicate with EUI PS and the peer review experts on a regular basis. By participating in the activity, they commit to carry out all steps described in Section 2.3 of the present document.

The reporting of the activity will be carried out after the peer review event.

For cities under review, the submission of a completed, satisfactory follow-up report which is approved by EUI PS is the basis for payment. Cities under review must submit this report within two months of the date of the peer review event. The report must be followed by the Reimbursement Form, which includes the IBAN of the bank account of the city under review and is supported by the upload of an official Bank Account Identification Document. If the reporting is deemed satisfactory by EUI PS, then it is approved by EUI PS, which will trigger payment. If the reporting requires correction or completion, EUI PS will request ad-hoc corrective or complete actions to the city under review. If the reporting is not completed, or still unsatisfactory after requests for correction/completion have been sent by EUI PS, the city under review will not receive reimbursement, or benefit from promotional opportunities from EUI PS (e.g. invitation to participate in capitalisation studies, or invitations to speak in capacity building events etc) or benefit from a fast-track application for city-to-city exchanges.

5.2. TERMS OF REIMBURSEMENT

The reimbursement of costs incurred during a peer review by the city under review and peers will be carried out by EUI PS, provided that all tasks described in chapter 4.1 are completed at the expected quality. The reporting procedure will lead to payment of the approved amounts to the city under review and peers based on the on-time submission and following approval by EUI PS of the Report and Reimbursement Form following approval.

The Reimbursement Form template to be used will be provided to the city under review and peers after the peer review event. Besides information on the eligible costs of their participating representatives (employees of the urban authority or other relevant invited stakeholders), the cities under review and peer(s) will provide their bank account data on the Reimbursement Form. Payment to the city under review and peers shall be made by EUI PS no later than 80 days from the date of the approvals of their Reimbursement Form.

6. EXPECTATIONS FOR CITIES UNDER REVIEW AFTER THE EVENT

6.1. ACTING AS A PEER

Cities under review are expected to act as a peer in future peer review events. This expectation to also review another city is a valuable part of the capacity building process that will bring additional insights to the city under review. Participating as a peer brings new outlooks on the challenges addressed by the peer review. It is also a networking opportunity and helps to foster the development of an EUI capacity building community.

6.2. ACTING AS AN AMBASSADOR

All participants are expected to act as **an ambassador of the peer review activity**. Such role will be especially expected of participants from cities under review. Acting as an ambassador may include:

- Disseminating the results and outcomes of the peer review within their institution and among stakeholders.
- Participating in EUI capacity building events as a participants or speakers (when invited)

- Participating in activities organised by EUI PS to promote peer reviews and share testimonies from previous participants.
- Sharing within their professional networks and on social media the outcomes and benefits of the peer review activity.

When relevant, EUI PS may provide the participants and ambassadors with ad-hoc templates for communication and dissemination of the activity.

6.3. EXPECTATION FOR CAPITALISATION ACTIVITIES

Throughout the implementation of the peer review, by discussing challenges related to SUD strategies, the cities under review will generate an important wealth of knowledge about the strategy process (i.e. what worked, what did not work and what could be done differently). This knowledge will be captured (mainly through the involvement of peer review experts) and shared with other policy makers and practitioners across Europe.

Different mechanisms will be set up to ensure the capitalisation and transfer of knowledge. The results of peer review activities will be transferred to capitalisation activities carried out by EUI PS and may feed into the work of the European Commission Joint Research Centre, to help build knowledge on challenges and possible solutions for the design and implementation of SUD strategies.

When relevant and upon request from EUI PS, peer review participants are expected to participate in capitalisation activities, which may include studies on elements discussed during their Peer Review.

6.4. EXPECTATIONS ON COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY OF EU FUNDS

Capacity Building activities are co-financed by public funds. Beneficiaries must consequently acknowledge their funding source, the support from the European Union and communicate the role and achievements of the European Urban Initiative.

Article 50 of the Regulation 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 lays down beneficiaries' obligations regarding information and communication measures for the public. Visibility requirements apply to all co-financed printed and digital products, publications, online, offline, and on-site activities and events. In order to properly follow the visibility requirements:

- Beneficiaries must include the EU emblem and reference to the ERDF support from the EU
- Urban authorities must include:
 - a statement that highlights the support from the EU and EUI in all documents and communication materials for general public and for participants
 - on its official website and social media sites, if such exist, a short description of the activity, proportionate to the level of support, including its aims and results, and highlighting the financial support from the European Union.

The following materials and templates are available on the EUI website:

- European Urban Initiative Visual Identity
- European Urban Initiative Brand book
- Templates: (i) PowerPoint and Word, (ii) letter paper, (iii) publication layout

7. HOW TO GET ASSISTANCE

EUI PS staff are ready to assist applicants with any questions they may have related to the call

- Applicants may contact the EUI PS team with specific queries at capacitybuilding@urban-initiative.eu
- EUI PS organised two Applicant Webinars: 5 April and 3 May 2023. The webinars were broadcasted online and the recordings may be accessed at the following [link](#).
- Bilateral online consultations will be offered. Interested applicants are required to first read the full call documentation, watch the webinar recording, and to prepare a list of questions before the consultations. The consultations can be booked [here](#).

8. KEY DATES

- **04/04/2023** – launch of the first Call for Applications for cities under review.
- **05/03/2023 – 07/07/2023** – bilateral online consultations
- **05/04/2023** – Applicant Webinar
- **03/05/2023** – Applicant Webinar
- **29/05/2023** – First interim cut-off date of the call
- **19/06/2023** – Second interim cut-off date of the call
- **10/07/2023** – closure of call and deadline for submitting an application
- **16/06/2023** – indicative and earliest date for the end of the first phase of evaluation.
- **12/06/2023 – 21/07/2023** – bilateral contacts with selected cities under review and contracting.
- **21/07/2023** – confirmation of date and location for peer review sessions and start date of content preparation.