

Speaking Points:

Cohesion Policy new framework in place for the 2021-2027 period to support urban areas

- The 2021-2027 Cohesion policy brought a strengthened bottom-up approach by empowering sub-regional territories and local communities to identify their own priorities and projects in an integrated and participatory way. We have introduced a new **multi-thematic new territorial policy objective 'A Europe closer to citizens'** that will support tailor-made investment strategies in **urban** and rural areas where people work, live and commute daily.
- Policy objective 5 plays a **central role in bringing Europe closer to its citizens and connects local development needs and potentials with European and global objectives to trigger economic, social and territorial cohesion** in all regions. It provides the necessary thematic flexibility and incentives for multi-level governance to support **integrated territorial and local development strategies** targeting sub-regional level. Almost all EU Member States (23MS) used this objective and have programmed more than EUR 19 billion to support place-based investments via more than 2 000 integrated territorial development strategies.
- Furthermore, **the urban earmarking of minimum 8% of the total ERDF allocation** (5% in the 2014-2020 period) has been exceeded in the Programmes reaching **11,8% meaning that more than EUR 24 billion will support investments based on sustainable, integrated strategies developed and implemented by cities**. Urban strategies are mainly tackling challenges such as climate change adaptation, urban regeneration and sustainable urban mobility.

European Urban Initiative

- A novelty of the 2021-2027 Programming Period is the set up a **European Urban Initiative (EUI) which has the ambition to provide a more coherent and complete set of services targeted to cities**, by raising their innovation profiles and overall ability to improve the quality of investments in urban areas.
- **The initiative supports cities of all sizes**. The budget allocation from the European Regional Development Fund to this initiative is **450 million euros**.
- It also aims at being a federating tool by better interconnecting initiatives, tools and instruments introduced to support cities, over time, and in particular maximising synergies with the Territorial Cooperation programme URBACT IV.
- We have already launched two calls **for Innovative Actions** addressing the topic of the **New European Bauhaus** (14 projects funded for up to EUR 65 million total), and challenges in terms of **'Greening cities', 'Sustainable tourism'** and **'Harnessing talents in shrinking cities'** (call closed on 5/10). Each project will comprise a transfer component so that the solutions developed can be replicated in other European cities.
- More is to come with **two other calls** planned to be organised on an annual basis **in 2024 and 2025**.

- The Initiative is targeting the cities also providing support to improve and build their capacities in the design and implementation of sustainable urban development strategies, policies and practices in an integrated and participative way. In this context, challenges caused by Russian's aggression against Ukraine - such as the refugee crisis in EU cities - could feature among the topics of city-to-city exchanges.
- The **call for city-to-city exchanges is open until 17 November, while the call for peer reviews** will re-open within the end of the year, so we invite you to apply if you are interested to share experiences and learn from other cities on specific urban challenges.
- We will be certainly analysing this first wave of support granted afterwards to see how we can improve it and continue to make it as relevant as possible for beneficiaries.
- The EUI will be promoting **knowledge sharing** and **capitalisation** for the benefit of urban policy makers and practitioners at local, regional, national and European levels. The most relevant novelty here is **PORTICO, the gateway to urban learning, not only a repository for knowledge, funding and initiatives but also a space for exchange and collaboration among urban practitioners, policymakers, and experts**.
- Moreover, the EUI support to the **Urban agenda for the EU** is starting within a rather dynamic environment since currently, behind the three partnerships already ongoing, ("Culture and cultural heritage", "Public procurement" and "Inclusion of migrants and refugees"), two partnerships are now operational ("Greening cities" and "Sustainable tourism") and two others in the making – in the context of discussions on the identification of new thematic areas led by the Spanish Council Presidency.

European territorial cooperation goal (INTERREG)

- The EU initiatives are sources of **knowledge and good practices on reconstruction and sustainable people-centred construction of metropolis**, and as part of their activities, many have initiated **support for cities and municipalities in Ukraine**.
- **Cohesion policy** includes initiatives and programmes in support of Ukrainian cities and municipalities, notably under **its territorial cooperation part INTERREG**. As regards the support provided by **the cross-border and transnational cooperation**, Ukraine is actively involved in five cooperation programmes in both the 2014-2020 and 2021-2027 periods. There are:
 - **three cross-border programmes** with Ukraine: Poland-Ukraine, Romania-Ukraine, Hungary-Slovakia-Romania-Ukraine
 - **two transnational cooperation programmes**: Black Sea Basin and Danube.
- These cooperation programmes play an important role in building long-lasting partnerships through joint projects in the areas like environmental protection, health cooperation and better governance of the public policies.
- All programmes are now organising calls for project proposals, providing new funding opportunities and taking into account the needs of Ukraine. In the first closed calls in **Danube, Black Sea Basin and Poland-Ukraine programmes, we have noticed a strong participation from Ukrainian beneficiaries. 500 applicants from Ukraine involved across the 3 programmes, out of which 330 in Poland-Ukraine only**. This is an extremely positive sign of the level of interest and commitment in Ukraine for such cooperation.

- We also expect a strong interest and high number of applications in the other calls under Romania-Ukraine and Hungary-Slovakia-Romania-Ukraine programmes, which are currently open as well as in the second upcoming call of Danube programme. These calls should be used for supporting joint initiatives between Ukrainian and EU cities, tightening the integration of Ukrainian communities and local authorities with the EU.
- Cooperation between Ukraine and the Member States and their regions and cities also provides the authorities and stakeholders there with the chance to become acquainted with the EU and its funding mechanisms. This is very helpful in the on-going accession process.
- Further to the involvement of Ukraine in these cross-border and transnational cooperation programmes, the European Commission and the respective managing authorities are in a process of adding Ukraine formally or informally to the three **interregional cooperation programmes URBACT, the European Spatial Planning Observation Network (ESPON as observers) and to INTERREG EUROPE**. This process will be completed by the end of 2023. Cities from every Member State should use those programmes in order to build partnerships with Ukrainian cities and to implement joint projects (mostly for URBACT).
- With its budget of **EUR 106 million for the 2021-2027** period, **URBACT IV will continue to finance networks of cities sharing good practices** on sustainable urban development, and in doing so, the programme will enable cities of all sizes to develop effective solutions to major urban challenges. Its main focus is on building networks of cities to help them tackle specific challenges relating to sustainable Urban Development and preparing for Cohesion policy investments and their deployment on the ground on the basis of place based strategies and plans.
- The URBACT programme will work on including the Ukrainian cities in its future networks and events, and see how its specific method can be applied beyond the countries already involved.
- With a budget of **EUR 379 million for 2021-2027**, **Interreg Europe** is the capacity-building programme of the cohesion policy. It fosters regional policy development through networking, exchange of experience, innovative actions among local and regional authorities.
- The Interreg Europe programme partners recently decided to extend the programme area to **5 Western Balkan countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia- alignment with Urbact) and to Ukraine and Moldova**. The focus of the programme is not the cities as such like Urbact. The focus is on all Policy Objectives of the cohesion policy and the UA regional authorities will be able to participate at projects with other regions in Europe.
- **ESPON** will continue to foster in the programming period 2021-2027 demand-driven and cross-cutting research activities to tackle territorial challenges and to support a better cooperation governance in Europe's regions and boosting effectiveness of cohesion policy.
- **In mid-2023 the ESPON Programme Monitoring Committee** decided to invite the **candidate countries including Ukraine and Moldova** (but currently not Türkiye), to join the programme with an observer status. In this case the Managing Authority in Luxembourg sends the invitations, not the Commission. **This dialogue between Luxembourg and the candidate countries is currently ongoing.**

New European Bauhaus Prizes

- Lastly, when shaping the sustainable future of our cities, we should build on the knowledge and talent of civil society. This is why **every year the European Commission organises the New European Bauhaus Prizes**. The Prizes call on all individuals and organisations to bring forward their projects and ideas to inspire others. With more than 4500 applications received in three editions (2021, 2022 and 2023), **many examples submitted to the Prizes show how citizens and organisations are innovating**, including in the ways of making living spaces (like urban spaces and buildings), more sustainable, inclusive and aesthetically pleasant.
- The **call for applications to the fourth edition (2024) is open** until 10 November 2023, 19:00 CET .
- The 2024 edition of the New European Bauhaus Prizes will be **opened to applications of projects and concepts from Ukraine**. It's the first time that Ukraine joins the competition.
- In addition, in the 2024 edition, **two special prizes will be awarded to the best projects or concepts from Ukraine, under the 'Special Recognition to Ukraine's Reconstruction and Recovery Effort'**:
 - One prize as winner (first place) of the 'Special Recognition', amount of EUR 30.000.
 - One prize as runner-up (second place) of the 'Special Recognition', amount of EUR 15.000.
- With this 'Special Recognition to Ukraine's Reconstruction and Recovery Effort', we want:
 - To **support and recognize** Ukraine's resilience, recovery, and reconstruction efforts.
 - To encourage projects and concepts from Ukraine that are aligned with NEB values and principles.
 - To reward outstanding projects and concepts that provide inspiration for the **preparation of Ukraine's reconstruction and recovery**.
 - To foster **collaboration and engagement between Ukrainian partners/stakeholders, EU citizens and organizations, and the NEB community**.
- The winners will be announced in April 2024, during the New European Bauhaus Festival.