

**Cities@Heart**  
URBACT IV project proposal

Project type: **URBACT IV – Action Planning Network**

Interreg Specific Objective (ISO) 1: **A better cooperation governance for city centres**

Proposed project name : **Cities@Heart**

Lead Partner: **Greater Paris Metropolis**, France

**1) Lead Partner: Greater Paris Metropolis**

The [Greater Paris Metropolis](#) is a French **dense and urban inter-municipal establishment** that unites a total of **131 cities**, including Paris.

It spreads a total of **814 km<sup>2</sup>** and hosts a total population of **7.2 million inhabitants**, of which concentrate in the city of Paris and the remaining 70% distributes among the other 130 municipalities.

As an institution, the Greater Paris Metropolis was officially created the **1st of January 2016**, as a result of the approval of two laws voted in 2014 which granted it a new legal status. The Greater Paris Metropolis currently holds competences in five main areas:

- 1. energy policy and climate change action,**
- 2. management of aquatic environment and flood prevention,**
- 3. land use planning,**
- 4. economic, social and cultural development**
- 5. planning, and local housing policy.**

The Greater Paris Metropolis' governance stems from its different organs, namely the Metropolitan Council, its main governing body, which is made up of 208 metropolitan councillors representing the 131 municipalities that are part of the Metropolitan area.

The Metropolitan Bureau, elected by the Metropolitan Council and led by the Metropolis' President, oversees the organization's political strategy, examines the agenda and the draft deliberations to be submitted to vote to the Metropolitan Council.

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**2) Project proposal**

In the trouble times the world has lately been experiencing, political decision making at all levels is key to ensure a **sustainable, fair and green future in Europe** (EU). The pandemic, brutally happening in a context of an overall profound **economic crisis** and followed by the **war in Ukraine**, has shown the need for **efficient, immediate response** at all levels and considering both now and tomorrow.

To propose accurate and relevant policies, tackling today's unforeseen issues but also addressing well-known underlying challenges, there is a critical need for **tools** to lean on to take the **right decisions** in the :

- **short** (i.e. ensuring a safe and inclusive environment to EU citizens, encouraging local consumption, developing circular economy channels, ...)
- **medium** (i.e. creating conditions to transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy, setting up green and efficient public transport)
- **long** (i.e. R&D on connected mobility, getting to a safer, more competitive and smarter Europe) **runs.**

**Cities@Heart** proposes to create among a partnership of cities from different sizes and backgrounds, a **shared methodology** adjustable to each territory to support the decision-making process, implementation, efficiency and smooth run of sustainable urban policies. **Why Cities@Heart ?** Since it aims at taking the pulse of the heart of cities – city centers – and having a better understanding of what city users like more or less about these places.

Excerpt from the URBACT IV programme manual:

*“A Interregional cooperation to reinforce the effectiveness of cohesion policy (Interreg C) by promoting exchange of experiences, innovative approaches and capacity building in relation to the identification, transfer and capitalisation of good practices on integrated and sustainable urban development, taking into account the linkages between urban and rural areas, supporting actions developed in the framework of Article 11 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1058 and while also complementing in a coordinated way with the initiative outlined in Article 12 of that Regulation (the ‘URBACT Programme’); ”*

This partnership is willing to capitalize on good practices created, developed, monitored and improved over the years in **Town Centre Management (TCM)**. TCM consists in ensuring that **town centre functions (live, work, leisure, culture, history, education, living, health, shopping and public services, etc.)** meet the need of its users through an appropriate strategy bringing together public and private actors. Pre-existing practices such as the [ISO 9001 Quality Mark](#) developed by the Town Centre Management Worldwide include :

- **Digital managing tools** made out of efficient **key performance indicators (KPI)**, both supporting local policies in their set-up and monitoring the **positive side-effects** of their implementation ;
- **Digital decision-making tools** infilled by field work with local partnerships and different levels of governance ;
- **A multi-stakeholder and multi-level approach**

To upgrade these tools and adapt them to today’s issues, the creation and development of a **common framework** adapting each territory’s **local challenges** will assist authorities in designing integrated urban action policies and managing the smooth run of sustainable urban local policies through local actions.

Following the various experiences of the members of the partnership both innovative and complementary, the **Greater Paris Metropolis**, leading this project, is currently working on applying for an **URBACT IV Action Planning Network type project**.

*“The Action Planning Networks, this scope includes the five policy objectives as defined in Article 3 of the ERDF regulation (EU) 2021/1058:*

- 1. a more competitive and smarter Europe by promoting innovative and smart economic transformation and regional ICT connectivity;*
- 2. a greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation, risk prevention and management, and sustainable urban mobility;*
- 3. a more connected Europe by enhancing mobility;*
- 4. a more social and inclusive Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights;*
- 5. a Europe closer to citizens by fostering the sustainable and integrated development of all types of territories and local initiatives.”*

In an effort to respond in the best and most coordinated way to the challenges listed hereabove, **Cities@Heart** aims at leading partners to share experiences to create and develop a **common methodology** to adapt each territory locally that will include:

- **A benchmark of good practices of governance and policy evaluation**
- The creation of a **flexible and digital “managing tool”** including KPI relevant to each territory at local level.

- **Multi-leveled and multi-stakeholders' governance framework:** TCM has become a recognised long-term collaboration tool between public and private sectors through partnerships. Yet, this scope needs to be broadened with the integration of locally based stakeholders such as the civil society, associations, etc. to become a fully multi-levelled and multi-stakeholders' governance.

This managing tool will include a **monitoring section** tailored to assess the **performance of local policies implementation** and their **impact on environment and sustainability, city centres' attractiveness and quality, health and well-being, gender equality, inclusiveness and safety**. It could encompass quantitative and qualitative assessments (ie auto-diagnostic, real estate data, pedestrian counting or inhabitant and consumer surveys, etc). It will encourage the use of **consensus-based partnerships**, including public and private sectors but also the civil society, associations, local communities, applied to sustainable social, economic and environmental urban (re)development.

**Cities@Heart** will be led by the **Greater Paris Metropolis** and is looking for partners from small to larger cities, universities and experts committed to urban planning and economic development and willing to achieve the same goals, creating and using **this tool** to improve their capacity to **manage and carry out successful sustainable urban policies leaning on pragmatic and operational action plans**. Each partner joining the project will be able to use this shared methodology to its own concerns and local commitments.

In short, this URBACT IV application aims at enriching TCM to ensure that a **dialogue** is established between all partners, in such a way that the **development of the town centre is the result of a project widely and jointly supported by all key players**. Indeed, urban projects are coordinated and produce **beneficial side effects** in a variety of areas (planning, stimulating the economy, activating private investment, mobility, etc.) all directed towards a **greener, smarter and more inclusive EU society**.

### 3) Partnership

Partners may be **public authorities or bodies governed by public law**.

In keeping with the requirements pertaining to partnerships in URBACT, we are looking for **partners from at least 8, but more probably 10 Member States**. In order to ensure that implementation phases and decisions are followed by actions at all levels, each partner will have to form a local partnership comprising relevant local stakeholders such as:

- its **National and/or Regional Authority** competent in the field of sustainable urban development
- **local Town Centre Managements**
- any relevant stakeholder (public, private, association, civil society, ...), in the fields of addressed challenges.

**Cities@Heart** is looking for cities from **different sizes and various backgrounds**, all committed to improving the efficiency of their urban policies' successful and sustainable implementation.

**Universities and experts** specialised in the area and/or having an interest in the field will also be offered a **partner or observer position** in the partnership.

Other Organisations working on similar themes albeit in more specific contexts could also be invited either as partners or observers, depending on their input capacity and on their motivations.

### 4) Budget

To be defined with the partnership with a maximum budget of 850.000€. Co-financing rates are as follows:

| Co-financing rate | Regions  |
|-------------------|--|
| 95% by IPA funds  | Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia, & North Macedonia |
| 80% by ERDF funds | Less developed regions (See map)   |
| 70% by ERDF funds | Regions in transition (See map)  |

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| 65% by ERDF funds     | More developed regions (See map)                                 |
| 50% by national funds | Partner-states: Norway, Switzerland                              |
| -                     | Partners from other countries may participate at their own costs |

For each partner, the estimated total budget amounts to 50 000€ to 80 000€ including 95% to 50% of total expenses refunded and 5% to 50% at its own charge depending on the co-financing rates. Existing equipment and already-employed staff can also be included in this budget as long as they work on the project.

5) **Duration** : 31 months – starting now > December 2025

6) **Timeline:**

