

URBAN AGENDA FOR THE EU



Water Sensitive City

Background Document for applicants

3 July 2024





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GLOSSARY

CALM	Coordinators and Action Leaders Members
CEMR	Council of the European Municipalities and Regions
CoR	European Committee of the Regions
DGUM	Directors General for Urban Matters
EAA	Ex-Ante Assessment
EIB	European Investment Bank
EUI	European Urban Initiative
UAEU	Urban Agenda for the EU
UATPG	Urban Agenda Technical Preparatory Group
UDG	Urban Development Group
OFC	Other Forms of Cooperation
WSC	Water Sensitive City
TP	Thematic Partnership
TPO	Thematic Partnership Officer

1. CONTEXT OF THE CALL AND SELECTION PROCESS

This Call for expression of interest for Partners aims at establishing the **Partnerships** under the Urban Agenda for the European Union (UAEU) on (i) **Water Sensitive City** and (ii) **Building Decarbonisation: Integrated Renovation Programmes and Local Heating and Cooling Plans**.

Both topics were proposed within the Gijon Agreements at the Informal Ministerial Meeting on 14 November 2023. This call follows the Ex-Ante Assessments (EAA) on "**Water Sensitive City**" and "**Building Decarbonisation: Integrated Renovation Programmes and Local Heating and Cooling Plans**."

The EAA was proposed as a new step towards the creation of Partnerships and Other Forms of Cooperation (OFC) in the scope of the new phase of the UAEU established by the Ljubljana Agreement. The EAAs were developed between 10th of January and 26th of June 2024, to deploy a pragmatic, effective and result-oriented approach aiming at increasing the impact of future UAEU deliverables. The EAA has the purpose to optimise focus, timing and activities of the multi-level cooperation, as well as safeguard suitable level of partners' thematic and procedural expertise, in view of proposing an analysis and recommendations as to the conditions to launch a Call to create two new Partnerships of the UAEU.

Both EAA reports highlight the importance of a launch of the Partnerships and propose recommendations for a possible thematic focus of the Thematic Partnerships in relation to Better Knowledge, Better Funding and Better Regulation pillars. The final EAA reports were adopted by the **Directors General on Urban Matters (DGUM) on 26 June 2024** and the decision was taken to launch the Calls for the selection of Partners of the two new Thematic Partnerships. The eligible categories of Partners are specified under each priority theme, in section 4 below.

The Call will remain open - until 2 October 2024.

The Call will remain open from **28 August until 02 October 2024**. The assessment of applications will be conducted by the experts responsible for each EAA of the themes and the selection criteria used to assess the applications were discussed and agreed upon in the UATPG meeting on 3 July 2024. These are presented in section 5 of this document.

The Call materialises into two **EU surveys** to be filled in by applicants, one for each theme. The surveys are accessible on the UAEU website: <https://www.urbanagenda.urban-initiative.eu/>

The survey questions are based on the selection criteria. Once the Call is closed, a proposed list of selected partners will be presented to the Directors General on Urban Matters in November 2024, seeking their decision. If the DGUM's decision is positive, the Partnerships on Water Sensitive City and Building Decarbonisation: Integrated Renovation Programmes and Local Heating and Cooling Plans will be officially established.



2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON UAEU AND PARTNER RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1 What is the Urban Agenda for the EU?

The following sections aim to identify the **key objectives and features of the Urban Agenda for the European Union (UAEU)**. Applicants who wish to have more in-depth knowledge of the refer to the [UAEU website](#) read the following relevant material which contains more comprehensive information and details.

- [Pact of Amsterdam \(2016\)](#)
- [Assessment Study of the Urban Agenda for the European Union \(2019\)](#)
- [New Leipzig Charter \(2020\)](#)
- [and its Implementation Document \(2020\)](#)
- [Ljubljana Agreement \(2021\) and Multiannual Working Programme for the Urban Agenda for the EU - the Next Generation \(2021\)](#)
- [Urban Agenda for the EU: Multi-level governance in action \(2021\)](#)
- [Gijon Agreements \(2023\)](#)

The Urban Agenda for the EU is an **innovative multi-level governance initiative on urban policy**, developed in the scope of intergovernmental cooperation on urban matters, and officially established by the [Pact of Amsterdam](#) in 2016. It enables cities, Member States, city networks, the European Commission, other EU institutions, the Union's advisory bodies, and other stakeholders to come together to **jointly tackle pressing urban matters** and deliver concrete outputs for the benefit of EU citizens. The Urban Agenda for the EU is **boosting the role of cities** in national and EU policymaking to better connect the EU with citizens' needs. It is a key delivery mechanism at EU level for the [New Urban Agenda \(Habitat III\)](#).

Making **multi-level governance** tangible has been recognised as one of the most important successes of the Urban Agenda for the EU. Multi-level governance is crucial beyond this initiative and at the EU level, it is widely promoted through **Cohesion policy** in order to target the investments in the most efficient and balanced way.

The Urban Agenda seeks to stimulate action along three key objectives (or "pillars"): **Better Regulation, Better Funding and Better Knowledge**.



Figure 1 - Source: EUI

In addition, the UAEU aims to address several cross-cutting issues¹ and thematic priorities. The Pact of Amsterdam led to the selection of an initial list of 12 priority themes for challenges to be addressed in Thematic Partnerships. In 2018, two more themes were added, and two Thematic Partnerships launched accordingly (Assessment study, 2019). Lastly, in 2021 the Ljubljana Agreement defined other four thematic focuses: Greening Cities, Sustainable Tourism (which have been launched in winter 2022) and Food and Cities of Equality (which have been launched in winter 2023). The Gijon Agreements (2023) proposed a selection of priority themes for future partnerships and agreed on seven new cross-cutting issues.

The complete list of themes tackled through Partnerships so far is the following;

1. Urban Poverty
 2. Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees
 3. Housing
 4. Air Quality
 5. Urban Mobility
 6. Digital Transition
 7. Circular Economy
 8. Jobs and Skills in the Local Economy
 9. Sustainable Land Use
 10. Public Procurement
 11. Energy Transition
 12. Climate Adaptation
-
13. Culture/Cultural Heritage
 14. Security in Public Spaces
-
15. Greening Cities
 16. Sustainable Tourism
-
17. Food
 18. Cities of Equality

The 18 Thematic Partnerships have brought together more than 330 partners/members ranging between local, regional and national authorities, European Institutions, NGOs and Umbrella Organisations, research institutions, programmes and networks as well as private companies.

¹ The seven cross-cutting issues are: Urban policy for the common good; Integrated and innovative approaches; Effective urban governance, participation and co-creation; multilevel governance; place-based approach and 3 spatial levels of the new Leipzig Charter; Planning and balanced territorial development; International dimension.



2.2 The process of the UAEU

As per the Pact of Amsterdam, a Partnership achieves results in about three years, but the partners may agree to prolong their activities. Each Partnership is tasked to prepare an **action plan which contains actions** (and possibly recommendations) that aim at addressing issues that hamper urban development in the specific thematic area and that are meant to be implemented after. The actions target one (or more) specific pillar(s) of the UAEU on Better Regulation, Better Knowledge and/or Better Funding and are addressed at the local level, national level and/or EU level. As for the type of actions, these may include the development of (new) data and indicators, guidance documents and handbooks, roadmaps/strategies, the design of a new governance structure, impact assessments, policy recommendations, toolkits etc. Each action has an action leader and contributors. Each action describes the issue at stake and explains what action is needed to solve this issue, including how it will be concretely implemented, by when and by whom. For more inspiration on what previous actions had been defined and implemented, you can consult the [Urban Agenda for the EU Brochure](#) as well as the [Monitoring Table of Actions \(version 2021\)](#) and the new [UAEU website](#).

The Partnership follows a structured process to develop its action plan, beginning with a scoping phase that involves brainstorming and creating an orientation paper, focused on potential subthemes under water-sensitive city. This phase is shortened due to prior EAA contributions, which serve as a baseline. Next, the stocktaking phase involves analyzing challenges, identifying solutions, and selecting actions. The draft action plan is then publicly reviewed and refined based on feedback from the European Commission, Members of the Urban Development Group and other interested stakeholders. Final approval occurs at the Directors General meeting on Urban Matters, after which implementation begins. The process includes multiple meetings and collaboration among Member States, the European Commission, and other stakeholders, as outlined in the Pact of Amsterdam.

2.3 The governance bodies of the UAEU

'The strategic steering of the UAEU is provided by the **Directors-General on Urban Matters (DGUM)**, which is the high-level decision-making body initiated prior to the Urban Agenda for the EU. The DGUM is composed of all Member States, the Commission and city representatives and associations (European Committee of the Regions (CoR), Eurocities, Council of the European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), and is co-chaired by the country holding the EU Presidency and the Commission (European Commission, 2017).

'The **Urban Development Group (UDG)** (expert working level) is made up of representatives of the Member State ministries responsible for urban issues, as well as other representatives of the multiple levels of governance (EC, EP, EIB, CoR, EESC, city representatives Eurocities and CEMR). The UDG is an informal advisory body to the Directors-General's on Urban Matters (DGUM). Its role is to both review the progress of the Partnerships and discuss issues pertaining to the UAEU at the intergovernmental level (European Commission, 2016). In principle, DGUM makes decisions based on the opinion forming process at the level of the UDG' (Assessment study, 2019).

'It was considered that the work of the Partnerships requires "operational guidance and interpretation of aspects of the Pact of Amsterdam and its Working Programme in between UDG meetings." (Bulgarian Presidency of the EU Council, 2018) [...] The mandate, scope, responsibilities and tasks of an **Urban Agenda Technical Preparatory Group (UATPG)** was thus created as a non-decision-making body, to act "as a technical executive group, supporting the actual Presidency of the Council in preparing UDG and DGUM meetings only with respect to the items related to UAEU", and coordinate the technical issues related to the preparation of UAEU Partnerships (ibid). The UATPG is composed of 10 members, including: six Member States at a time – representing the rolling Presidencies (the two past Presidencies, the current one and the three succeeding ones); Commission (with the UAEU Technical Secretariat); three members in total from the European Committee of the Regions, Eurocities and CEMR' (Assessment study, 2019).

2.4 Role of Partners within the Partnership

The following sections aim at capturing some of the expected roles of the partners in the scope of the Partnership in a succinct and non-exhaustive manner. The Pact of Amsterdam and the Multiannual Working Programme contain more comprehensive information and details on these roles.

Cities

Urban authority representatives are at the heart of the UAEU. They identify the challenges they face at the local level and act as partners by contributing to the work on the actions and to their implementation (also as action leaders), by bringing inputs, by making the link to relevant activities or resources and by taking part in meetings. They also liaise with other cities to create bigger impact on the implementation of actions.

City organisations (European and national) and URBACT

City organisations such as the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), EUROCITIES, other bodies representing Urban Authorities at European and national levels, as well as EU programmes dedicated to sustainable urban development such as URBACT and The European Urban Initiative (EUI) bring their expertise and experience on the exchange of good practices and knowledge. They act as a partner, by contributing to the work on the actions and to their implementation (also as action leader), by bringing inputs, by making the link to relevant activities or resources and by taking part in meetings. They disseminate the outcomes of the UAEU to the cities which are part of their networks and promote synergies with a second circle of cities, who may in turn, contribute to the Partnership.

Member States

They act as a partner, by contributing to the work on the actions and to their implementation (also as action leader), by bringing inputs, by making the link to relevant activities or resources and by taking part in meetings.

Member States ensure that the UAEU outcomes reach the local authorities in their Member State, e.g. by sharing the outcomes with cities that are not directly participating in the UAEU. Member States may provide financial resources to the implementation of the UAEU, e.g. through the organisation of meetings/events, the translation of documents in their national language, the support for the participation of cities etc.

EU Institutions

The **European Commission** acts as a facilitator of the UAEU by providing EU funds to support the Partnerships' activities and by making the link with the EUI Permanent Secretariat. The Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy coordinates the EU support and helps to connect to relevant services within the European Commission to support the design and implementation of actions. The European Commission services act as partners of the Partnership, by contributing to the work on the actions and to their implementation (also as action leader), by bringing inputs, by making the link to relevant activities or resources and by taking part in meetings.

The **European Parliament** may consider the results and recommendations of the Partnerships for the agenda of relevant Committees when discussing relevant new and existing EU legislation and the [Urban Intergroup](#) may play an advisory role in the UAEU process.

The **European Committee of the Regions** and **European and Economic and Social Committee** may act as partners by contributing to the work on the actions and to their implementation (also as action leader), by bringing inputs, by making the link to relevant activities or resources and by taking part in meetings. They may contribute to the outreach of the UAEU, with dedicated activities aiming to involve a broader range of local authorities and civil society organisations.

The **European Investment Bank (EIB)** acts as a partner by contributing to the work on the actions and to their implementation (also as action leader), by bringing inputs, by making the link to relevant activities or resources and by taking part in meetings.

Other stakeholders

Other stakeholders act as partners, by contributing to the work on the actions and to their implementation (also as action leaders), by bringing inputs, by making the link to relevant activities or resources and by taking part in meetings.

Coordinators

Coordinators are responsible for the overall coordination of Partnership activities and are the main contact persons for internal and external communication and outreach. They organise and chair Partnership meetings, organise and coordinate the work in between meetings, send e-mails to partners, reach out to other Partnership Coordinators, represent the Partnership in conferences, monitor and report on the Partnership's activities etc. Coordinators act as partners, by contributing to the work on the actions and to their implementation (also as action leaders), by bringing inputs, by making the link to relevant activities or resources and by taking part in meetings.

2.5 The European Urban Initiative

1. As stipulated in the Cohesion policy regulatory framework for 2021-2027, the [European Urban Initiative \(EUI\)](#) shall support the UAEU, and upon request from one or more Member States, it may also support intergovernmental cooperation on urban matters. The support will be delivered by the EUI Secretariat, hosted by the Region Hauts de France. It will build on the outputs from the previous years of work and implementation and will seek to integrate as much as possible elements of the relevant urban-related initiatives and programmes as well as the work streams of the EUI. The UAEU will benefit from wider support in the context of the EUI, notably National Contact Points that will assist in the communication, dissemination and capitalisation activities of the UAEU and support relevant outreach.

The support provided by the EUI includes all phases of the implementation of a Thematic Partnership / OFC, starting from the setting up of a new Partnership (including the Ex-Ante Assessments of Partnership proposals), and possibly Other Forms of Cooperation on an ad-hoc basis up to the implementation of the Action Plan. Since 2023 the EUI provides a comprehensive support package for all new Thematic Partnerships established after 2021. This support package includes the following services:

- **Administrative Support:** Each UAEU Thematic Partnership will be secured with a Thematic Partnership Officer (TPO) for a duration of up to 3 years. The TPO provide advice and guidance about partnership planning, management, and monitoring.
- **Initiation Phase Service:** The EUI Secretariat will provide during the initiation phase to every UAEU Thematic Partnership initiation meetings and provision of support materials about the UAEU structure, templates, timelines for key deliverables and principles of managing the UAEU TP.
- **Provision of External Expertise Service:** Each Thematic Partnership will benefit from up to 70 expert days per year. The experts will be contracted when knowledge, know-how and expertise are not already available inside the Thematic Partnership or when there is not sufficient capacity to achieve a certain goal.

- **Reimbursement of Travel and Accommodation:** Financial support is offered to urban authorities and associations or groupings of urban authorities to actively participate in their UAEU Thematic Partnership in-person meetings to compensate for their limited resources and to actively participate in the Coordinators and Action leaders' in-person Meetings (CALM). This service is limited to cities for up to 500.000 inhabitants.
- **Communication and Dissemination Support:** The EUI secretariat offer communication and dissemination support, including information sessions and trainings, linked to the EUI Communication & Dissemination Strategy 2021 – 2027. Thematic Partnerships have the possibility to promote and disseminate content linked to their activities through news articles on the UAEU website, via the EUI Knowledge and Exchange Sharing Platform Portico, EUI newsletter, events and UAEU social media accounts.
- **Creation of Synergies:** Overall, the EUI Secretariat supports synergies between the UAEU Thematic Partnerships and other EUI work streams. Furthermore, it organises Coordinators and Action Leaders' Meetings (CALM) to offer a structured moment where the UAEU Thematic Partnership coordinators and action leaders of all ongoing Thematic Partnerships can exchange directly about the status of implementation of the Thematic Partnership, Action Plan and related events.

The EUI Secretariat will, together with the UAEU Thematic Partnerships, monitor the status of the UAEU development and implementation.

3. THEMATIC FOCUS

3.1 Justification to launch a Thematic Partnership on Water Sensitive City

The objective of this call for Expression of Interest is to select suitable and motivated partners for the UAEU Thematic Partnership on Water Sensitive City.

The analysis presented in the related Ex-Ante Assessment report confirms that the opportunity to launch the Water Sensitive City partnership is excellent at this time. The Water Sensitive City theme is extremely well aligned with the current EU priorities such as the Greener Europe policy objective of Cohesion Funding, starting negotiations of the post-2027 Cohesion Policy, the Recast of the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive, the EU Strategies on Biodiversity and on Climate Change Adaptation and recent intentions to establish a European Blue Deal or the Commission's Water Resilience Initiative. Moreover, climate change poses increasing water challenges to cities of an unknown magnitude – extreme precipitation, flooding, and water scarcity – requiring a new method of water management in cities.

3.2 Thematic focus

Water sensitive city (WSC) offers an integrated approach to urban water management, vital for tackling also new pressing challenges posed by climate change, urbanization and land use trends. It addresses the various water-related risks cities are faced with, like stormwater, flooding, and water scarcity. The WSC concept shifts the conventional perspective from seeing water as a problem to rather seeing it as a resource. Achieving WSC involves measures across green, blue, and technical infrastructure, alongside non-engineered approaches like awareness raising, education and incentives.

Thereby, water management in cities is intricately linked with a myriad of stakeholders and various sectors, their policies and regulations such as climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction, urban planning, housing, nature, biodiversity, and industry. Additionally, cities rely on water management and land use in their rural surroundings, alongside policies set by regional, national governments, and the EU. Tackling water challenges demands therefore a broad systemic, regional, cross-sectoral and **multi-level approach**.

European, international, and national **policies** play a crucial role in providing guidance, funding, knowledge, and capacity building for WSC. They set the framework for cities and regions to act. Cohesion Policy with its substantial funding under its target "A Greener Europe" is pivotal in driving the implementation of Water Sensitive City among with several other policies such as Horizon Europe, EU Biodiversity Strategy, EU Adaptation Strategy, or New European Bauhaus, and funding and capacity building programmes, including EU LIFE, European Urban Initiative, URBACT, and Interreg, can also contribute significantly to advancing WSC. Other EU policies, particularly the ones on building renovation and circular economy, are underutilized in promoting water sensitive design.

Thematic Partnerships under the UAEU, particularly those focused on greening cities, climate adaptation, sustainable land use, and circular economy, intersect with the WSC theme offering for opportunities for knowledge exchange, collaboration, and synergetic action.

While no specific **regulations** for Water Sensitive City (WSC) in the EU exist, water-related directives, like the Water Framework, Floods, and Urban Wastewater Treatment Directives, offer guidance inside their thematic scope. The integrated urban wastewater management plans as part of the revision of the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive present an opportunity to incorporate water sensitive design for cities. The proposed Nature Restoration Law aligns with the push for more nature in cities. Integrating water-sensitive design into building regulations and urban planning at the EU level, such as the Energy Performance of Buildings and the Energy Efficiency Directives, is currently overlooked. Despite existing regulations, the framework is still scattered from the perspective of WSC articulating the need for a more coordinated and integrated approach.

Water sensitive cities face complex, multi-level, multi-stakeholder challenges that require effective governance and holistic approaches. Among the **identified gaps** are lack of knowledge and awareness of the potential benefits of WSC for stakeholders beyond the water sector that need to be included in WSC. Despite numerous technical and nature-based solutions, their systematic adoption by cities is limited due to fragmented provision of knowledge, a lack of comprehensive data and indicator set that would allow an encompassing assessment, and lack of capacity of smaller and medium-size cities for the uptake of solutions. Challenges in accessing funding for WSC can arise from the complex landscape of European and national funds.

Water sensitive design offers cities simultaneously benefits beyond water challenges by enhancing resilience, efficiency, and sustainability. It is thus **recommended** to actively integrate it with other urban topics, which saves overall costs and yields additional benefits. Effective success factors to establish WSC include community engagement, budgetary capacity, long-term political commitment, effective use of knowledge and data, and participation in peer-learning networks. Embracing digitalization and blue tech innovations can propel cities towards a sustainable blue economy, enhance the efficiency of measures, accelerate their implementation and can also foster economic growth and job creation.

Trends and evidence about EU cities show that they grapple with water management challenges amid climate change and urbanization, facing threats from both excess and scarcity of water, which can also compromise water quality and impact water infrastructure, economy, and public health. Urban sprawl and sealing of soil may exacerbate these challenges. On the positive side, cities can draw from existing pilot solutions of water sensitive design and adaptation actions, documented in various platforms, initiatives and projects like the Covenant of Mayors, the Urban Water Atlas for Europe, Climate-ADAPT, OPPLA, UIA, Horizon 2020, and LIFE.

Given the urgent need to transform water management in cities, the TP could aim at making water sensitive design become the new business as usual model for water management in cities and to promote this with multi-level governance actions. Given the complexity of the matter, it is advisable to focus on the topic for the TP’s work to ensure manageability. Since emerging most pressing challenges primarily and substantially affect water quantity—whether it is excessive water or its scarcity — this perspective could guide a TP on Water Sensitive City. However, it’s crucial not to overlook the interconnected topics. Actions could prioritize water quantity, while also addressing its relationship with water quality, treatment, urban quality of life, circular economy principles, and external impacts. The following tables list the sub-themes linked to the UAEU pillars better regulation, better funding and better knowledge.

Table 1: Potential Sub-themes for Better Regulation

Sub-theme	Reasoning / Relevant Regulation
1. Refine Mapping of relevant EU regulations for mainstreaming WSC	The topic of Water-Sensitive City (WSC) extends beyond the scope of water and urban policies, encompassing various other policy domains. Following the initial mapping of relevant policies, regulations, and funding mechanisms in this EAA, the TP could refine this to identify concrete entry points for introducing / improving water sensitive action. This may concern regulation that is currently under negotiation / in implementation (see sub-theme 2) as well as mapping regulations and areas of regulation where the potential is not yet used but WSC could be introduced in the long-term (see sub-theme 3).
2. Mainstream the WSC topic into	Opportunities can be explored to mainstream WSC considerations across diverse EU policy frameworks and instruments and their



existing and ongoing EU policies, regulations and funding	consecutive implementation in MS. Key areas of engagement include: Post-2027 Cohesion Policy, Integrated water plans according to the recast of the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive, Urban Greening plans of EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, calls of the New European Bauhaus, Urban Innovative Action of the European Urban Initiative, URBACT and similar. Depending on their adoption also: Commission’s Water resilience initiative, planned Nature Restoration Law
3. Develop strategies to include WSC in further policy areas in the long-term	Opportunities can be explored to mainstream WSC considerations in further relevant areas of policy and regulation for providing input and lobbying for the inclusion of WSC in the long-term. Key areas of engagement include: Circular Economy, the Renovation Wave for Europe, building regulations, European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR).
4. Exchange practice on multi-level and territorial approaches to build WSC	Water sensitive city necessitate a multi-level approach due to the interconnected nature of water systems transcending administrative boundaries. It can take multiple forms. Exchanging of experience and knowledge on successful practice in Member States helps identifying their success factors, potential pit falls and solutions to overcome barriers.

Table 2: Potential Sub-themes for Better Funding

Sub-theme	Reasoning / Funding Programme
5. Analyse the options for a better use of existing funding for investments in WSC	Transitioning to Water Sensitive City requires substantial local and regional-level investment. Funding options of the water sector as well as related sectors could be useful. The analysis of different EU funding options would reveal how to better use them, and shape them for supporting water sensitive cities. These include: the Cohesion Funds, InvestEU Programme, Just Transition Fund, Recovery and Resilience Facility, LIFE Programme, among others.
6. Collect practice on innovative financing for WSC	Leveraging funding beyond conventional investment for water infrastructure could speed up the transition to WSC. Such could be through diverse sources and innovative methods, like water taxes and multi-stakeholder co-design and co-implementation. Examples from Member States can be collected and analysed concerning their success factors and their barriers. Recommendations for transfer and upscaling, for capacity building as well as necessary adjustments in national and the EU policy and legal framework can be developed.

Table 3: Potential Sub-themes for Better Knowledge

Sub-theme	Reasoning
7. Create cross-sector awareness for the	WSC does at its best engage different sectors and stakeholders, as the concept offers benefits like improved water management, urban spaces, and biodiversity. Boosting awareness by creating targeted materials explaining WSC concepts, benefits, and



opportunities of WSC	relevance to various sectors would be helpful. The most important sectors to target can be considered: climate change adaptation, nature and biodiversity, land use and soil, urban planning, housing.
8. Improve the access to knowledge on WSC design and implementation	There is a need to consolidate the scattered existing knowledge on building water sensitive cities for its better use. Guidance is needed on what a water sensitive city is and how to achieve it in different local contexts. Available information sources and specific city needs could be explored, including technologies, governance, capacity-building, and concepts to centralise the knowledge access developed.
9. Exchange good practice at national and regional level to enable cities becoming a WSC	Local authority support depends on the effectiveness of national and sub-national frameworks, with Member States using various tools to support cities. Collecting best practices for supporting cities' transition to water sensitivity and promoting knowledge exchange on these among national and sub-national authorities would be supportive. Specific processes worth investigating include: the Management Plans under the Water Framework and the Flood Directives, the uptake of WSC projects in the Operational Programmes of the Cohesion Funds, and further national and sub-national legislation, incentives and pricing, capacity building programmes, knowledge and information activities, and funding programmes.
10. Capacity building for cities	Capacity-building efforts, like training sessions, webinars, and city-to-city learning exchanges, are crucial for the widespread adoption of existing knowledge. Leveraging existing funding and research programmes such as EUI, URBACT, Interreg, Horizon Europe Missions, and others can support water sensitive city initiatives. This could include both region-specific as well as cross-regional exchanges.
11. Improve data and indicators for assessing the state and progress of WSC	An indicator-based definition of a WSC is lacking and goes along with a patchy data situation to describe it across European cities. Building on the few available central datapoints such as the Urban Audit Database, Urban Atlas or the Green Cities Accord and indicator frameworks such as the City Blueprint or OECD water governance indicators, a method to measure and improve water sensitivity in cities can be developed.

4. CATEGORIES OF PARTNERS

Eligible applicants include:

- **Cities of all sizes** (including city regions, Functional Urban Areas and Agglomerations)
 - small (less than 50.000 inhabitants)
 - medium (between 50.000 and 250.000 inhabitants)
 - large (more than 250.000 inhabitants)
- **Regions and Regional Development Agencies**
- **Member States** (through relevant national-level ministries and agencies)
- **Partner States** (Norway and Switzerland)
- **European and national city umbrella organizations**
- **Other stakeholders** such as:
 - NGO with a focus on urban water management directly or as part of urban sustainability, climate change adaptation, disaster risk management, land use, circular economy, health or social equity
 - Other local or regional entities related to WSC, such as water authorities, water boards, River basin district authorities and similar
 - Academy and Research Centres, Universities
 - EU organisations dedicated to water, urban, regional development, nature, environment, circular economy, climate adaptation, disaster risk management, sustainable finance
 - Social economy partners/businesses at the EU, national and city levels
 - National associations representing local governments, in particular, smaller and medium-sized cities

5. SELECTION CRITERIA

5.1 Specific selection criteria for applicants as Partners

The specific selection criteria below will be assessed on the basis of a 0-3 scale (*See Table 4 below for details*).

- a) Motivation to become a member**, advance one or more identified policy domains (*Tables 1-3 in Chapter 3*) in a way that contributes to betterment of EU policy by better regulation, funding and knowledge and brings specific contribution at the city level. Provide evidence of the/a relationship between the specific expertise developed by an applicant (and a potential member) (*criterion b*) and the specific issue or set of issues that motivate the applicant to be part of this specific partnership. Applicants should show awareness of [previous activities in UAEU Partnerships](#) that may be related to the sub-themes and issues of their concern. Applicants need to demonstrate willingness to participate in meetings, share experience and disseminate knowledge; willingness to participate in EU policy dialogue etc.
- b) Expertise** and qualifications of the applicant with regard to at least one of the sub-themes and issues included in *Tables 1-3 in Chapter 3*.
In the case of small and medium-sized cities, the expertise may be limited to specific aspects of the issue concerned and may have been developed through cooperation agreements with local, regional or national stakeholders. In case applicants possess knowledge/experience other than the ones mentioned above, they should clearly state it in the expression of interest. Expertise should be clearly demonstrated through description of past projects and initiatives.

Expertise should be provided:

(1) in transformative urban water management, specifically in the implementation of "Water Sensitive City" principles, which involve a circular approach to managing water resources across whole neighbourhoods, cities, and/or regions. This includes developing and applying innovative strategies, governance models, and technical solutions that transcend traditional water management approaches; proficiency in integrating water management with other urban sectors such as nature-based solutions, climate adaptation, urban planning, land use, industry, economic development, urban agriculture, tourism, health, energy, cultural heritage, social equity, and climate change mitigation including a thorough understanding of the diverse needs of various public and private stakeholders is essential.

and / or

(2) in collaborative multi-level governance by seeking for solutions across different levels

from local to regional and in the framework of national and EU policies and regulations and collaborating with the diversity of stakeholders; thereby, having a sufficient knowledge of EU policies, regulations, funding and knowledge management as described in the EAA.

- c) **Outreach to relevant stakeholders and participation** in networks and cooperation programmes at local, regional, national and EU level, also based on previous experiences, with reference to water sensitive city and/or urban policy issues, as well as the sub-themes and issues included in Tables 1-3.
- d) **Readiness to participate with own human and financial resources:** availability and commitment of human and financial resources throughout the duration of the Partnership. As per the Multi Annual Working Programme, this will not be the prevailing criterion for small and medium sized cities.

5.2 Specific selection criteria for applicants as Coordinators

All the above specific selection criteria (a-d) and in addition:

- e) **Project management expertise:** 1. specifically concerning projects and initiatives in multilevel governance and European/international contexts, based on evidence from previous experience 2. including expertise in dissemination and institutional communication at EU and national level
- f) **Commitment** to adequate allocation of human and financial resources throughout the lifecycle of the Partnership
- g) **Proposal of a plan for the kick-start** of the Partnership's work based on the outcomes of the Ex-Ante Assessment and for the management of the new Partnership.

Table 4: Assessment grid for specific criteria for applicants

(members and coordinators)

Specific Selection Criteria for Members	Points*
a) Motivation to become a member	0-3
b) Expertise	0-3
c) Outreach	0-3
d) Readiness to participate with own human and financial resources	0-3
Additional Selection Criteria for Coordinators	
e) Project management expertise	0-3
f) Commitment	0-3
g) Proposal of a plan for the kick-start	0-3

*Points:

0	insufficient
1	sufficient
2	good
3	excellent

5.3 Horizontal selection criteria applicable to the Partnership

The Partnership will represent a diversity of members at different levels of governance. The horizontal criteria aim at guaranteeing a composition of the Partnership consistent with the objectives of the Urban Agenda for the EU and of the new Partnership on water sensitive city. These will be considered once the specific selection criteria described below are assessed, in order to make a selection amongst the highest scoring participants. In line with objectives of the Urban Agenda for the EU the selection criteria for the potential members of the Water sensitive city UAEU Partnership are as follows:

- i. **Multi-level and multi-stakeholder approach:** in line with the Pact of Amsterdam, the Partnership will be composed of **about 15 to 20 partners** from all levels of government and from different types of organisations. In order to ensure the representativeness of the local level, the Partnership will include **at least five cities** (urban authorities), as well as European and national city umbrella organisations.
- ii. **Size of cities:** at least one 'small-sized city' (below 50.000 inhabitants) and one 'medium-sized city' (below 250.000 inhabitants) will be part of the Partnership. In line with the Ljubljana Agreement Multi Annual Working Programme, 'if no small and medium-sized

urban authorities are selected in the open call, a nomination of small or medium-sized urban authorities can follow. Nominations can be proposed by Member States, Committee of the Regions and URBACT (upon approval of the Monitoring Committee) to the DGUM.' As the horizontal criteria will not be scored, the small and medium-sized cities with the highest assessment score(s) on the specific selection criteria will be selected.

- iii. **Geographical balance:** During the selection process, one of the aims will be to ensure a relative geographical balance between the members in terms of the EU 27 and a variety of geographic situations – whether cities are situated in river deltas, inland, in mountainous areas etc all posing different water challenges.
- iv. **Prior involvement in the UAEU:** Prior involvement in the UAEU is not required. The selection should give the opportunity to new cities/organisations to be involved as far as possible.
- v. **Coordinators:** maximum of two will be appointed, at least one from a city (regardless of size). In their expression of interest, applicants should indicate if they would like to be considered for the role of a Coordinator.