



Call for Applications for the constitution of a Panel of External Experts for the assessments of Urban Innovative Actions in the framework of the 1st Call for Proposals

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1. Call for Applications

As defined in the annex 1 of the Delegation Agreement signed between the Conseil Regional Nord-Pas de Calais (Entrusted Entity for the implementation of the Urban Innovative Actions Initiative) and the European Commission, the Entrusted Entity shall set up an expert panel to perform the strategic assessment and rank proposals submitted in the framework of the different Call for Proposals for the selection of Urban Innovative Actions (UIA) projects.

In this framework, the Conseil Regional Nord-Pas de Calais, issues a Call for Applications for the constitution of a Panel of External Experts for the Strategic Assessment of project proposals submitted in the framework of the first Call for Proposals.

The present Call for Applications is open for the recruitment of around 20 experts on the 4 main topics identified for the first Call for Proposals:

- Jobs and skills in the local economy
- Energy transition
- Urban poverty – with focus on deprived neighbourhoods
- Integration of migrants and refugees

Depending on the number of applications received, it is expected that around 5 experts will be selected for each topic.

The present Call for Applications will remain open until 26th February 2016, 14h00 (CET).

2. Urban Innovative Actions – Background

2.1 Context

Approximately 359 million people – 72% of the total EU population – live in cities, towns and suburbs. Urban areas face multiple and interconnected challenges related to employment, migration, demography, water and soil pollution, etc. But, they are also engines of new ideas and solutions, dynamic places where changes happen on a larger scale and at a fast pace.

To answer the increasingly complex challenges they face, urban authorities need to go beyond traditional policies and services - they need to be bold and innovative.

Although research on urban issues is well developed, potential solutions are not always put into practice because urban authorities are reluctant to use their money to test new, unproven and hence risky ideas.

The UIA Initiative offers urban authorities with the possibility to take a risk and experiment the most innovative and creative solutions. The main objective of UIA is to provide urban areas throughout Europe with resources to test innovative solutions to the main urban challenges, and see how these work in practice and respond to the complexity of real life.

UIA is an initiative of the European Commission, based on the Article 8 ERDF and its implementation is delegated to the Conseil Regional Nord-Pas de Calais (Entrusted Entity). A Permanent Secretariat (PS) has been set up to ensure the management of the Initiative.

The UIA Initiative has a total ERDF budget of around EUR 372 million. UIA projects will be selected through annual calls for proposals from 2015 to 2020 on one or more topics proposed by the Commission. Each action can receive up to a maximum of EUR 5 Million ERDF co-financing. Project implementation must take place within a maximum period of 3 years.

Specifically, the UIA Initiative supports projects that are:

- **Innovative:** Projects should be new, bold, creative and experimental. Urban authorities should propose projects that might not been financed under a mainstream Programme and are not merely part of normal local activities. Building on research and benchmarking, urban authorities should be able to demonstrate that the proposed project has not been previously tested and implemented on the ground in the urban area or elsewhere in the EU.
- **Of good quality:** Projects should meet key quality standards such as clear and logical interrelation of objectives/activities/outputs, evidence of preparatory work, realistic ambitions, effective management structures and procedures.
- **Participative:** Urban authorities should seek to benefit from sources of external expertise such as universities, NGOs, businesses, citizens and other levels of government both in the design and in the implementation of the project. To ensure the participative approach they need to define effective mechanisms of consultation, coordination and co-design.
- **Measurable:** Urban authorities should be able to clearly explain what the changes are that they want to achieve in the local context as a result of their projects. They need to demonstrate how any change in the local situation is directly attributable to the new solution developed and how the results can be measured, quantified and evaluated.
- **Transferable:** Solutions developed in the framework of the projects should be applicable and replicable by other organisations throughout Europe. Urban authorities should demonstrate that the challenge addressed has an Europe-wide relevance and that the resources needed for the implementation of the projects can be found in other local contexts.

2.2 Beneficiaries

The following authorities may apply for support to undertake UIA projects:

- any urban authority of a local administrative unit defined according to the degree of urbanisation as city, town or suburb and comprising at least 50 000 inhabitants;
- any association or grouping of urban authorities of local administrative units defined according to the degree of urbanisation as city, town or suburb where the total population is at least 50 000 inhabitants; this can include cross-border associations or groupings, associations or groupings in different regions and/or Member States.

2.3 Thematic coverage

In the framework of the consultation on the EU Urban Agenda, it was agreed by all key stakeholders (urban authorities, Member States, the Commission and the European Parliament) that in order to achieve meaningful and measurable results at local level, one of the central aims of the EU Urban Agenda shall be to better target the funds, initiatives and efforts of the Commission towards those urban challenges that local authorities and inhabitants feel are most pressing.

The Commission strongly believes that the UIA Initiative should concretely contribute to this operational aim of the EU Urban Agenda. As a consequence, the topics that urban authorities can address within the frame of the UIA Initiative should be closely aligned to those of the EU Urban Agenda.

More particularly, for each call for proposals for the selection of UIA projects, the Commission will select a limited number of topics that urban authorities can address. In the framework of the first call for proposals (launched in December 2015) the following 4 topics have been identified:

- Jobs and skills in local economy
- Inclusion of migrants and refugees
- Urban poverty, with focus on deprived neighbourhoods
- Energy transition

More details on the 4 topics identified are provided in the Terms of Reference of the first Call for Proposals that experts interested in the present Call for Applications are strongly recommended to read.¹ A presentation of the 4 topics is also available in the UIA website².

2.4 Selection process of UIA projects

As stated above, UIA projects will be selected through annual calls for proposals, each focused on a limited number of topics proposed by the Commission.

Eligible Urban Authorities are requested to submit their project proposals in the form of an Application Form.

Applications Forms received with the deadline are subject to a selection process organised along the following steps:

1. Eligibility and admissibility check
2. Strategic Assessment
3. Operational Assessment

Upon closure of the Call for Proposals, an assessment is carried out by the PS as to the compliance of the received Application Forms and their annexes with the formal **eligibility and admissibility** criteria listed in the Terms of Reference of the Call for Proposals.

¹ Terms of Reference – First Call for Proposals – <http://www.uia-initiative.eu/en/call-for-proposals>

² <http://www.uia-initiative.eu/en/12-topics-for-a-better-urban-environment>

Application Forms that are declared eligible and admissible will be subject to a **Strategic Assessment** carried out by a Panel of External Experts. The Strategic Assessment accounts for 80% of the weighting given to the overall project assessment and consists the following criteria:

- Innovativeness (40% of weighting) – To what extent is the applicant able to demonstrate that the project proposal is new and that has a clear potential to add value
- Partnership (15% of weighting) – To what extent is the involvement of key stakeholders relevant for the implementation of the project
- Measurability (15% of weighting) – To what extent will the project deliver measurable results
- Transferability (10% of weighting) - To what extent will the project be transferable to other urban areas across Europe

The object of the present Call for Applications is to select and recruit experts for the Panel of External Experts to carry out the Strategic Assessment of eligible and admissible Application Forms received in the framework of the first Call for Proposals for UIA projects.

Applications which score over a certain threshold as result of the Strategic Assessment will go forward for an **Operational Assessment**. The Operational Assessment is carried out by the UIA PS and accounts for 20% of the weighting given to the overall project assessment.

The main objective of the Operational Assessment is to assess the quality of the proposal (including the justification for the project, the feasibility, consistency and coherence of the work plan, quality of the management structures proposed, coherence and proportionality of the budget, quality of the communication activities proposed).

After the Operational Assessment, a Selection Committee comprised of the Entrusted Entity and the Commission will meet to make the final selection. The Commission provides the final agreement as to which projects are selected.

3. Tasks of the Panel of External Experts

The Panel of External Experts will intervene only in the framework of the Strategic Assessment, based on the criteria listed above.

The Strategic assessment includes the following activities:

- **Kick off meeting** with all members of the Panel, the Permanent Secretariat, the Entrusted Entity and the Commission to define the methodology for the Strategic Assessment, develop a shared understanding of the assessment criteria and define a detailed calendar for the delivery of the expected deliverables.
- **Assessment and scoring of eligible and admissible Application Forms** by individual members of the Panel of External Experts. Each Application Form shall be assessed by 2 different experts, allowing for cross-analysis and cross-scoring of each proposal. The Permanent Secretariat will allocate the Application Forms to each expert on the basis of the specific thematic competences. A lead expert will be nominated for each project and will be responsible to draw up a consolidated assessment sheet. This will include detailed (for each criterion) and overall scoring, comments and recommendations for each criterion. This will be done following individual assessments and an exchange between the nominated experts assessing the project.

- **Consensus meeting** with all members of the Panel, the Permanent Secretariat, the Region Nord-Pas de Calais and the Commission to share the consolidated assessment and scoring for all eligible Applications Form and rank the project proposals.
- **Submission of the final consolidated assessment sheet for each project proposal**

4. Selection of experts for the Panel of External Experts:

4.1 Applications:

Experts interested in applying in the framework of the present Call for Applications shall submit the following:

- A detailed CV in English, using the Europass format³
- A signed cover letter in English outlining :
 - Why the candidate is suitable to join the panel of evaluators for Urban Innovative Actions
 - Main experience with regard to : A) working on thematic issues covered by the specific call for proposals for UIA projects, B) working as an expert in such an assessment panel

Nota bene: In order to avoid potential conflict of interest, the cover letter shall include the following:

“I hereby certify that I do not have any professional relation with actors potentially involved in proposals for Urban Innovative Actions to be assessed nor any interest in projects that could be developed by urban authorities and other public authorities within the framework of the call for proposals for Urban Innovative Actions. In case there should be any change in my personal situation with regard the above mentioned elements, I commit to inform immediately the Director of the Secretariat for Urban Innovative Actions.”

The deadline for receipt of the applications is 26th February 2016, 14h00 (CET).

Applications shall be sent by the deadline via email to the Permanent Secretariat at the following address recruitment@uia-initiative.eu

4.2 Selection procedure

The selection of applications for the Panel of External Experts will be performed by an independent consultancy selected by the Entrusted Entity through an open call for tender.

The selection procedures will be undertaken in 2 stages:

- A short list of candidates for each topic will be elaborated on the basis of the assessment of received applications
- Short listed candidate will be interviewed by the independent consultancy and the Permanent Secretariat in order to establish a final consolidated list. **Interview will take place in Lille on the second and third week of March 2016**

³ The template for the Europass CV can be found at : <https://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/en/documents/curriculum-vitae>

4.3 Selection criteria

Selection of applicants will be done along the following criteria:

- In depth knowledge (academic and/or based on practical experience) of the urban topics of relevance for the first Call for Proposals for Urban Innovative Actions. A minimum of 7 years of experience on the topic is requested. These are as follows :
 - Jobs and skills in the local economy
 - Energy transition
 - Urban Poverty – with focus on deprived neighbourhoods
 - Integration of migrants and refugees
- Good understanding and direct experience of challenges for integrated sustainable urban development in Europe as well as of the potential for experimentation of innovative solutions
- Understanding of the urban dimension of the EU policies, Cohesion Policy in particular
- Proven track record in similar work (i.e. of assessing applications of urban projects, and of applying scoring systems and making recommendations for selection)
- Independence from cities
- Fluent in English (written and spoken)
- Working knowledge of French appreciated
- Where possible working knowledge of a third EU language
- IT literate
- Excellent communication skills (written and verbal) and experience of committee work
- Ability to work in a team, under pressure and to tight timeline

The panel of experts shall be balanced in terms of thematic expertise so as to cover the 4 topics of relevance for the first Call for Proposals for Urban Innovative Actions.

In addition, as stated in the Delegation Agreement, the panel shall be geographically balanced and it shall ensure that the territorial diversity of the Union's urban areas is taken into account.

If made possible by the range of applications received, the 20 experts should be of different nationalities.

As a result of the assessment process, a short list will be defined for each of the 4 topics.

The final decision concerning the number of experts selected for each topic will be taken after the deadline for the submission of project applications, when the number of project applications for each topic will be known.

4. Contractual details

4.1 Contractual management

The external service provider, in charge of the assessment of the applications received for the constitution of the Panel of External experts will be also responsible for the contractual management of the selected experts.

A contract will be signed between the external service provider and each selected expert included in the Panel of External Experts.

The UIA PS will coordinate and support the activities of the external service provider. It is the only responsible for the quality control of the activities and deliverables of the members of the Panel of External Experts

4.2 Fees

The payment of experts is fixed at EUR 750, VAT included. These payments will be financed in the framework of the initiative Urban Innovative Actions.

Travel and accommodation costs will be supported by the UIA Initiative according to the refunding conditions communicated to the experts in advance and after reception by the external service provider of the declarations of expenses form and justifications of payments.

4.3 Number of days

Depending on the number of project proposals received, the number of days to be allocated to each expert included in the panel is around 20.

4.4 Incompatibility with the position of UIA Experts

Each UIA project approved in the framework of a Call for Proposals will be supported by an UIA Experts.

UIA Experts will be selected through a specific Call for Applications, to be launched each year in relation with the Call for Proposals for the selection of projects.

Experts selected as members of the Panel of External Experts will not be able apply for the position of UIA Experts to support project assessed by the Panel.

4.4 Calendar of the activities

The strategic assessment of the project applications received in the framework of the first Call for Proposals shall be carried out according to the following calendar:

- **Kick off meeting: first week of April 2016**
- **Individual assessment: second week of April/first week of May 2016**
- **Consensus meeting: last week of May 2016**

5. Useful resources⁴

- Terms of Reference for the 1st Call for Proposals
- UIA Guidance
- Application Form – Working Version

⁴ All documents can be downloaded here : <http://www.uia-initiative.eu/en/call-for-proposals>