



Terms of Reference: fifth Call for Proposals

Urban Innovative Actions Initiative

16/09/2019 – 12/12/2019



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1 Introduction

As stated in the Article 8 of the ERDF Regulation¹, ERDF may support innovative actions in the area of sustainable urban development. In this framework, the European Commission has launched the Urban Innovative Actions (UIA) Initiative in order to identify and test new solutions, which address issues related to sustainable urban development and are of relevance at Union level.

The main aim of the UIA Initiative is therefore to provide urban authorities across Europe with space and resources to test bold and unproven ideas addressing interconnected challenges and experiment how these respond to the complexity of real life. Projects to be supported shall be innovative, of good quality, designed and implemented with the involvement of key stakeholders, result oriented and transferable.

Urban authorities should seize the opportunity offered by the UIA Initiative to move from “normal projects” (that could be financed through “traditional” sources of funding, including mainstream ERDF Programmes) and take the risk to turn ambitious and creative ideas into prototypes that can be tested in real urban settings. In other words, UIA can support pilot projects that are too risky to be funded by traditional sources of funding provided that they are highly innovative and experimental.

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 should take place within a maximum period of 3 years². There is no ideal size for UIA project budgets. Small projects (i.e. below EUR 1 million ERDF requested) may have a reduced probability of being selected as they may struggle to demonstrate that the actions are of sufficient scale to produce meaningful conclusions. Whereas, projects including significant investment costs, particularly at the end of the implementation period, should demonstrate that the cost fit the purpose and are duly justified.

The UIA Initiative is an instrument of the European Union and is managed by the European Commission's (EC) Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy under indirect management. For the implementation of the Initiative, the Commission has designated the Region Hauts-de-France³ as

¹ European Regional Development Fund Regulation (EU) No 1301/2013: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32013R1301>.

² In exceptional and well justified cases projects may be extended by maximum 1 year (see UIA Guidance for more information).

³ Formerly Region Nord-Pas de Calais.

Entrusted Entity (EE). For the management of the Initiative, a Permanent Secretariat (PS) has been established⁴.

With the present Terms of Reference, the Entrusted Entity is inviting eligible authorities to submit project proposals in the framework of the fifth Call for Proposals. For this Call for Proposals an indicative budget of EUR 50 million is allocated.

The present document sets out the requirement and process to follow for the fifth Call for Proposals. It should be read in conjunction with the [UIA Guidance](#) and the [guidance for the Application Form](#), published on the UIA website and updated in the framework of the fifth Call for Proposals.

2 Eligible authorities – Who can apply

Article 2 UIA establishes that the following authorities may apply for support to undertake Urban Innovative Actions:

- First category: Any urban authority of a local administrative unit defined according to the degree of urbanisation as city, town or suburb comprising at least 50 000 inhabitants.
- Second category: 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.

Only eligible urban authorities as defined by the Article 2 of the Delegated Act can submit an Application Form in the framework of a UIA Call for Proposals.

The definition of Local Administrative Units (LAUs) as well the classification according to the degree⁵ of urbanisation and the figures on the number of inhabitants are based on information provided in the **UIA Correspondence table “EU-28-LAU-2018-NUTS-2016-FR&PT_POP2017” (2018)**⁶. Although a more recent correspondence table has been released by Eurostat, it does not include information for

⁴ Information and contact details of the Permanent Secretariat can be found here:

<http://www.uia-initiative.eu/en/about-us/meet-team>.

⁵ Definition of Local Administrative Units and degree of urbanisation are available here:

<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/nuts/local-administrative-units>; http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:Degree_of_urbanisation.

⁶ UIA Correspondence table “EU-28-LAU-2018-NUTS-2016-FR&PT_POP2017” (2018) can be downloaded from the respective Call page on the UIA website. Please note that this table was created specifically for Call 5, based on the information in Eurostat Correspondence table “LAU – NUTS 2016, EU-28 and EFTA / available Candidate Countries” (2018) and Eurostat Correspondence table “LAU – NUTS 2016, EU-28 and EFTA / available Candidate Countries” (2017). Because of this, please note that for FR and PT there are two tabs in the spreadsheet, whilst for the rest of the Member States the information is consolidated in one tab per country.

all EU Member States; only the **UIA Correspondence table “EU-28-LAU-2018-NUTS-2016-FR&PT_POP2017” (2018)** does. This is the reason why this table will be used by the UIA PS as the main reference document for the Eligibility Check. Applicants are invited to refer to this Correspondence table to verify their eligibility and provide information on the LAUs included in its administrative borders and the figures concerning the number of inhabitants. However, in case more recent Eurostat tables or new figures from national statistical institutes show a significant change to an applicant’s eligibility situation (e.g. an LAU previously considered as rural is now considered as urban according to the degree of urbanisation), the applicant is strongly invited to contact the PS prior to the submission to double check their eligibility situation.

Additional detailed information on the eligibility of urban authorities is provided in the following sections.

2.1 First category

- Municipalities/city councils whose administrative borders correspond to a single LAU. In this case the LAU shall be classified as city, town and suburbs according to the degree of urbanisation (code 1 and/or 2 in the Correspondence table – column Degree of Urbanisation) and have at least 50 000 inhabitants
- Municipalities/city councils whose administrative borders include several LAUs. This is the case for municipalities/city councils in Portugal, United Kingdom, Ireland, Greece, Malta and Latvia where the Eurostat definition of LAU does not correspond to municipalities/city councils but to infra-municipal units (parishes) or statistical units (electoral wards). In this case, the municipality/city council can be eligible only if it has a total of 50 000 inhabitants and if the majority (more than 50%) of the inhabitants lives in LAUs classified as cities, towns or suburbs according to the degree of urbanisation (code 1 and/or 2 in the Correspondence table – column Degree of Urbanisation)
- Organised agglomerations which are an association/grouping of urban authorities fulfilling the following criteria:
 - To be officially recognised as a tier of local government (different from the regional and provincial level) by national law with the obligation for municipalities/city councils to join the supra-municipal organisation (therefore in this category are not included associations that are composed on a voluntary basis, for a specific purpose and/or with a limited duration)

- To be composed only by municipalities/city councils (therefore in this category are not included associations involving other institutions such as universities, chambers of commerce, etc.)
- To have specific competences, fixed by national law, delegated by the municipalities involved for policy areas relevant for the UIA project. Associations are invited to provide precise reference to the national legal framework. Organised agglomeration shall have exclusive competences for the design and implementation in policy areas relevant for the UIA project
- To have a specific political (with indirect representation of the municipalities involved) and administrative (dedicated staff) structure

Examples of organised agglomerations in the framework of the UIA Initiative are:

- France: Métropoles, Communautés Urbaines, Communautés d'Agglomération and Communautés de Communes, Etablissements Publics Territoriaux
- Italy: Città Metropolitane and Unione di Comuni
- Germany: Landkreis
- Spain: Mancomunidades and Area Metropolitana Barcelona
- United Kingdom: Combined Authorities
- Portugal: Comunidades Intermunicipais (CIMs)

European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) whose partnerships are composed only of urban authorities (as defined above) and with specific competencies for policy design and implementation relevant for the UIA Call are considered as organised agglomerations and therefore they can apply in the framework of UIA Calls for Proposals as Main or Associated Urban Authorities. EGTCs whose partnerships include other organisations (e.g. Member States, regional authorities, associations, universities, etc.) are not considered as organised agglomerations and cannot apply as Main or Associated Urban Authorities but they can join as Delivery Partners in a proposal submitted by an eligible urban authority.⁷

⁷ For details on the roles and responsibilities of the Main and Associated Urban Authorities and Delivery Partners applicants shall refer to the section 5.1 of the present Terms of Reference as well as to the section 2.1 of the UIA Guidance.

In the framework of the UIA Initiative, organised agglomerations are considered as a single urban authority representing all the municipalities/city councils involved. For this reason, in a project proposal submitted by an organised agglomeration, this shall be indicated as Main Urban Authority.

To verify the eligibility of organised agglomerations, the PS will check that the total number of inhabitants is at least 50 000 and that the majority (more than 50%) of inhabitants live in LAUs involved in the agglomeration that are classified as cities, towns or suburbs according to the degree of urbanisation.

2.2 Second category

Any association of urban authorities (national/regional associations of urban authorities, territorial pacts, development districts, etc.) as well as individual urban authorities without formalised cooperation agreements but willing to jointly apply in the framework of the UIA Initiative, cannot apply as a single urban authority.

They shall identify a Main Urban Authority (MUA) among the municipalities/city councils involved and list the others as Associated Urban Authorities (AUA).

In order to be eligible, all urban authorities involved (Main and Associated) shall be recognised as LAUs and be classified as cities, towns or suburbs according to the degree of urbanisation. In case of urban authorities whose administrative borders include more than one LAU, the same rules for the definition of the degree of urbanisation described above in the present section apply.

The relationship between the MUAs and AUAs does not need to be formalised at the time of submitting the Application Form. In case the proposal is approved and supported, the UIA PS will provide the MUA with a template of Partnership Agreement to be signed by all partners involved (Main and Associated Urban Authorities and Delivery Partners) during the first months of the implementation phase.

Previous experiences show that single projects delivered by associations or grouping of cities without a status of organised agglomeration, comprising more than 3 urban authorities (Main and Associated Urban Authorities) without territorial contiguity, risk losing coherence and having difficulties in delivering meaningful results. As such, it is recommended that associations and/or groupings of urban

authorities (without a status of organised agglomerations) who wish to apply should be territorially contiguous and seek to limit the number of Associated Urban Authorities involved.

Nota bene: Only in the framework of the present fifth Call for Proposals and only for proposals addressing the topic “Demographic Change”, urban authorities recognised as **LAUs by EUROSTAT but classified as rural according to their degree of urbanisation can exceptionally be involved as Associated Urban Authorities (AUAs) only**. This is meant to foster urban-rural linkages, particularly relevant for this topic. To ensure the full respect of the requirements laid down in the Delegated Act, LAUs classified as rural according to their degree of urbanisation cannot be indicated as MUAs (and therefore they cannot submit project proposals) and their inhabitants cannot be taken into account to reach the minimum threshold of 50.000 inhabitants. The minimum threshold of inhabitants shall be ensured by the MUA and eventually the other AUAs classified by Eurostat as cities, towns and/or suburbs according to their degree of urbanisation.

2.3 Common requirements for eligible urban authorities

In addition to the principles outlined above for each specific category of eligible urban authorities, the following principles apply to all eligible urban authorities in the framework of the UIA Initiative:

- All urban authorities shall be located in an EU Member State
- Only eligible urban authorities as defined above may submit an Application Form in the framework of a UIA Call for Proposals. An Application Form submitted by a Delivery Partner will be declared ineligible.
- Urban authorities (as defined above) can be listed in a project proposal only as Main and/or Associated Urban Authorities. The category of Delivery Partners is reserved only to institutions and/or organisations that are not recognised as urban authorities in the framework of the UIA Initiative
- An urban authority or an organised agglomeration can be involved in only one project proposal in the framework of each Call for Proposals (even if these project proposals are submitted under different topics in the same Call for Proposals). The rule applies also to the AUAs (a municipality can be involved in only one project proposal whether it is as MUA or as AUA).
- Urban authorities already supported in an approved project by the UIA Initiative in the framework of a previous Call for Proposals cannot submit a new Application Form on the same topic over the entire duration of the Initiative.

Agencies and companies (e.g. in the field of energy/waste management, economic development, touristic promotion, etc.) fully or partially owned by the municipality/city council are not considered as LAUs and therefore cannot be recognised as eligible urban authorities. Nevertheless, these organisations can be involved in the partnership as Delivery Partners (more details on the roles and responsibilities of Delivery Partners are provided in section 5.1 of the present Terms of Reference as well as in section 2.1 of the UIA Guidance).

As stated in the previous paragraphs, the UIA PS will use as the main tool for verifying compliance with the eligibility criteria the spreadsheet **UIA Correspondence table “EU-28-LAU-2018-NUTS-2016-FR&PT_POP2017” (2018)**. Applicants are therefore strongly advised to check the spreadsheet and carry out an eligibility self-assessment before filling in the Application Form.

In case of gaps, inconsistencies or doubts concerning the interpretation of the data included in the table, applicants are strongly advised to contact the UIA PS before filling in and submitting the Application Form.

During the eligibility check, in cases any applicant's status as eligible candidate is uncertain, the UIA PS will liaise with all relevant partners, including Eurostat, to determine the eligibility.

3 Thematic coverage for the fifth Call for Proposals

The Commission has decided to closely align the topics that Urban Authorities can address through the UIA Initiative to those defined in the framework of the Urban Agenda for the EU. In addition, European Commission could propose so called “cross-cutting topics” which are not part of the list of topics of the Urban Agenda but refer to key urban challenges (e.g. Demographic change). More especially, each Call for Proposals for UIA will focus on a certain number of topics.

For the fifth Call for Proposals, applicants can submit project proposals addressing the following topics:

- Air quality
- Circular economy
- Culture and cultural heritage
- Demographic change

Urban authorities applying in the framework of a UIA Call for Proposals are requested to select only one of the topics proposed. However, as an integrated approach should be developed in order to tackle effectively the challenges identified, in the Application Form applicants have the possibility to describe the links and externalities with other topics and policy areas.

As stated, the Commission's desire is to see projects proposed that bring forth creative, innovative and durable solutions to address the various challenges identified. As UIA will also be a laboratory for new ideas, the Commission aims to encourage novel experimentation, which draws on experience in a variety of disciplines. For that reason, the Commission has avoided being overly prescriptive in terms of describing the types of projects it expects to see proposed.

In terms of support to ERDF Thematic Objectives and Investment Priorities, the overall project needs to be viewed as supportive of the thematic objectives and investment priorities for ERDF. However, UIA projects contributing to Thematic Objectives 8-10 (i.e. those that are more social oriented) will be able to be supported provided that:

- The knowledge generated by the overall project can be viewed as supportive of the thematic objectives and investment priorities for ERDF; and
- The project is not overwhelmingly focused on European Social Fund (ESF) type of activity

Please bear in mind that during the selection and implementation of project proposals, the complementarity and synergies with other Union funding programmes and policies, as well as supported projects, is of utmost importance. The UIA Initiative Selection Committee will seek to avoid any duplication when deciding on which projects to support.

The following sections provide detailed descriptions for the 4 topics of the fifth UIA Call for Proposals.

3.1 AIR QUALITY

Overall definition and context of the topics

Despite considerable progress in the past decades, ambient air pollution remains the number one environmental cause of premature deaths in the EU, still leading to more than 390.000 premature deaths each year in the EU due to elevated levels of fine particles, nitrogen dioxide and ozone. Air pollution also continues to harm ecosystems as more than half of the EU territory is exposed to excess nitrogen deposition (eutrophication) and ozone concentrations. This negatively impacts biodiversity, reduces crop yields and causes other material damage.

EU environmental policy focusses on developing and implementing a clean air policy framework that reinforces national, regional and local policies in those aspects of air quality problems that Member States cannot handle effectively or efficiently alone. EU policies also aim at implementing the Union's international obligations in the field of air pollution having as main actors citizens, to co-design and co-implement and at integrating environmental protection requirements into, for example, industry, construction, urban planning and design, energy, transport, urban farming and agriculture sectors. Figures illustrating the importance of ambient air pollution can be found [here](#).

Relevance for and role of urban authorities

Urban authorities are best placed to implement local measures benefiting citizen's health and well-being and the environment, as they know the local situation and control a range of instruments such as urban planning and design, infrastructure/traffic management, housing permits, neighbourhood retrofit and buildings adaptive re-use, parking policy etc., which allows them to steer and promote innovative solutions. They will generally control local budgets and employ the staff that will have to do any implementation, including for instance taking or enforcing measures in the case of smog episodes, or designing and implementing long-term air quality plans.

In many Member States city authorities are either responsible for developing, implementing and evaluating official air quality plans under Directive 2008/50/EC or for city air quality plans that are linked to official regional air quality plans under Directive 2008/50/EC. In the case of official regional air quality plans, cities often play a major role, as they tend to be the big economic centre of the region, with a concentration of population, traffic and industry. The fact that exceedances of PM and NO₂ in many cities of several countries persist, despite air quality action plans, indicate that innovative solutions and improvements in the approach are necessary: a better insight in where and when the air pollution problems may occur and how innovative solutions can contribute to solutions would be very welcome.

Prompts for urban authorities

It should be stressed that healthy living and urban air quality can be improved by mitigation of the relevant emission sources of air pollutants or their precursors. Urban air quality is not only influenced by urban sources (i.e. traffic, domestic heating, poorly isolated buildings, industry) but also by sources situated outside the city. This so-called background air quality is composed of/influenced by the emissions from non-urban emission sources such as agriculture, (inland) shipping, natural sources and emissions in distant (urban) areas. Decisions on which urban source could best (cost-effectively) be mitigated require good data on the background sources (which determine the background concentration and the city's own contribution to air pollution). In addition, air pollution in an urban

environment is not homogeneous. In any urban environment hotspots occur, which can be related to various sources. High-resolution modelling could help identifying these hotspots and allow far more precise and more cost-effective measures that are best suited for that micro environment.

When identifying innovative solutions, urban authorities are invited to take note of and build on lessons learnt as described in the reports from the European Environment Agency on air implementation in 12 cities ([Air Implementation Pilot](#), [Europe's urban air quality — re-assessing implementation challenges in cities](#)), from projects carried out under the LIFE or Horizon 2020 (See for instance the [urban waste management call 2015](#) to renature cities ; and most recent [cross-cutting activities with focus on smart and sustainable cities](#)) programmes and, where appropriate, link to existing activities, such as exchanges under the [TAIEX Peer-2-Peer programme](#).

Without being prescriptive in terms of the types of projects expected, cities are invited to consider in particular the following points and issues:

- Clean commuting: innovative mobility solutions (e.g. Urban Vehicle Access Regulations (UVARs) such as low Emission Zones and/or Congestion Charging) to reduce the impact of commuter traffic from suburban and other areas surrounding the city (centre) on urban air quality. City authorities could apply results from mobility projects and investments specifically to the challenge of air pollution from commuter traffic, testing and improving innovative solutions to enhance uptake, public acceptance and impact on air pollution. A key element would be the cooperation with regional authorities and neighbouring municipalities as commuting often originates outside the city boundaries and as Air Quality Plans under Directive 2008/50/EC are often established at regional level.
- Clean air and climate: City authorities are best placed to maximize synergies between energy/climate and air quality measures locally. They could, for instance, test methodologies to integrate air quality into their climate and energy strategies, such as the Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plans (SECAPs) under the Covenant of Mayors, improving the link to Air Quality Plans, such as developed under the Ambient Air Quality Directives. If and where appropriate, results could be shared in relevant city networks.
- Clean air for all: citizens can become more vulnerable to air pollution due to health conditions. Less affluent parts of cities, and thereby their dwellers, can also be more affected by air pollution. Urban authorities could test innovative actions on issues such as urban planning, mobility, energy and information, to target them to reduce air pollution exposure of such vulnerable groups, for instance focusing on less affluent areas with high pollution, and/or on areas with childcare facilities and schools, hospitals and/or homes for the elderly.

- Clean air citizen science: use of indicative air quality measurements (e.g. through deployment of reliable low-cost sensors) to complement the official air quality monitoring stations. Urban authorities, where needed together with relevant stakeholders responsible for air quality monitoring and public health, could test and link up citizen science with developed tools for processing data and qualified established air quality monitoring practices, building on experiences with related projects ([LIFE Preparatory Project on sensors](#); EP Pilot Project on sensors).
- Clean air communication: often enjoying high political trust, local authorities are well-placed to increase public acceptance of clean air quality measures, for instance ensuring and demonstrating positive social, health and well-being impacts. Projects should test innovative approaches that adequately target key segments of the local population, such as in schools, the construction sector and the health community, to further sensitise citizens and stimulate behavioural and cultural change.
- Clean air governance: multi-level and multi-departmental governance best practices. Effective action on air quality depends on all levels of governance, and at every single level on cooperation between departments that can affect air quality (e.g. urban planning and building codes, mobility, road maintenance, urban green, etc.). Projects should design and test innovative approaches to clean air policies across different levels of governance, such as local, regional and national, and across departments.

As this is the second time that the topic of Air Quality is included in a UIA Call for Proposals, we would recommend that applicants look at those projects approved in the [third Call for Proposals](#).

3.2 CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Overall definition and context of the topics

The transition to a circular economy, where the value of products, materials and resources is maintained in the economy for as long as possible, and the generation of waste minimised, is [a priority for the EU](#). Water is one of those key resources in the transition and the circular urban water management is of a particular focus.

Waste water is the largest untapped waste category of circular economy. Re-use of water (for instance for urban irrigation) could improve from separation of water from chemical contaminants. Water and waste water systems are significant energy consumers in Europe (according to [ENERWATER project](#) (H2020) the 22 000 waste water treatment plants in Europe use more than 1% of the overall electricity consumption in the EU) . The European Commission adopted in February 2018 a proposal for a revised drinking water directive to improve the quality of drinking water and provide greater access and

information to citizens. It will help EU countries to manage drinking water in a resource-efficient and sustainable manner so as to reduce energy use and unnecessary water loss. It will also help reduce the number of plastic bottles following increased confidence in tap water, improved access and promotion of use of drinking water. In line with the principles of the new European pillar of social rights, the proposal contains an obligation for EU countries to improve access to safe drinking water for all and to ensure access for vulnerable and marginalised groups.

At the same time, the European Commission has launched an evaluation of the Urban Waste Water Directive with the objective to identify what has worked and what are the remaining key challenges in the collection and treatment of urban waste waters.

Among the many sectors facing specific challenges in the context of the circular economy, the European Commission is also taking decisive steps on plastic recycling. In May 2018 was proposed new EU-wide rules to target the 10 single-use plastic products most often found on Europe's beaches and seas, as well as lost and abandoned fishing gear, as part of European Plastics Strategy to tackle wasteful and damaging plastic litter. The measures proposed will contribute to Europe's transition towards a Circular Economy, and to reaching the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the EU's climate commitments and industrial policy objectives.

Relevance for and role of urban authorities

Urban authorities have a solid experience in providing waste management as a service of general interest. Cities can also drive the change towards more sustainable modes of production and consumption. They have a key role in fighting littering and reducing amounts of solid waste spread in the environment including in the rivers and finally at sea. New obligations for producers of single use plastic items will be put in place thorough the future Directive on single use plastics, including the obligation to finance actions to reduce litter. Cities will be in first line to implement concretely these new requirements.

Cities are very often responsible for sustainable, efficient and equitable management of water (incl. drinking water supply and waste water treatment). Good management in networks and installations have positive impacts on maintenance costs and investments at local level. Furthermore, urban authorities are close to citizens when it comes to affordability issues.

Prompts for urban authorities

Without being prescriptive in terms of the types of projects expected, cities are invited to consider in particular the following points and issues:

Innovative solutions for the reduction of plastics and other pollutants such as pharmaceuticals in urban waste and waste water streams, with a focus on:

- single use plastics (that most frequently end up in the oceans as specified in the Directive on single use plastics);
- collection of plastic litter, micro plastics and other pollutants from water run-off and storm water overflows;
- promote collection and separate treatment of waste water polluted by pharmaceuticals at typical hotspots.

Innovative solutions for more circular urban water management, including:

- making waste water collection and treatment plants climate-neutral or climate-positive - reducing energy consumption / energy production;
- exploit the full potential of the re-use of urban waste water;
- better water use efficiency / reduction of water consumption, and improving water access and affordability for the vulnerable and marginalised groups.

As this is the second time that the topic of Circular Economy is included in a UIA Call for Proposals, we would recommend that applicants look at those projects approved in the [second Call for Proposals](#).

3.3 CULTURE AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

Overall definition and context of the topics

[Culture](#) and [cultural heritage](#) including Cultural and Creative Industries, are vital assets for regional competitiveness and social cohesion, while constituting key elements of the identity of cities and regions. Furthermore, cultural participation has a significant impact on residents' quality of life, contributing to their well-being and their sense of belonging.

Despite the fact that culture and cultural heritage are considered an [important element in strategies for urban and regional development](#), their potential is not always fully tapped. One of the reasons lies in the persistence of a traditional approach where investments in those sectors focus exclusively on the support to cultural production or on physical interventions in heritage sites or buildings. While those investments are crucial to support the development of cultural values and/or artistic expressions, and to pass the precious tangible and intangible cultural heritage of Europe to future generations, it is fundamental to promote [innovative approaches](#), targeting the sustainability of the actions and maximising the social and economic benefits on the territories and communities.

As general principles, these investments should be based on:

- integrated approaches, by better using the potential that culture and culture heritage has in generating benefits in the [different policy areas](#) (i.e. research, transport, tourism, employment, environment, entrepreneurship - Culture and cultural heritage benefit from a range of EU policies, programmes and funding, including [Creative Europe](#), but also [European Structural and Investment Funds](#), [Horizon 2020](#), [COSME](#), [Europe for Citizens](#) or [EU external action financing instruments](#).) and in the quality of urban interventions;
- people-centred approaches, tailoring interventions on the effective needs of people and communities and offering them the opportunity to benefit from cultural and cultural heritage resources through [participatory approaches in decision making](#), co-creation and co-implementation;
- open governance models, engaging a wide spectrum of actors in the public, non-for-profit and private sectors (in particular SMEs) allowing them to generate innovative forms of financing culture and cultural heritage, direct or indirect economic or social benefits.

Relevance for and role of urban authorities

Cities are laboratories of culture-based innovation. They can play a key role, targeting their strategies to enable citizens and communities to benefit from culture and heritage resources for their future, and acting as catalysers for the wide spectrum of stakeholders and authorities concerned by integrated investments. Integrated, place-based development efforts adapted to local conditions are more likely to be successful in generating results. For instance, it has been demonstrated that a strategic, long-term and participatory approach to culture as required by the [European Capital of Culture](#) label, can bring [sustainable benefits to cities and regions](#).

Such integrated approach needs to reflect above all the needs of local residents, in order to facilitate their [access to and participation in culture](#). The concept of “access” focuses on enabling them to use the available cultural offer, also by “opening doors” to non-traditional audiences in order for them to enjoy cultural offer or heritage sites that have previously been difficult to access because of a set of barriers. The concept of “participation” (in decision making, in the creative processes, etc.) recognises the residents as an active interlocutor, to be consulted – or at least involved – in planning and creating the cultural offer.

In order to produce benefits on the society, actions and projects should be as open and inclusive as possible, allowing all citizens and communities to engage with and benefit from these resources. Unfortunately, available data on [cultural participation in the EU](#) shows that due to a number of [obstacles](#), numerous Europeans neither take part in cultural activities nor visit cultural sites. The [New European Agenda for Culture](#), proposed by the European Commission in May 2018,

recognizes that there is a clear scope to increase cultural participation of Europeans. Cultural accessibility was also included among specific objectives of the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018. Furthermore, the political legacy of the Year, the [European Framework for Action on Cultural Heritage](#), states that stimulating participation in cultural heritage remains a challenge and proposes a number of actions that specifically target, or remain relevant, for cities in the EU.

Prompts for urban authorities

Within the context of the Urban Innovative Actions and taking stock of the European Union activities in this regard, urban authorities are invited to test innovative community-based solutions in accessibility to and participation in culture and cultural heritage, which can have a positive impact on growth and jobs, social cohesion and social inclusion.

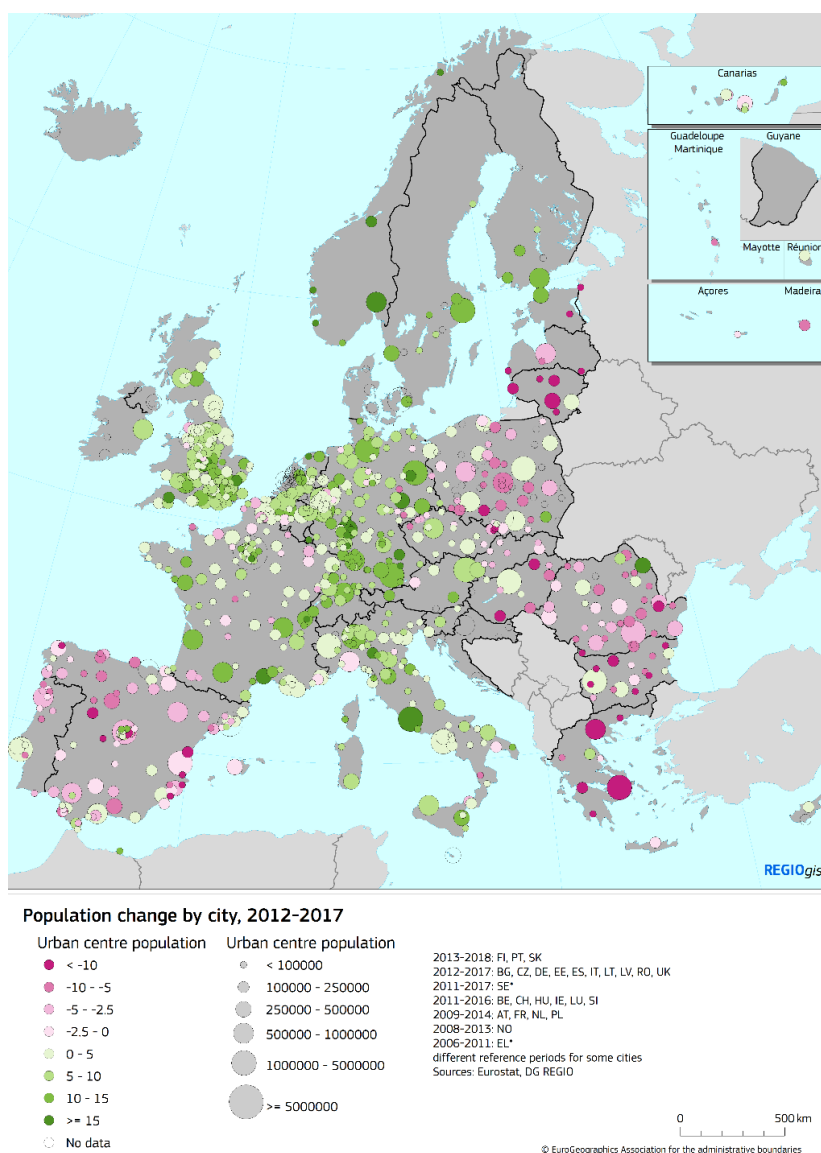
Without being prescriptive concerning the types of projects expected, cities are invited to consider in particular the following points and issues:

- Promoting social inclusion and cohesion through improved access and participation to cultural and recreational services, in particular, to cultural “third places” (widely understood physical places where people can connect with each other, ranging from cultural centres or museums to recreational centres, urban gardens or public libraries).
- Identifying and putting in place innovative participatory governance and management models for cultural heritage and cultural assets for example, but not exclusively, by looking for synergies between urban policies and digital humanities which can contribute to culture-centred participatory urban processes (e.g. see the [European CrossCult project](#))
- Improving natural heritage, especially in peri-urban areas and historic centres to create quality public spaces to improve sense of belonging and resilience of cities;
- Promoting local employment through culture and cultural heritage sustainable business models based on the participation of stakeholders and innovative public-private partnerships.
- Exploring innovative models of increasing social and physical well-being through improved access to and participation in culture and cultural heritage;
- Identifying new strategies for more sustainable tourism flows, tapping on the potential of minor/peri-urban/rural heritage sites;
- Fostering intercultural dialogue through better access and wider participation in culture.

3.4 DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE

Overall definition and context of the topic

In the EU, 43% of the population live in a NUTS 3 region that lost population due to a natural reduction between 2005 and 2015. Whereas, almost a third of the EU population, 31%, live in a region that lost population due to net outward migration, i.e. more people leaving the region than people entering the region, between 2005 and 2015. The biggest reductions occurred in regions where there was both a natural population decline and a net outward migration (see for further details [Seventh Report on Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion](#)). On the contrary, capital metropolitan regions have experienced population growth. At the level of cities, many non-capital, small and medium-sized cities in the EU are facing decrease in population in the last decades, i.e. shrinking cities. The graph below shows the change in population in EU cities, as defined by EUROSTAT, in the period 2012-2017. The phenomenon is affecting in general the EU, and in particular countries in East Europe and in South Europe.



Relevance for and role of urban authorities

Urban shrinkage brings about fundamental challenges for urban societies, planning processes and governance structures. Population decline impacts on almost all arenas of urban life: business and employment, housing, social (including schools) and technical infrastructure, municipal finances, social cohesion, segregation etc. Shrinkage results in a mismatch between supply of and demand for built structures, urban space and infrastructure. It is challenging to steer or govern urban shrinkage because under the conditions it produces, governance arrangements risk becoming unstable and fragmented.

Shrinking cities are particularly affected by the impact of aging population, e.g. the availability of social and health services, and by the evolution of the labour market, e.g. a shrinking active labour force. Both these consequences have a strong impact on sustainable economic development. In addition, suburbanisation or urban sprawl, where the population disperses from the core city toward more peripheral locations within the city regions is among the causes of population decline. Furthermore, outward migration flows from Central, Eastern and Southern Member States also contribute to the shrinking of cities and depopulation.

Acknowledging shrinkage and adapting to economic and demographic conditions, it could be an opportunity for urban authorities to modernise local governance and public services and to reorganise public building and land use policies.

Prompts for urban authorities

Urban authorities are invited to test innovative solutions to adapt to demographic decline, to reverse demographic trends and to attract relevant economic activities and residents for sustainable urban development to counterbalance the effects of demographic decline. Without being prescriptive in terms of the types of projects expected, cities are invited to consider in particular the following points and issues:

- access to community-based social and health services, incentivizing labour force participation through child/elderly care solutions, improve quality of life including through participatory methods with focus on gender and inter-generational dialogue;
- accessibility and sustainability of basic public services;
- reorganisation of existing public infrastructure and services;
- reorganisation of land use and public buildings;
- development of society 5.0, e.g. use of robotics and artificial intelligence;
- development of the "silver economy";

- strengthening the active labour force by retaining and requalifying the local one and attracting active workers;
- stimulating local entrepreneurship, especially for young population;
- reinforcing the capacity of labour market institutions, vocational education and training facilities and life-long learning.

In parallel with larger cities, attention could also be devoted to smaller and medium-sized shrinking cities. If innovative solutions require an urban-rural interface or functional area approach, it will be possible under this topic to include local administrative units defined as rural according to their degree of urbanization within a project partnership. However, as specified in section 2.2 from this document, “LAUs classified as rural according to their degree of urbanisation cannot be indicated as MUAs (and therefore they cannot submit project proposals) and their inhabitants cannot be taken into account to reach the minimum threshold of 50.000 inhabitants. The minimum threshold of inhabitants shall be ensured by the MUA and eventually the other AUAs classified by Eurostat as cities, towns and/or suburbs according to their degree of urbanisation.”

When applying for this topic, urban authorities shall provide statistical evidence of a population decline, which would justify the status of shrinking cities. Therefore, please note that the decrease in the overall population (shrinking condition) is **an essential condition** when applying under this topic for the fifth Call for proposals. Once this condition is demonstrated, cities can submit proposals addressing specific issues such as "silver economy", attraction of young talents, etc. In any case, the evidence of a shrinking condition will not be reviewed as part of the eligibility check but during the Strategic Assessment when assessing the relevance of the local challenge to be addressed. Therefore, applicants are requested to provide their reasoning/justification for a population decline in section **C.1.1 “Main challenge(s) to be addressed”** from the Application form.

4 Funding Principle

Total costs principle

The UIA Initiative follows the total costs principle. The project receives ERDF co-financing up to 80% of the eligible costs. Every partner, receiving ERDF, needs to secure 20% at least of public or private contribution to complete its budget, either from its own resources or from other sources. The partners contribution can be in the form of cash and/or in-kind. It should be noted that unpaid volunteer work is not eligible under UIA eligibility rules while paid staff should be considered as contribution in cash.

ERDF payments

The UIA payment scheme is mainly based on the principle of advance ERDF payments⁸ and also based on the principle of reimbursement of costs that were actually incurred (including flat rates):⁹

- A first ERDF advance payment corresponding to 50% of the ERDF grant is made to the Main Urban Authority within 90 days from the signature of the Subsidy Contract (and of the Partnership Agreement when necessary). This first advance payment also covers the lump sum for preparation costs (maximum EUR 16 000 ERDF).
- A second ERDF advance payment corresponding to 30% of the ERDF grant is made to the Main Urban Authority after the submission and approval of an interim progress report and project expenditure verified by the First Level Controller. The reported expenditure must reach 70% at least of the first pre-financing instalment (corresponding to 35% of the total project budget).
- A third ERDF payment corresponding to maximum 20% of the ERDF grant (minus the lump sum dedicated for the project closure and transfer of knowledge) is made to the Main Urban Authority after the submission and approval of the Final Progress Report. This report, submitted no later than 3 months after the project end date, includes the final project expenditure verified by the First Level Controller. It is important to note that the third payment is no more based on the principle of advance payment but on the principle of reimbursement of incurred and paid costs. Therefore, project partners need to pre-finance their expenditure during the last phase of project implementation.
- A final payment is made to the Main Urban Authority after the approval of the Final Qualitative Report (submitted no later than one year after the project end date). The payment amounts to maximum EUR 12 000 ERDF and covers the phase project closure and transfer of knowledge.

5 Project generation and development

5.1 Partnership for Urban Innovative Actions

Only eligible urban authorities as defined by the Article 2 of the UIA Delegated Act can submit an Application Form in the framework of a UIA Call for Proposals.

However, in the framework of the UIA Initiative, Urban Authorities are expected to establish strong local partnerships with the right mix of complementary partners. All partners need to be from the EU.

⁸ As stated in the Delegation Agreement signed between the European Commission and Region Hauts-de-France (ex-Region Nord-Pas-de-Calais) in 2015.

⁹ Idem.

A partnership for a UIA project can be made up of an MUA, AUAs and delivery partners. The wider group of stakeholders is not part of the project partnership but should also be involved in the project.

- **Main Urban Authority (MUA):** the UIA Initiative functions on the basis of an Urban Authority, who is responsible for the overall implementation and management of the entire project. The MUA signs the Subsidy Contract with the Entrusted Entity and receives the ERDF to be distributed to the other partners (AUAs and/or Delivery Partners) according to their specific roles and responsibilities (and related budget). In the case of organised agglomerations, the institution, including all the other urban authorities involved in the agglomeration, shall be considered as a single Urban Authority and listed as the Main Urban Authority in the framework of the UIA project.
- **Associated Urban Authorities (AUAs):** Any association of urban authorities (national/regional associations of urban authorities, territorial pacts or associations, development districts, etc.) with or without legal status of organised agglomeration, as well as individual urban authorities without formalised cooperation agreement but willing to jointly apply in the framework of the UIA, shall list in the Application Form one LAU as MUA and the other LAUs as AUAs. The AUAs will be responsible for the delivery of specific activities and the production of related deliverables/outputs. AUAs will have a share of the project budget and will report the costs incurred for the delivery of the activities. Detailed information on the AUAs (including legal status, experiences and competencies, contact persons, etc.) shall be provided in the Application Form.
- **Delivery Partners (DPs):** institutions, agencies, organisations, private sector partners and associations that will have an active role in the implementation of the project. Urban Authorities should select their Delivery Partners in respect of the principles of transparency and equal treatment. They will be responsible for the delivery of specific activities and the production of the related deliverables/outputs. It should be noted that only organisations having legal personality are entitled to participate in a project as Delivery Partners. Consultancy firms, having as primary objective the development and management of European projects, are not entitled to participate in a project as Delivery Partners.
- **A wider group of stakeholders** should also be involved in the design and implementation of the project. The group could include institutions, agencies, organisations and associations. These will not have a direct role (and therefore they do not have a dedicated budget for implementation) but are considered relevant in order to ensure a smooth and effective implementation as well as shared ownership of the project.

Detailed information on the roles and responsibilities of the Urban Authorities (AUAs, if relevant) and Delivery Partners is provided in section 2.1 of the UIA Guidance.

5.2 Project Activities

Activities within the framework of the UIA projects shall be organised around Work Packages and shall support one or several ERDF Thematic Objective(s) and related Investment Priority(ies) as set out in the first paragraph of the Article 9 CPR¹⁰ for ESIF and in the Article 5 ERDF.

To this end, different types of WPs should be used and are listed below:

- WP Preparation
- WP Project management
- WP Communication
- WP Implementation
- WP Investment

Except for the investment Work Package, all the other types of WPs are mandatory in UIA project applications.

In addition, each project will have in place a UIA Expert:

- to provide ongoing advice and guidance on the substance of the action, especially regarding the innovative content
- to assist in the development of documentation and outputs that will capture and disseminate lessons learnt, good practice, etc. to the wide audience
- to ensure that the action remains on track and is in line with the agreed proposal

Costs for UIA Experts (including for travel and accommodation) will be covered by the UIA Initiative and shall therefore not be included in project budgets.

More information on the structure of the work plan for a UIA project, as well as on the role and tasks of UIA Experts is provided in the UIA Guidance.

¹⁰ Common Provision Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1567433696162&uri=CELEX:32013R1303>

5.3 Budget lines and eligible expenses

All expenditure related to the implementation of the UIA projects shall be eligible according to the UIA Guidance (see section 4.2) and budgeted in the appropriate budget lines:

- Staff
- Office and administration
- Travel and accommodation
- External expertise and services
- Equipment
- Infrastructure and construction works

5.4 Additional considerations: public procurement, audit and State aid

Project partners, which fulfil the definition of a contracting authority according to the relevant national procurement legislation, have to respect the applicable public procurement rules.

Expenditure, declared by the project, must be audited by a First Level Controller (FLC). The independent FLC opinion must cover the legality and regularity of the expenditure declared, the delivery of the products and services, the soundness of the expenditure declared and the compliance of expenditure and operations with Union and national rule. As the FLC is directly appointed and paid by the UIA Initiative, no control (audit) costs should be foreseen by the project partnership when setting up the project budget.

In order to maintain a level playing field for all undertakings active in the internal market, approved projects must be designed in compliance with State aid rules so as to ensure the effectiveness of public spending and prevent market distortions such as crowding-out of private funding, the creation of ineffective market structures or the preservation of inefficient firms.¹¹ Care should be taken to ensure that funding of Urban Innovative Actions neither distorts competition nor leads to market interference without sufficient cause.

More specifically, UIA is a centrally managed EU instrument, implemented through indirect management via an Entrusted Entity, the Région Hauts-de-France. The European Commission finances the Urban Innovative Action by the ERDF (up to 80% of the project's costs), which is not regarded as

¹¹ For further guidance on the notion of State aid, see Commission Notice on the notion of State aid as referred to in Article 107(1) TFEU ('NOA'), published at: [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52016XC0719\(05\)&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52016XC0719(05)&from=EN).

resources under control of Member States and falls outside the context of State aid law. The remaining (at least 20% of the project's cost) may be covered by either private or public contributions. When such contributions stem from private sources, they fall outside the context of State aid law. When contributions stem from public sources and in so far as the project activities are non-economic, funding for such activities will not constitute State aid. However, when there are contributions from public resources of a Member State to projects which involve "economic activities", i.e. offering goods and services on the market, then such projects must be designed in a way that any public contributions comply with State aid rules at all levels, that is either at the level of the owner, constructor and/or operator of the project or facility. In such cases, the public funding provided should be in line with the requirements of the De Minimis Regulation, or with conditions set in the General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER) or the SGEI Decision for Services of General Economic interest.

Detailed information on public procurement and State aid are provided in the UIA Guidance.

6 Application process

The application pack for the fifth Call for Proposals for UIA consists of the following:

- The present Terms of Reference available in all EU languages. However, in case of discrepancies, please note that the English version prevails.
- Technical guidance for the Electronic Exchange Platform (EEP)
- Detailed instruction to fill in the Application Form available online in all EU languages within the EEP system. However, in case of discrepancies, please note that the English version prevails.

A working version of the Application Form and the Confirmation Sheet is also provided as a tool to help in the application drafting process (word document available only in English).

In addition, the UIA Guidance (available only in English), will need to be extensively consulted regarding the overarching rules of the Initiative.

All documentation can be found on the UIA website, where a single page gathers all relevant information.

The application process is 100% paperless through the use of UIA's [Electronic Exchange Platform \(EEP\)](#). **The application consists in an Application form and a scanned signed Confirmation sheet.** An annex

can also be uploaded and attached to the Application Form. This could be a map presenting the area of intervention, a graph, an infographic, etc. The type and size of the file to be annexed are specified in the EEP guidance.

It is strongly recommended that applicants fill in the Application Form in clear English, although it may also be submitted in any of the official EU languages.

It should be noted that the Strategic and Operational assessments will be done on the basis of the English version of the Application Form (to be translated in English by an external service provider contracted by the PS, in case the Application Form is submitted in another language). The quality of the translation will not be guaranteed by the PS and therefore is at the applicants' risk. Moreover, the Subsidy Contract, project management, formal reporting, key deliverables and all communication with the Entrusted Entity and the PS will have to be in English.

**The final deadline for the submission of the Application Form and Confirmation sheet is
12/12/2019, 14h00 CET.**

7 Selection process

Following submission, each application is subject to a selection process organised along the following steps:

1. Eligibility check
2. Strategic assessment
3. Operational assessment

7.1 Eligibility check

Upon closure of the Call, the PS carries out an eligibility check on all submitted project applications.

The purpose of the eligibility check is to:

- Verify compliance of the received Application Forms and their annexes with the formal eligibility criteria
- Avoid further assessment of ineligible applications
- Ensure equal treatment of all proposals to be selected for funding

The UIA eligibility criteria are the following:

1. The Application Form has been submitted electronically via the EEP before the deadline, indicated in the Terms of Reference of the Call for Proposals
2. The Application Form is completely filled in (including all mandatory WPs)
3. The applicant is a single urban authority of a Local Administrative Unit (LAU) defined according to the degree of urbanisation as city, town or suburb and comprising at least 50 000 inhabitants
OR
The applicant is an association or grouping of urban authorities with legal status of organised agglomeration composed by LAUs, where the majority (more than 50%) of inhabitants lives in LAUs defined according to the degree of urbanisation as cities, towns or suburbs and where the total combined population is at least 50 000 inhabitants
OR
The applicant is an association or grouping of urban authorities without legal status of organised agglomerations where all the urban authorities involved (Main Urban Authority and Associated Urban Authorities) are LAUs defined according to the degree of urbanisation as cities, towns or suburbs and where the total combined population (Main Urban Authority plus Associated Urban Authorities) is at least 50 000 inhabitants
4. In case of an association or grouping without a legal status of organised agglomeration, a Main Urban Authority and the Associated Urban Authorities are presented in the Application Form
5. Only for the present Call for Proposals and only for proposals addressing the topic “Demographic change”, rural LAUs, if any, have been listed as Associated Urban Authorities. In this case, the minimum threshold of 50 000 inhabitants is reached by all LAUs (Main and Associated Urban Authorities) classified as cities, towns and/or suburbs
6. Eligibility period is respected: the end date of the project respects the Call and the Initiative requirements
7. The maximum budget requirements and the co-financing principle are respected
8. All partners involved (Main Urban Authority, Associated Urban Authorities and Delivery Partners) are from EU Member States
9. Applying urban authorities (Main Urban Authorities and/or Associated Urban Authorities) are involved in only one project proposal in the framework of the same Call for Proposals.
10. Applying urban authorities (Main Urban Authorities and/or Associated Urban Authorities) have not been selected and funded on the same topic from a previous UIA Call for Proposals
11. The confirmation sheet duly signed by the (Main) Urban Authority’s legal representative is uploaded in the EEP system.

If not all requirements set out above are complied with, the application will be deemed ineligible and no further assessment will be undertaken. Applicants will be notified at the end of the Eligibility check of the decision regarding their application (going forward or not).

7.2 Strategic assessment

Applications that are declared eligible 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 of the following criteria:

- Innovativeness (40% of weighting) – To what extent is the applicant able to demonstrate that the project proposal is new (not been previously tested and implemented on the ground in the urban area concerned and elsewhere in the EU) and that has a clear potential to add value?
- Partnership (15% of weighting) – To what extent is the involvement of key stakeholders (Associated Urban Authorities if any, Delivery Partners and Wider group of stakeholders) relevant for the implementation of the project?
- Measurability (15% of weighting) – To what extent will the project deliver measurable results?
- Transferability and scaling up (10% of weighting) - To what extent will the project be transferable to other urban areas across Europe? To what extent does the project provide a clear explanation about how the action will be scaled up, if successful?

The indicative assessment questions for each criterion are presented in section 3.2.2 of the UIA Guidance.

The panel of External Experts will also verify that projects contribute to the thematic objectives for the ESI Funds and Common Strategic Framework as set out in the first paragraph of Article 9 CPR and that they propose integrated answers to the challenges identified and are in line with the principles of sustainable urban development. The EC and EE may decide not to select a project for lack of contribution if these are not fulfilled.

As a result of the Strategic Assessment, the panel of External Experts elaborates an assessment of the applications and ranks them. In agreement with the EC, applications which score over a certain threshold will go forward for an Operational assessment. Applicants will be notified at the end of the Strategic assessment process of the decision regarding their application (going forward or not).

7.3 Operational assessment

The Operational assessment is carried out by the 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 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).

Indicative assessment questions for the criterion “Quality” are presented in section 3.2.3 of the UIA Guidance.

After the Operational assessment, a Selection Committee comprised of the EE and the EC will meet to make the final selection. The EC provides the final agreement as to which projects are selected. Applicants will be notified at the end of the Operational assessment process of the decision.

7.4 Assessment scoring system

A score of 1 to 5 will be attributed to each weighted criterion, which will result in an average score per project.

Detailed information on the assessment scoring system is provided in section 3.2.4 of the UIA Guidance.

The scoring system will be applied taking into account not only the specific merit of each project proposal but also in the spirit of a competitive process considering comparatively the other project proposals submitted in the framework of the same Call for Proposals. For this reason, applicants of project proposals not shortlisted for the Operational Assessment or not finally approved will not be provided with the scores but only with a detailed comment for all criteria assessed.

8 How to get assistance

The PS staff will be ready to assist applicants with any technical questions they may have during the Call for Proposals. Contact details can be found on the UIA website. In addition:

- The PS will organise several Applicants Seminars in different cities across Europe. Dates and venues of the Applicants Seminars can be found in the section “Events” of the UIA website. During these seminars, participants will have the possibility to book bilateral meetings with members of the PS and/or representatives of the EC to discuss their project idea.

- Webinars have been published on the UIA website on specific aspects of the project development and submission.
- Online Q&A sessions and bilateral consultations will be held. More information will be provided on the UIA website.

9 Key dates

- 16/09/2019 – Launch of the fifth Call for Proposals
- 10/2019 – 12/2019 – Applicant seminars and online consultations
- 12/12/2019 – Deadline for the submission of the Application Forms
- 06/2020 – Indicative date for the final decision for the approval of projects
- 01/07/2020 – Official start date for all approved projects

We look forward to reading your project proposals soon!