



Background document for applicants

Thematic Partnership on Cities of Equality



July 2023





**EUROPEAN
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GLOSSARY:

CALM	Coordinators and Action Leaders Members
CoE	Cities of Equality
DGUM	Directorate General Urban Matters
EAA	Ex-Ante Assessment
EUI	European Urban Initiative
UAEU	Urban Agenda for the EU
UIA	Urban Innovative Actions
UDG	Urban Development Group
OFC	Other Forms of Cooperation



1 Context of the Call and selection process

This Call for expression of interest for Partners aims at establishing the **Partnerships** under the Urban Agenda for the European Union (UAEU) on (i) **Cities of Equality** and (ii) **Food**.

This Call is preceded by **Ex-Ante Assessments (EAA)** on the "Food" and "Cities of Equality" themes. The EAA was proposed as a new step towards the creation of Partnerships and Other Forms of Cooperation (OFC) in the scope of the new phase of the UAEU established by the Ljubljana Agreement. The EAAs were developed between 18 of January and 30 of June 2023, to deploy a pragmatic, effective and result-oriented approach aiming at increasing the impact of future UAEU deliverables. The EAA has the purpose to optimise focus, timing and activities of the multi-level cooperation, as well as safeguard suitable level of partners' thematic and procedural expertise, in view of proposing an analysis and recommendations as to the conditions to launch a Call to create two new Partnerships of the UAEU.

Both EAA reports highlight the importance of a launch of the Partnerships and propose recommendations for a possible thematic focus of the Thematic Partnerships in relation to Better Knowledge, Better Funding and Better Regulation pillars. The final EAA reports were welcomed by the **Directors General on Urban Matters (DGUM)** via a written procedure and a decision was taken to launch the Calls for the selection of Partners.

As per the Multiannual Working Programme accompanying the [Ljubljana Agreement](#), urban authorities, Regions, Partner States, city consortiums and national city umbrella organisations are able to apply to this call. Moreover, Member States and other stakeholders (Managing Authorities for EU funds, experts/academia, NGOs, economic and social partners, civil society organisations and private sector representatives) are also able to apply to the Call. The eligible categories of Partners are specified under each priority theme, in the corresponding section below.

The Call will remain open - until 29 September 2023.

Once the Call is closed, the assessment of the application will start and then a **proposed list of selected partners** will be presented by the Urban Development Group to the **Directors General on Urban Matters** on seeking for their decision. The final agreement on the establishment of the Partnerships on Cities of Equality and Food will officially take place at the occasion of the Informal Ministerial Meeting of 13-14 November 2023.

2 Background information on the UAEU and partners' responsibilities

2.1 What is the Urban Agenda for the EU?

The following sections aim at identifying the **key objectives and features of the Urban Agenda for the European Union (UAEU)**. Applicants who wish to have more in-depth knowledge on the UAEU may read the following relevant material which contain more comprehensive information and details.

- [Pact of Amsterdam \(2016\)](#)
- [Assessment Study of the Urban Agenda for the European Union \(2019\)](#)
- [New Leipzig Charter \(2020\) & its Implementation Document \(2020\)](#)
- [Ljubljana Agreement \(2021\) and Multiannual Working Programme for the Urban Agenda for the EU - the Next Generation \(2021\)](#)
- [Urban Agenda for the EU: Multi-level governance in action \(2021\)](#)
- [The UAEU website: www.urbanagenda.urban-initiative.eu/](http://www.urbanagenda.urban-initiative.eu/)

The Urban Agenda for the EU is an **innovative multi-level governance initiative on urban policy**, developed in the scope of intergovernmental cooperation on urban matters, and officially established by the [Pact of Amsterdam](#) in 2016. It enables cities, Member States, city networks, the European Commission, other EU institutions, the Union's advisory bodies, and other stakeholders to come together to **jointly tackle pressing urban matters** and deliver concrete outputs for the benefit of EU citizens. The Urban Agenda for the EU is **boosting the role of cities** in national and EU policymaking to better connect the EU with citizens' needs. It is a key delivery mechanism at EU level for the [New Urban Agenda \(Habitat III\)](#).

Making **multi-level governance** tangible has been recognised as one of the most important successes of the Urban Agenda for the EU. Multi-level governance is crucial beyond this initiative and at the EU level, it is widely promoted through **Cohesion policy** in order to target the investments in the most efficient and balanced way.

'The main **aim** of the Urban Agenda for the European Union is to **identify and tackle urban challenges** by bringing together Member States, cities, the European Commission and other stakeholders, into a framework for dialogue and finding solutions on policy initiatives that affect urban areas (Pact of Amsterdam, 2016). The Urban Agenda proposes to use a new multi-level, multi-stakeholder working method to better achieve the objectives of the Union and national policy by involving urban authorities in both the design and implementation phases of policy making. This in turn is intended to **strengthen the urban dimension of**

policies as well as facilitate their uptake, ultimately leading to a more efficient and effective policy making and implementation process. [...] The Urban Agenda seeks to stimulate action along three key objectives (or “pillars”): **Better Regulation, Better Funding and Better Knowledge**.



Figure 1 - Source: EUI

In addition, the UAEU aims to address several cross-cutting issues and thematic priorities'. [...] 'The Pact of Amsterdam led to the selection of an initial list of 12 priority themes for challenges to be addressed in Thematic Partnerships. In 2018, two more themes were added, and two Thematic Partnerships launched accordingly' (Assessment study, 2019). Lastly, in 2021 the Ljubljana Agreement defined other four thematic focuses: Greening Cities, Sustainable Tourism (which had been launched in winter 2022) and Food and Cities of Equality (which will be launched in 2023).

1. Urban Poverty
2. Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees
3. Housing
4. Air Quality
5. Urban Mobility
6. Digital Transition
7. Circular Economy
8. Jobs and Skills in the Local Economy
9. Sustainable Land Use
10. Public Procurement
11. Energy Transition
12. Climate Adaptation
-
13. Culture/Cultural Heritage
14. Security in Public Spaces
-
15. Greening Cities
16. Sustainable Tourism

At the moment of writing this document, the 16 Partnerships have brought together 25 Member States, 100 cities and/or metropolitan regions, 18 regions and 15 Directorate-Generals of the European Commission, and no less than 44 institutions, ranging from European umbrella organisations, programmes and networks, to civil society organisations and private companies.

2.2 The process of the UAEU:

As per the Pact of Amsterdam, a Partnership achieves results in about three years but the partners may agree to prolong their activities. Each Partnership is tasked to prepare an **action plan which contains actions** (and possibly recommendations) that aim at addressing issues that hamper urban development in the specific thematic area and that are meant to be implemented after. The actions target one (or more) specific pillar(s) of the UAEU on Better Regulation, Better Knowledge and/or Better Funding and are addressed at the local level, national level and/or EU level. As for the type of actions, these may include the development of (new) data and indicators, guidance documents and handbooks, roadmaps/strategies, the design of a new governance structure, impact assessments, policy recommendations, toolkits etc. Each action has an action leader and contributors. Each action describes the issue at stake and explains what action is needed to solve this issue, including how it will be concretely implemented, by when and by whom. For more inspiration on what previous actions had been defined and implemented, you can consult the [Urban Agenda for the EU Brochure](#) as well as the [Monitoring Table of Actions \(version 2021\)](#)

In order to reach the final action plan, the Partnership enters a **scoping phase** that includes brainstorming on the themes and challenges, elaborating the objectives of the Partnership etc. This materialised with a scoping or orientation paper. As the current two themes: Food and Cities of Equality have been subject to an **Ex-Ante Assessment**, the scoping phase will be reduced in time and scope. The EAA represents a major contribution to the scoping phase and could be considered as the **baseline document for this phase**. Partnerships will have the flexibility to choose the specific topics they will be working on, considering **the recommended thematic focus**, and will draft an orientation paper that will explain the rationale of their choice.

After this phase, the Partnership enters into the **stocktaking phase**, which entails analytical and research work on the identification of specific bottlenecks, mapping existing solutions and an initial brainstorming on themes and challenges. After this, the Partnership establishes a **shortlist of possible actions** to work on, and they decide jointly, as Partnership, which actions they select to be included in the action plan. Partners identify the objectives and deliverables per action and draft the **action plan**. Actions should be new, address a real need, be implemented, have visible impact, and concern several cities and Member States.

The action plan goes through a **public feedback** (consultation) on a dedicated portal and relevant colleagues in the European Commission are consulted. The Partnership revises the action plan following comments received and the document is presented to the Urban Development Group who may provide additional feedback. The Partnership revises the action plan accordingly. The action plan is considered final once presented at the meeting of Directors General on Urban

Matters (which takes place one time per semester) and the implementation of actions may begin. All these phases, including the implementation phase that follows the finalisation of the action plan, entail a number of Partnership meetings as well as work in between these meetings. The number of meetings depends on the working method of the Partnership.

As mentioned in the Pact of Amsterdam, the UAEU ‘will be taken forward by Member States together with the European Commission, the European Parliament, the European Committee of the Regions, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), the European Investment Bank (EIB), representatives of the European Urban Authorities and other relevant stakeholders.’

2.3 The governance bodies of the UAEU:

‘The strategic steering of the UAEU is provided by the **Directors-General on Urban Matters (DGUM)**, which is the high-level decision-making body initiated prior to the Urban Agenda for the EU. The DGUM is composed of all Member States, the Commission and city representatives and associations (European Committee of the Regions (CoR), Eurocities, Council of the European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), and is co-chaired by the country holding the EU Presidency and the Commission (European Commission, 2017). The DGUM meetings may include a range of organisations as observers, such as representatives of Partner States, European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), European Parliament (EP), European Investment Bank (EIB), URBACT, ESPON and European Urban Knowledge Network (EUKN) (European Commission, 2016)’ (Assessment study, 2019).

‘The **Urban Development Group (UDG)** (expert working level) is made up of representatives of the Member State ministries responsible for urban issues, as well as other representatives of the multiple levels of governance (EC, EP, EIB, CoR, EESC, city representatives Eurocities and CEMR). Several organisations and networks may act as **observers** and / or be invited to participate in a particular relevant session, such as Partner States, URBACT, ESPON, JPI Urban Europe and EUKN. The UDG is an informal advisory body to the Directors-General’s on Urban Matters (DGUM). Its role is to both review the progress of the Partnerships and discuss issues pertaining to the UAEU at the intergovernmental level (European Commission, 2016). In principle, DGUM takes decisions based on the opinion forming process at the level of the UDG’ (Assessment study, 2019).

‘It was considered that the work of the Partnerships requires “operational guidance and interpretation of aspects of the Pact of Amsterdam and its Working Programme in between UDG meetings.” (Bulgarian Presidency of the EU Council, 2018) [...] The mandate, scope, responsibilities tasks of an **Urban Agenda Technical Preparatory Group (UATPG)** was thus created as a non-decision-making body, to act “as a technical executive group, supporting the actual Presidency of the Council in preparing UDG and DGUM meetings only with respect to the items

related to UAEU”, and coordinate the technical issues related to the preparation of UAEU Partnerships (ibid). The UATPG is composed of 10 members, including: six Member States at a time – representing the rolling Presidencies (the two past Presidencies, the current one and the three succeeding ones); Commission (with the UAEU Technical Secretariat until available); three members in total from the European Committee of the Regions, Eurocities and CEMR’ (Assessment study, 2019).

In 2021, the **renewal process of the Urban Agenda for the EU** started, in line with the directions provided by the New Leipzig Charter and its Implementing document. The renewal of the UAEU was concluded by the adoption of the **Ljubljana Agreement on 26 November 2021**, which lays out the updated parameters for its implementation over the period 2022-2026. It materialised the start of a new phase of the Urban Agenda for the EU, including its operational parameters, work method and steps. The Pact of Amsterdam remains valid as a framework document for this intergovernmental multi-level governance initiative.

The Ljubljana Agreement emphasises some new features of the UAEU. The **ex-ante assessment (EAA) of priority themes** is a step put in place prior to the establishment of the Partnerships to raise the impact of the work developed by the Partnerships, and to better correlate it to the EU policy and regulatory framework. The first EAA had been prepared in 2022 for the UAEU Partnerships of Greening Cities and Sustainable Tourism. Moreover, **Other Forms of Cooperation** can be established, besides Partnerships, with a more flexible approach (shorter duration, targeted on a specific angle or question, smaller group etc.). Finally, more attention will be paid to the role and participation of **small and medium size cities**.

2.4 Role of Partners within the Partnership

The following sections aim at capturing some of the expected roles of the partners in the scope of the Partnership in a succinct and non-exhaustive manner. The Pact of Amsterdam and the Multiannual Working Programme contain more comprehensive information and details on these roles.

Cities

Urban authority representatives are at the heart of the UAEU. They identify the challenges they face at the local level and act as partner by contributing to the work on the actions and to their implementation (also as action leader), by bringing inputs, by making the link to relevant activities or resources and by taking part in meetings. They also liaise with other cities to create bigger impact on the implementation of actions.

City organisations (European and national) and URBACT



City organisation such as the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), EUROCITIES, other bodies representing Urban Authorities at European and national level, as well as EU programmes dedicated to sustainable urban development such as URBACT and The European Urban Initiative (EUI) bring their expertise and experience on the exchange of good practices and knowledge. They act as partner, by contributing to the work on the actions and to their implementation (also as action leader), by bringing inputs, by making the link to relevant activities or resources and by taking part in meetings. They disseminate the outcomes of the UAEU to the cities which are part of their networks and promote synergies with a second circle of cities, who may in turn, contribute to the Partnership.

Member States

Member States ensure that the UAEU outcomes reach the local authorities in their Member State, e.g. by sharing the outcomes with cities that are not directly participating in the UAEU. Member States may provide financial resources to the implementation of the UAEU, e.g. through the organisation of meetings/events, the translation of documents in their national language, the support for the participation of cities etc. They act as partner, by contributing to the work on the actions and to their implementation (also as action leader), by bringing inputs, by making the link to relevant activities or resources and by taking part in meetings.

EU Institutions

The **European Commission** acts as facilitator of the UAEU by providing EU funds to support the Partnerships' activities and by making the link with the EUI Permanent Secretariat. The Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy coordinates the EU support and helps to connect to relevant services within the European Commission to support the design and implementation of actions. The European Commission services act as partner of the Partnership, by contributing to the work on the actions and to their implementation (also as action leader), by bringing inputs, by making the link to relevant activities or resources and by taking part in meetings.

The **European Parliament** may consider the results and recommendations of the Partnerships for the agenda of relevant Committees when discussing relevant new and existing EU legislation and the [Urban Intergroup](#) may play an advisory role in the UAEU process.

The **European Committee of the Regions** and **European and Economic and Social Committee** may act as partner by contributing to the work on the actions and to their implementation (also as action leader), by bringing inputs, by making the link to relevant activities or resources and by taking part in meetings. They may contribute to the outreach of the UAEU, with dedicated activities aiming to involve a broader range of local authorities and civil society organisations.



The **European Investment Bank (EIB)** acts as partner by contributing to the work on the actions and to their implementation (also as action leader), by bringing inputs, by making the link to relevant activities or resources and by taking part in meetings.

Other stakeholders

Other stakeholders act as partner, by contributing to the work on the actions and to their implementation (also as action leader), by bringing inputs, by making the link to relevant activities or resources and by taking part in meetings.

Coordinators

Coordinators are responsible for the overall coordination of Partnership activities and are the main contact person for internal and external communication and outreach. They organise and chair Partnership meetings, organise and coordinate the work in between meetings, send e-mails to partners, reach out other Partnership Coordinators, represent the Partnership in conferences, monitor and report on the Partnership's activities etc. Coordinators act as partner, by contributing to the work on the actions and to their implementation (also as action leader), by bringing inputs, by making the link to relevant activities or resources and by taking part in meetings.

2.5 The European Urban Initiative

The Cohesion policy legislative package for 2021-2027 includes the establishment of the [European Urban Initiative](#) (set out in Article 12 of Regulation No 2021/1058 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on the European Regional Development Fund and on the Cohesion Fund¹ - ERDF/CF Regulation) – an instrument of the European Union, successor of the [Urban Innovative Actions](#) Initiative implemented during the 2014-2020 programming period and building also on activities undertaken in the Urbact III Programme and Urban Development Network.

This Initiative is 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 European Union relevance. The EUI provides, overall, different levels of assistance:

- **Supporting urban authorities with up to 80% direct co-financing** and up to €5M ERDF, allowing EU cities to experiment as testbeds for their innovative idea and transferring it to other cities.

¹ Regulation (EU) 2021/1058 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on the European Regional Development Fund and on the Cohesion Fund: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32021R1058>.

- **Strengthening capacities of cities** in the design and implementation of sustainable urban development strategies, policies and practices in an integrated and participative way.
- **Providing a knowledge environment for cities** to ensure easier access to horizontal and thematic knowledge and share the know-how on sustainable urban development.
- **Supporting the Urban Agenda for the EU (UAEU)**, and upon request of Member State(s), supporting the intergovernmental cooperation on urban matters.

The EUI is managed by the EC's Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO) via indirect management. The EC has designated the [Region Hauts-de-France](#) (France) as Entrusted Entity, for the implementation of EUI. The EUI Permanent Secretariat has been created to assist the Entrusted Entity and to ensure the day-to-day management of EUI.

One of the objectives of the EUI is to **provide support to the Urban Agenda for the EU** as indicated in the Pact of Amsterdam and Ljubljana Agreement and further detailed in Annex 1b) to the Contribution Agreement between the Commission and the Region Hauts-de-France.

2.6 Support to the UAEU Partnership

The **support to Partnerships and Other Forms of Cooperation (OFC)** is described in the Multiannual working Programme², namely:

Requirements for technical support for Partnerships and OFC:

- Providing templates of Action Plans, securing consultation method for draft Action Plan and facilitate reporting to UDG/DGUM;
- Maintaining a website and social media communication effort for Partnerships/OFCs follow up;
- Providing adequate expert support in cooperation with Partnership/OFC;
- Providing specific to small and medium size cities³, in order to secure the participation of members in the Partnership/OFC
- Organising ideally an annual coordinators' – and if relevant – action leaders' meeting (CALM).

Other potential elements of technical support required by Partnerships:

- Translation of finalised Action Plans into national language when organised by an individual Member State;
- Calls for contributions, evaluations;

² https://www.urbanagenda.urban-initiative.eu/sites/default/files/2022-10/multiannual_working_programme_uaeu_2022_2026.pdf

³ A support scheme for travel and accommodation reimbursement is put in place for urban authorities under a certain threshold to benefit in the framework of their participation to a Partnership



- Administrative support for Partnerships/ OFC;
- Support for communication and outreach activities, such as:
 - Providing a visual identity for UAEU and corresponding materials to be used by Partnerships/OFC;
 - Hosting webinars and online outreach activities;
 - Surveys and peer reviews;
- Case studies

The support will build on the outputs from the previous years of work and implementation, and will seek to integrating as much as possible elements of the relevant urban-related initiatives and programmes as well as the other work streams of the EUI. The UAEU will benefit from wider support in the context of the EUI, notably National Urban Contact Points that will assist in the communication, dissemination and capitalisation activities of the UAEU and support relevant outreach.

The support to be provided by the EUI will include, among others:

- I. the setting up of new Partnerships (including the ex-ante assessments of Partnership proposals), and possibly Other Forms of Cooperation on an ad-hoc basis;
- II. the implementation of the UAEU and delivery of actions, with expertise support; and
- III. the setting up of capitalisation, communication and dissemination activities on the outcomes/results of the UAEU.



3 The new Thematic Partnership on Cities of Equality

The objective of this **call for Expression of Interest** is to **select suitable and motivated partners for the UAEU Thematic Partnership** on Cities of Equality.

The analysis presented in the related Ex-Ante Assessment report confirms that the opportunity to launch the 'Cities of Equality' partnership is excellent at this time. The 'Cities of Equality' theme is extremely well aligned with the current EU priorities, especially [the Union of Equality](#) initiative *presented in the State of the Union 2020 address by the Ursula von der Leyen - President of the European Commission*⁴ and launched in 2021. While this initiative focuses on mainstreaming equality at the EU and MS level, there is more work to be done at the city level and especially the urban dimensions that Urban Agenda for the EU is dedicated to. This is where the UAEU Partnership on 'Cities of Equality' can bring added value.

The multidimensional nature of the Cities of Equality (CoE) theme calls for a capacity to deal with complex challenges and to ensure strong levels of coherence across policy spheres and their implementation.

Multi-level governance approach is compatible and essential for CoE. as the theme requires a comprehensive approach that aligns vision, incentives, and delivery mechanisms from the EU, through MS, regional, and city levels. The importance of the involvement of cities in general, and small & medium-sized in particular is key.

The Cities of Equality theme is strongly aligned with the EU headline priorities (especially European Commission Work Programme 2023, the Union of Equality initiative, and Cohesion Policy 2021-2027). It's also aligned with four EU policy strands: Green Transition (European Green Deal, the Renovation Wave), Urban and Territorial strand (including the New Leipzig Charter, the Pact of Amsterdam, Ljubljana Agreement, New European Bauhaus, the Territorial Agenda 2030), Social Economy strand (European Action Plan for the Social Economy, The Transition Pathway for the Proximity and Social Economy Industrial Ecosystem), and Digital Transition (European Digital Strategy). Additionally, it continues the innovative work started in some of the Urban Innovative Actions (UIA) funded projects⁵.

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_20_1655

⁵ <https://www.uia-initiative.eu/en/uia-cities>

The CoE theme enjoys a favourable **regulatory environment** throughout. ‘Equality’ is the key value of the EU, with a comprehensive legislative framework, directives, strategies, and action plans. This **legislative framework** provides protection against discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, religion and belief, race and ethnic origin. The EU laws are transposed to all EU Member States and EU and Member State legal systems have provisions to ensure legal equality principles are elevated to include equity and justice in practical terms.

However, there is more work to be done to implement the EU and MS legislative provisions advancing ‘equality and non-discrimination’ at the city levels. Using urban planning and policy as their key expertise they can move from reactive practices of anti-discrimination law enforcement to proactively creating environments for equality, they can build ‘cities of equality’ – places that consider the diverse needs of all individuals and social groups and provide an environment that allows them to live their lives fully.

The triple transition the European policies are supporting at the moment, green, digital and just, along with the urban and environmental transformation are all a great opportunity, as they come not only with plans and visions but also with substantial resources and funding. However, while all the policies explicitly support inclusion and equality, the key challenge is that there are seldom concrete strategies accompanying these ambitions, in general and at city levels. Social dimension, as it has been said many times, is still a weak link This is the opportunity the future partnership should seize.

3.1 Thematic focus

The Cities of Equality theme is new, innovative and complex. As such it does not have an agreed upon definition in policy and regulatory context. This is a challenge as well as the opportunity for the new partnership. In this section we provide a working interpretation of the theme.

The notion of Equality recognises that historically certain groups of people with now legally protected characteristics such as race or ethnic origin, disability, sex and sexual orientation, religion and belief and more have experienced discrimination. In general terms notion of equality is about ensuring that every individual has an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents. It is also the belief that no one should have lesser life chances because of the way they were born, where they come from, what they believe, or whether they have a disability.

The new Thematic Partnership will focus on **specific issues** related to equality in cities.

The cities that can successfully and proactively create environments for equality are those that consider the diverse needs of all individuals and social groups, plan for and provide equal opportunities for all, regardless of age, disability, gender, sexual orientation (LGBTIQ), religion and belief, race and ethnic origin (incl. country of origin), or socio-economic status – leaving no one behind.

In order to achieve this ambition whilst creating the environments for equality, both targeted interventions that benefit protected groups specifically and holistic thinking aimed at ensuring cities work for all are needed. The principle of intersectionality⁶ must be respected.

There is a vast number of urban and policy areas where the need and ambitions for achieving equality have been expressed. These are noted in Table 1. This expansive range of policy domains is a testament to the ambition to achieve equality throughout and the challenges of inequality observed. Achieving equality requires mainstreaming it throughout policy domains at the EU, national and city levels. The Partnership will have a choice regarding the particular policy domains where it wishes to mainstream equality in and provide concrete, actionable strategies. In order to aid shortlisting of the potential policy domains within the overall equality work in cities, the table 1 provides a cross reference with the most quoted expressions of exclusion quoted in the regulation, action plans and strategies focusing on specific population groups (or grounds of discrimination).

Tables 2, 3 and 4 provide a tentative and non-exhaustive list of potential sub-themes that may be used for that purpose.

Table 1 Policy domains where the equality has been expressed as an ambition		
Policy themes	Policy domains of relevance to CoE theme noted by the EAA stakeholders and identified in the selected EU policy documents	Urban expressions of exclusion
Inclusive urban planning, renewal and supply of urban infrastructure at the city level	Housing (including access adequate, supported, affordable housing, eligibility criteria, homelessness)	
	Accessibility (Universal Design)	
	Urban mobility and transportation	
	Public spaces (access and accessibility)	
	Urban and city infrastructure renewal	
	Urban resilience	

⁶ Intersectionality is an analytical framework for understanding how a person's various social and political identities combine to create different modes of discrimination and privilege. Intersectionality identifies multiple factors of advantage and disadvantage.



	Informal settlements (and unplanned and unauthorized construction)	
	Tackling spatial segregation at the city and neighbourhood levels (Territorial dimension of social exclusion)	
Social inclusion, including institutions for equality at the city level	Access to services (health, education, transport, health, care and other public services)	
	Digital transition (as the means for access to services)	
	Culture and sport	
	Democracy, elections and participation in local life (incl. participation in decision-making).	
	Transformation of public institutions	
	Mechanisms and structures for support victims of discrimination	
Economic inclusion and equal economic opportunities at the city level	Social economy businesses	
	Employment and skills	
	Inclusive labour markets (including green and digital transition trends in the job market)	
	Entrepreneurship support	
Themes setting overall context the green transition		
Green Transition	Environmental justice	
	Biodiversity	
	Air Quality	
	Food	

Source: The analysis conducted for Cities of Equalities EAA by Dr Orna Rosenfeld

Table 2 Sub-themes for Better Regulation

Sub-theme	Reasoning/Relevant Regulation
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<p>1. Mainstreaming equality in the existing policy areas</p>	<p>Equality is a goal shaped through non-discrimination on grounds of age, disability, gender, sexual orientation (LGBTIQ), religion and belief, race & ethnic origin and others. To achieve it, equality mainstreaming is the incorporation of a focus on equality, non-discrimination and diversity into all legislation, policies and programmes designed and developed at all levels and at all stages of the planning process and into the policies, procedures and practices of all institutions involved in the design and delivery of public sector policies and programmes.</p> <p>The key policy domains of interest to the EAA stakeholders are noted in Table 1 (shortlist available above). They present a choice for focus for the future partnership under this sub-theme/action.</p>
<p>2. Implementation of the available regulation at the city level</p>	<p>While a comprehensive set of regulations for 'equality and non-discrimination' are available at the EU and MS levels, their full implementation at the local or city level remains a key challenge.</p> <p>The partnership could consider improving the implementation of the existing regulation (see Table 2, 3 and 4) at the city level.</p>
<p>3. Development of concrete equality strategies for the EU policies</p>	<p>The EU policies note ambitions to achieve equality (incl. equitable, fair or just results) while leaving no one behind. While there is adherence to horizontal rules, the equality perspective of concrete strategies relevant to the urban context (including action plans and monitoring) could be better and more concretely reinforced. Furthermore, the existing strategies under the Union of Equality could in turn, further strengthen their urban perspective, building on the already recognised importance of cities and local authorities in addressing inequalities.</p> <p>The concrete action could include mainstreaming equality in the urban policy areas of choice by the Partnerships (the policy areas relevant to the EAA stakeholders are noted in Table 1).</p>
<p>4. Development of concrete equality strategies at the city level</p>	<p>While considered at the EU and MS levels, equality is ultimately achieved (or not) at the city level.</p> <p>In order to ensure progress towards equality ambitions for all (while leaving no one behind), the cities need concrete equality strategies that address their urban policies and interventions. This includes considerations of the equality of opportunity and equality of outcome.</p>
<p>5. Developing system-level coherence between social and urban policies</p>	<p>Social policies (addressing various aspects of equality and non-discrimination) are often designed at the national level, while city development (and urban development) are local competencies. There is a need for developing system-level coherence between social and urban policies at the city levels (this includes identifying and addressing bottlenecks).</p>
<p>6. Coordination (vertical)</p>	<p>The regulations and policies relevant to the 'Cities of Equality' theme are designed at the EU, national, regional and local levels. It is important to improve the coordination and collaboration between the EU, MS, regional and local levels to deliver the best results (in the policy areas of the future Partnership's choice).</p> <p>It is relevant to look at every government layer to understand the perspectives and identify potential bottlenecks to devise concrete strategies for improving coordination.</p>
<p>7. Coordination (horizontal)</p>	<p>The horizontal coordination also called a 'whole government approach,' is essential to consider. It is vital to deliver coordinated interventions with the capacity to ensure that the urban interventions at the city level provide equitable outcomes and remove barriers (be it physical or societal).</p> <p>This involves horizontal coordination within departments of local public authorities (eg. Addressing challenges related to internal coordination within</p>



	<p>urban authorities in implementing integrated solutions including equality, social inclusion and the fight against discrimination, among other issues).</p> <p>It also includes the coordination between sectors (private, public and civil society) and disciplines (social and urban). This includes social economy businesses operating at the local level.</p>
<p>8. Participation and engagement of the protected population groups in local life and the decision-making processes</p>	<p>One of the key challenges to understanding the challenges and needs the protected population groups at the local level face is the insufficient stakeholder engagement and lack of capacity to use quadruple helix in addressing equality challenges. This involves both analogue and (increasingly) digital participation methods.</p> <p>Strategies to involve protected population groups/grounds in the decision-making and shaping of urban environments are the key. These strategies should take an intersectional approach while ensuring no one is left behind. This includes both analogue and digital involvement.</p>
<p>9. Capacity Building</p>	<p>While the ambitions to advance ‘equality’ in cities may be present, the city administration often lacks capacity (including resources) and expertise at an urban level. This is especially true with the innovative approaches to equality, such as intersectionality and their mainstreaming into concrete urban policy spheres and areas.</p> <p>City-level equality initiatives and projects could be increased through capacity building and technical assistance to project implementers, especially at the local level – local governments. This could involve developing toolkits, workshops, peer to peer learning, among other issues and using Cohesion Policy funding available for capacity building and technical assistance.</p>
<p>Source: The analysis conducted for Cities of Equalities EAA by Dr Orna Rosenfeld</p>	



Table 3 Sub-themes for Better Knowledge

Sub-theme	Reasoning
1. Best Practices Database	<p>The best practices are an important source of information and inspiration for cities and other stakeholders. However, in the case of the 'Cities of Equality', the information about the best practices (on different initiatives promoting equality in cities) on design, process and implementation is still missing.</p> <p>A centralised best practices database on the aspects of equality of cities chosen by the future Partnership would be of great benefit. The database could be accompanied by guidance and toolkits inspired by this knowledge.</p> <p>Such a database could build on the existing compendium of EU Capitals of Inclusion and Diversity, Access City Awards, and other fora where good examples have been collected.</p> <p>As part of this sub-theme, members should agree on a benchmark for good practices' quality, grounded in relevant legal and policy frameworks included in this report.</p>
2. Toolkits for implementing the intersectional approach to mainstreaming equality in urban dimensions at the city level	<p>An intersectional approach to equality appears to be a promising way to progress towards 'leaving no one behind' ambitions expressed in the EU, MS and local policy sphere (especially considering concrete urban interventions and themes). However, the skills to implement this approach are still limited.</p> <p>Toolkits for implementing the intersectional approach and mainstreaming equality in urban policies, practices and implementation (of the choice of the partnership) at the city levels would be of great value.</p>
3. Peer-to-peer learning and exchange	<p>Encouraging collaboration and knowledge-sharing - exchange of best practices, innovative solutions, and lessons learned among cities are of great importance. This can contribute to more effective and impactful projects in the long run, and boost innovative approaches and out of box thinking on the local level, driven by local governments.</p>
4. Addressing challenges related to 'equality' related data collection of data	<p>Data collection at the EU, national and city levels has different issues. The challenges also depend on the context and locality. There is a need to comprehensively work on data collection at different levels and address challenges related to the collection of population and other data (considered sensitive information, or in case of hard-to-reach/identification population groups). This is especially important if the cities are to devise concrete strategies that equitably inform their urban interventions.</p>
5. Collection of qualitative data from the population groups	<p>At the city and neighbourhood level, it is important to map and understand the barriers protected population groups face as well as their needs to address them and incorporate them in urban policy, planning and implementation to remove barriers and address those needs. Opinions of people and how they experience discrimination not only matter but are the critical information currently missing to update the urban and architectural codes to serve all populations equitably. The methods for their collection are the key.</p>
6. Spatial data collection	<p>To address the issues related to spatial segregation (among others), it is important to develop a systematic approach to spatial information pertaining to disparate equality issues.</p>



<p>7. Collection of data on urban features and amenities enabling equality</p>	<p>There is a need for data on the characteristics of the urban environment, physical, digital services and amenities (Eg. in the case of accessibility, the types of buses equipped to take on people with reduced mobility, accessible housing, public spaces and leisure services (eg. pools) etc), they availability, distribution and accessibility for the protected populations. At the micro level, the availability of infrastructure of services is key to devising urban developments that reduce inequalities and promote equality.</p>
<p>8. Collection of data over time to assess the results of equality strategies and their implementation at the city level</p>	<p>The investment in equality should result in the improvement of life opportunities and outcomes over time. However, this aspect is not sufficiently captured in the data. The vulnerable populations are invested in (at a point in time), but there is rarely a follow-up to see what these investments have resulted in. Collecting data over time to assess the results of equality strategies and their implementation at the city level is crucial to learn about the effectiveness of the urban interventions that have equality as one of their ambitions.</p>
<p>9. Measuring progress, monitoring and impact evaluation</p>	<p>Measuring progress, monitoring implementation and evaluating the impact of urban interventions with equality as one of their ambitions is still limited. It is needed at the EU, MS and city levels for the UAEU partnership on Cities of Equality.</p> <p>it would be interesting to see what cities are doing, and how they are measuring their progress in equality, improving social inclusion, or reducing social inequalities.</p>
<p>10. Develop indicators (Cohesion Policy)</p>	<p>There is a lack of indicators in territorial development, specifically for social groups. For instance, the urban strategies do not have to mention the vulnerable or protected groups. In the case of the Cohesion policy supporting territorial development initiatives, the population disaggregated indicators are limited, as impact indicators on issues like improvement of the quality of life in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.</p> <p>Development, suggestions and/or examples of indicators that could be used in the next regulation is still something the Partnership could work on more concretely.</p>
<p>11. Research clusters and academic research for regional and city scales</p>	<p>A cluster is a competitive alliance of businesses in a certain sector that jointly come together to improve locally relevant research and intelligence. Local clusters can pull resources to carry out research in an area. The academic research dimension might be quite valuable for evidence-based policy-making and collecting data at the local level. This is one of the key challenges that cities face - a lack of evidence in order to create better policies.</p>

Source: The analysis conducted for Cities of Equalities EAA by Dr Orna Rosenfeld



Table 4 Sub-themes for Better Funding

Sub-theme	Reasoning/Funding Program
1. Developing the capacity to access and manage EU funding	While the funding at the EU level may be available for various issues linked to reaching equality ambitions (as noted in the report), the capacities are sometimes lacking to access and use this funding. It is important to develop capacity at the member states as well as local levels (especially in the case of cities, including small and medium-size cities) to access and use the available funding. The possibilities should be explored under the Cohesion Policy technical assistance for funding and guidance provided to be used at a larger scale.
2. Information about what is funded in terms of equality (and related ambitions) (Cohesion Policy)	The EU funding is available to EU MS only for the proposed interventions that are aligned with horizontal principles for equality, non-discrimination, accessibility etc. However, there is a lack of indicators on how the funding once received at the MS level is used, what population groups benefit from it, and how. Information about what is funded in this aspect and the indicators are important to address. The Partnership could work on this topic in view of the post-2027 Cohesion Policy Proposal.
3. Addressing bottlenecks in access to funding	Access to funding for cities, especially medium and small cities, should be addressed. This may require the examination of the competencies at the national and city-level competencies, bottlenecks related to the distribution of funds from the MS to its cities, and devising strategies for addressing these issues.
4. ERDF and ESF +	The ways to improve funding provisions under ERDF and ESF+ is an issue that the partnership could work on concretely.
5. Innovative funding and finance at the EU level	The partnership could explore alternative avenues for funding through grants, loans and other types of finance with European Investment and Development Banks. For example. The EIB and CEB banks are already involved in the examination of this type of finance for other partnerships (eg. Housing, Migrants and Refugees), and can blend financing for long-term financing of social infrastructure. Exploring alternative sources beyond EC funds would be of great value and benefit for progressing towards 'Cities of Equality' ambitions.
6. Cluster alliances and investment at the city level	<p>Transitions and transformations require a change of practices across the board and are costly. However, they are ultimately a local affair.</p> <p>The city is a very interesting scale to focus on because it can pull different actors together around the table (in the form of a cluster alliance, for example). It can bring them together to invest jointly in the local area where they are rooted to deliver complex changes that require specific focus on specific urban intervention and equality in process and outcome for different protected population groups. In addition to the above, there are other great opportunities at the city level for innovative approaches to funding (i.e crowdfunding, PPP) and scaling up funding solutions.</p>

Source: The analysis conducted for Cities of Equalities EAA by Dr Orna Rosenfeld





4 Categories of partners

Eligible applicants include:

- **Cities of all sizes** (small, medium, and large)
- **City regions**
- Regions and Regional Development Agencies
- Member states (through relevant national-level ministries and agencies)
- Partner States
- European and national city umbrella organisations

Other stakeholders such as:

- NGOs and Watchdog organisations dedicated to protecting rights on the grounds of age, disability, gender, sexual orientation (LGBTIQ), religion and belief, race & ethnic origin and others.
- EU organisations dedicated to different dimensions of equality.
- Social economy partners/businesses at the EU, national and city levels

5 Selection criteria

5.1 Horizontal selection criteria applicable to the Partnership

The Partnership will represent a diversity of member at different levels of governance.

The horizontal selection criteria aim at guaranteeing a composition of the Partnership consistent with the objectives of the Urban Agenda for the EU and of the new Partnership on “Cities of Equality”. These will be considered once the specific selection criteria described below are assessed, to make a selection amongst the highest scoring participants.

In line with objectives of the Urban Agenda for the EU the selection criteria for the potential members of the Cities of Equalities UAEU Partnership are as follows:

- i. **Multi-level and multi-stakeholder approach:** in line with the Pact of Amsterdam, the Partnership will be composed of **about 15 to 20 partners** from all levels of government and from different types of organisations. In order to ensure the representativeness of the local level, the Partnership will include **at least five cities** (urban authorities), as well as European and national city umbrella organisations.
- ii. **Size of cities:** at least one ‘small-sized city’ (below 50000⁷ inhabitants) and one ‘medium-sized city’ (below 250000 inhabitants) will be part of the Partnership. In line with the Ljubljana Agreement Multi Annual Working Programme, ‘if no small and medium-sized urban authorities are selected in the open call, a nomination of small or medium-sized urban authorities can follow. Nominations can be proposed by Member States, Committee of the Regions and URBACT (upon approval of the Monitoring Committee) to the DGUM.’ As the horizontal criteria will not be scored, the small and medium-sized cities with the highest assessment score(s) on the specific selection criteria will be selected.
- iii. **Geographical balance:** During the selection process, one of the aims will be to ensure a relative geographical balance between the members in terms of the EU 27.

⁷ As discussed and requested on 24 of October 2022 during the DGUM meeting in Prague, Also noted in the Meeting Minutes.

- iv. **Prior involvement in the UAEU:** Prior involvement in the UAEU is not required. The selection should give the opportunity to new cities/organisations to be involved as far as possible.
- v. **Coordinators:** maximum two will be appointed, at least one from a city (regardless of size). In their expression of interest, applicants should indicate if they would like to be considered for the role of a Coordinator.

5.2 Specific selection criteria for applicants as Partners

The specific selection criteria below will be assessed on the basis of a **0-3 scale**.

- a) **Motivation to become a member**, advance one or more identified policy domains (Table 1) and sub-themes (Tables 2, 3, 4) in line with the principle 'leaving no one behind', in a way that contributes betterment of EU policy, regulation and knowledge and brings specific contribution at the city level. Provide evidence of relationship between the specific expertise developed by an applicant (and a potential member) and the specific issue or set of issues that motivate the applicant to be part of this specific partnership. Applicants should show awareness of [previous activities in UAEU Partnerships](#) that may be related to the sub-themes and issues of their concern. Applicants need to demonstrate willingness to participate in meetings, share experience and disseminate knowledge; willingness to participate in EU policy dialogue etc.
- b) **Expertise**
 - (1) in 'equality' from legal and/or social perspective with proven experience working in an urban context (eg. experts intersectionality, or experts on age, disability, gender, sexual orientation (LGBTIQ), religion and belief, race and ethnic origin (incl. country of origin), or socio-economic status willing to work in line with the principle of intersectionality.

and/or

(2) in particular urban themes through which of lack of equality has been tackled (see Table 1) with the proven commitment and concrete application to the 'leaving no one behind' principle and the results to support it. The expertise and/or experience in sub-themes noted in Tables 2, 3 and 4 will be a bonus.

The expertise and experience could be acquired through (national, regional, or local) policy making, projects (design, management and/or implementation), research, activism (in case of NGOs and watchdogs) as well as active participation in international, EU and national networks within EU or national programmes contributing to equality efforts.



- c) **Willingness to work across disciplines and with the principle of intersectionality in mind (or in live with the ‘leaving no one behind’ principle)** in order to ensure that the equality issues are addressed both with interventions relevant to specific population groups and holistically in the context of one or more specific policy domains (of choice).
- d) **Readiness to participate with own human and financial resources:** availability and commitment of human and financial resources throughout the duration of the Partnership.

5.3 Specific selection criteria for applicants as Coordinators

All the above specific selection criteria (i-iv) and **in addition:**

- i. Experience and expertise in the management of multi-level, international partnerships. The applicants are to provide evidence of previous experience.
- ii. Ability to secure and commit to providing adequate human and financial resources throughout the lifecycle of the Partnership.
- iii. Proven commitment to multi-sectoral, interdisciplinary approach and commitment to intersectional approach to equality and leaving no one behind principle.
- iv. Experience in outreach to relevant stakeholders and membership (or at least participation) in EU and/or international networks working on the issues related to advancing equality in cities in a broad sense. Experience in dissemination and inter-institutional communication at the EU and national levels