

Cities forum 2027- Call for host city

Background document for applicants

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1. CONTEXT OF THE CALL AND SELECTION PROCESS

This call aims at selecting a city to host and co-organise the 7th edition¹ of the Cities Forum in 2027. The Cities Forum is a key European Commission Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy's (DG REGIO) event focusing on support to cities from the European Union (EU) level, in particular through the urban dimension of EU Cohesion policy. It represents a significant opportunity for the chosen city to showcase its unique qualities and contribute to urban development discussions at the EU level. This document outlines the application process and describes the expectations for the host city.

On behalf of the European Commission – DG REGIO, the European Urban Initiative (EUI) is reaching out to EU cities interested in hosting the 2027 edition of the event. The application form should be considered as the offer of the host city. The EUI Permanent Secretariat (PS) co-organises the event with the European Commission and has a dedicated budget for the event and support from an event agency, available for the whole process of organising the Cities Forum 2027. The host city should partly contribute to the organisation to the preparation by providing a venue, organising possible site visits, helping with communication activities, and ensuring political participation and media coverage from the country.

The call will be open from the 8 January 2026 until the 17 February 2026 14:00 CET. Once the call is closed, the assessment of the applications will be performed by the EUI PS. The results of the assessment will be then provided to the European Commission – DG REGIO, which will present a list of shortlisted candidate cities to the Directors-General on Urban Matters (under intergovernmental cooperation on urban matters) for decision. The final agreement on the host city for the Cities Forum will officially take place at the occasion of the Directors-General on Urban Matters meeting of 15 April 2026.

Cities are invited to submit their applications demonstrating their capability and enthusiasm to support the organisation of the next Cities Forum edition, via this [online form](#).

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Presentation of the Cities Forum

The Cities Forum is a biennial major event of the European Commission, on the urban dimension of the EU Cohesion policy. The event brings together key urban stakeholders from European, national, regional and local levels and will be co-organised by the EUI PS and the European Commission – DG REGIO, and under the responsibility of the EUI Entrusted Entity, the Region Hauts-de-France. It is the key moment to discuss and exchange on the urban dimension of EU Cohesion policy as well as on EU level initiatives supporting sustainable urban development.

About the European Urban Initiative

The European Urban Initiative (EUI) is an initiative of the EU funded in the framework of the EU Cohesion policy for the programming period 2021-2027. The EUI is managed by the European Commission – DG REGIO via indirect management. The European Commission has designated the Region Hauts-de-France (France) as Entrusted Entity, for the implementation

of the EUI. EUI is operationally managed on a daily basis by the EUI PS located in Lille (FR). The EUI PS is co-organising the Cities Forum and implements this call for host city on behalf of the Entrusted Entity – hereafter also referred as 'organisers'.

3. CITIES FORUM 2025: OBJECTIVES AND TARGET AUDIENCES

The 7th edition of the Cities Forum is set to take place tentatively **between mid-April and mid-June 2027** and aims to welcome around 800 onsite participants for a green, grounded, and interactive 1.5 to 2 days event.

The weeks for consideration are those starting on 19 April, 10 May, 17 May, 24 May, 31 May and 7 June 2027. When proposing concrete dates, all national bank holidays and major calendar constraints will need to be carefully taken into account. This allows flexibility in setting the exact dates and ensuring the availability of the venue.

Exact dates will be determined following a discussion between the European Commission, the European Urban Initiative and the selected host city.

The Cities Forum 2027 is designed to bring together a diverse group of EU Cohesion policy stakeholders and beneficiaries, urban policymakers, and practitioners to debate on sustainable urban development in Europe. The event will target:

- Cities of all sizes
- Cohesion policy stakeholders
- Urban policymakers and practitioners
- Urban Agenda for the EU partners

The Cities Forum 2027 will bring together the key stakeholders responsible for implementation to review projects, results and experiences from previous years, learn from them, and ensure an even stronger and more effective delivery in the years ahead. The scope of the event's content will be further defined at a later stage.

The event will take place in English. Interpretation might be provided.

4. ELIGIBILITY

Any EU city or urban authority located within the European Union, with the capacity to host a major event, is eligible to apply. There are no geographical restrictions for this call. However, special attention will be given to locations that were not featured in previous editions of the event, which were hosted by cities in Belgium, the Netherlands, Portugal, Italy, and Poland. While we value the diversity of past event locations, the goal is to enhance geographical balance across the entire spectrum of Member States.

5. KEY REQUIREMENTS FOR THE HOST CITY

Candidate cities must meet comprehensive requirements and are encouraged to articulate a vision for the event, showcasing their city's potential and capability to serve as a great location for the event.

Venue requirements

The venue must be:

- suitable for large attendance (around 800 participants expected). The number of attendees may vary until the end of the registration process around 2 weeks before the event which requires flexible spaces and capacity to adapt quickly.
- available in April, May or June 2027² for a full week (or at least four days), counting the setting, the event days, and the dismantling of the event. The event days should not be placed before Tuesday and should not finish afternoon on Friday. It is strongly recommended to propose at least two alternative dates.
- accessible to participants with public transport in a central area of the selected city; but also allow easy access to all event facilities for persons of reduced mobility.
- flexible for different event formats, including hybrid. This may vary depending on the agenda that will only be defined at a later stage, but it should include the following type of areas or rooms:
 - a big plenary room (for around 800 participants) with good quality acoustics and good visibility of stage area (including screens)
 - several break-out rooms (at least 3 of minimum 150 participants) for parallel sessions (sound proofed). Additional rooms for organising parallel sessions are needed. The breakout rooms should allow a good distribution of participants and several activities in parallel for a large audience up to 800 persons. They need to be easily accessible from the main rooms (plenary and networking areas).
 - adequate space for catering and breaks (light standing lunch/coffee breaks). The venue should be equipped to host catering services.
 - spaces for networking
 - an exhibition area
 - cloak rooms, restrooms, at least 3 additional meeting rooms to welcome and host meetings for speakers and VIP, and at least one separate room for the event organisers
 - natural light at least in the networking and break area
 - outside areas would be regarded as an extra asset.
- modernly equipped or recently renewed, including strong and stable internet connection for a large number of participants. Equipped as much as possible with audio-visual set-up and furniture.
- Potentially an emblematic building of the urban development or renewal for the host city. The aesthetic of the venue would be regarded as an extra asset.

² The weeks for consideration are those starting on 19 April, 10 May, 17 May, 24 May, 31 May and 7 June 2027.

- The proposed venue should demonstrate an effective policy for more sustainable events.

Possible site visits

Site visits are a highly valued component of the event, offering participants a unique opportunity to engage with the host city's most innovative and impactful urban projects. These excursions, conducted in English, should highlight the city's achievements in sustainable urban development and EU-funded initiatives, preferably by Cohesion policy but not only. Applicant cities are encouraged to emphasise this aspect in their application by providing detailed proposals for site visits that showcase best practices, notable projects, and alignment with sustainable urban development and EU Cohesion policy. The quality and relevance of proposed site visits will be considered as an additional scoring element.

Dissemination of the event

Effective dissemination of the event is crucial, requiring the host city's active engagement in promotional activities before, during, and after the Forum. The selected city should collaborate closely with the organisers to engage urban communities, and with national press to ensure visibility of the event.

Catering and additional services

In some cases, where venues have exclusive agreements with external companies, different options for the lunch should be proposed. It will be expected to offer vegetarian menus and to consider specific dietary requirements of participants. In these cases, it is also expected from the catering services to provide any menu at the best quality and to perform the service in a timely manner. Should the catering services not be included in the venue services and covered by an external provider, the EUI PS will manage directly with the external provider. Support from the city would be expected regarding additional support services on site.

Additional services may be proposed based on the city's possibility e.g. maps/stationery for participants, technical equipment, furniture, decoration.

Overall management and coordination with the venue

The host city is expected to facilitate exchanges with the venue and coordinate closely with the EUI PS and the event management provider. It is expected from the city to assign one contact person in charge of the coordination and some logistical aspects of the event. Some meetings on spot and online for each major step should be foreseen.

Sustainability

Concrete measures shall be taken to ensure that the events have the lowest environmental impact possible. Such as:

- Sustainably sourced and served food (fresh, local, organic, seasonal, healthy, vegetarian)
- Use of reusable and recyclable containers and materials
- Efforts to reduce waste, including food-waste prevention strategy
- Limited use of linen for tables and chairs. No use if not needed.
- Reduced use of plastic (e.g. serving local mineral water instead of water in plastic bottles) and paper (napkins instead of paper tissues).

- Efforts to save electricity, water consumption and CO2 emissions
- Use of energy-efficient equipment (led-lights etc.)
- Sustainable transport offer (for example: public transport tickets arranged for the event participants)
- Reduced use of paper

6. SELECTION CRITERIA

The assessment will be based on a set of defined criteria, considering the city's capacity to host and contribute to the Forum's success.

Venue spaces (45%)

The selected venue must have sufficient capacity to host the Forum and should offer flexible spaces suitable for a variety of activities. Refer to the venue requirements specified in section 5 of this document.

City's contribution to the event (25%)

The contribution of the host city to the event is an important factor in its selection, with cities evaluated on their level of involvement and the range of services they can offer or support. A city's commitment to offering the venue, supporting the organisation of possible site visits, including arrangements for transportation, or the engagement of local experts and community members, will be highly rated. Furthermore, the city's effectiveness in facilitating communication efforts — before, during, and after the event — and its ability to mobilise urban stakeholders, local officials, regional and national representatives and attract media attention will be considered in the selection process. Organisation of site visits provide additional points but are not a bidding criterion.

Accessibility and infrastructure (15%)

Candidate cities must showcase excellent connectivity and transportation links from various European locations. Direct connections by plane or train provide additional points but are not a binding criterion. With the forum expecting approximately 800 attendees, suitable spaces must be available within proximity to the event venue. Additionally, cities should provide details on the public transport duration from the nearest airport to the city centre. The proposed venue should be centrally located or readily accessible from the city centre, with ample hotel accommodations close to the event location, and accessible to people with disabilities. Applicant cities should also consider the possibility of providing participants with transport tickets for the duration of the event.

Sustainability (10%)

Cities should demonstrate a commitment to sustainability in event management, aligning with EU climate and environmental goals. As we are favouring sustainable means of transport, we ask you to describe how your city takes care of transporting bigger groups of people in the city. Cities should outline specific actions aimed at minimizing the environmental footprint of the event.

Contribution to the urban dimension of EU Cohesion policy and urban-related EU initiatives (5%)

Cities need to articulate their engagement and contributions to EU Cohesion policy, including involvement in ERDF-funded programmes and status as either Article 7 or Article 11 ERDF cities³. Emphasis will be placed on implementation of sustainable urban development strategy, policies and projects.

7. KEY MILESTONES

Milestones	Date
Call opening	12 January
Call closure and start of the assessment by EUI PS	17 February 14:00 CEST
Decision by DGUM on the basis of shortlist of candidate cities	15 April
Announcement of the selected host city	End April
First online meeting	Beginning May
First visit to the city and venue	May

³ <https://www.urban-initiative.eu/article-11-cities>