

EUROPEAN
U R B A N
INITIATIVE

Cities forum 2025 - Call for host city

Background document for applicants



Co-funded by
the European Union



Région
Hauts-de-France

1. CONTEXT OF THE CALL AND SELECTION PROCESS

This call aims at selecting a city to host and co-organise the 6th edition¹ of the Cities Forum in 2025. The Cities Forum is a key European Commission's Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO) event focusing on support to cities from the EU level, in particular through the urban dimension of Cohesion policy. It represents a significant opportunity for the chosen city to showcase its unique qualities and contribute to urban development discussions. This document outlines the application process and describes the expectations for the host city.

On behalf of the European Commission – DG REGIO, the European Urban Initiative (EUI) is reaching out to EU cities interested in hosting the 2025 edition. The application form should be considered as the offer of the host city. The EUI Permanent Secretariat (PS) will have a dedicated budget and support from an event agency, available for the whole process of organising the Cities Forum 2025. The host city should partly contribute, by providing a venue, organising site visits, helping with communication activities, and ensuring political participation from the country.

The call will be open from the 4 April 2024 until the 13 May 2024 14:00 CEST. Once the call is closed, the assessment of the applications will be performed by the EUI PS. The results of the assessment will be then provided to the European Commission-DG Regio, who will present a list of shortlisted candidate cities to the Directors General on Urban Matters (under intergovernmental cooperation on urban matters) for decision. The final agreement on the host city for the Cities Forum will officially take place at the occasion of the Directors General on Urban Matters meeting of 26 June 2024.

Cities are invited to submit their applications demonstrating their capability and enthusiasm to support the organisation of the next Cities Forum edition, via this [online form](#).

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Presentation of the Cities Forum

The Cities Forum² is a biennial major event of the European Commission, on the urban dimension of the EU Cohesion Policy. The event brings together key urban stakeholders from European, national, regional and local levels and will be organised by the EUI PS, on behalf of the European Commission - DG REGIO and under the responsibility of the EUI Entrusted Entity, the Region Hauts-de-France. It is the key moment to discuss and exchange on the urban dimension of EU Cohesion Policy as well as on EU level initiatives supporting sustainable urban development.

About the European Urban Initiative

The European Urban Initiative (EUI) is an initiative of the European Union (EU) funded in the framework of the EU Cohesion Policy for the programming period 2021-2027. The EUI is managed by the European Commission – DG REGIO via indirect management. The EC has designated the Region Hauts-de-France (France) as Entrusted Entity, for the implementation of the EUI. EUI is operationally managed on a daily basis by the EUI PS

² For more information about the last edition of Cities Forum held in 2023 access the following link: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/whats-new/conferences/cities-forum-2023_en

located in Lille (FR). The EUI PS is organising the Cities Forum and implements this call for host city on behalf of the Entrusted Entity – hereafter also referred as ‘organisers’.

3. CITIES FORUM 2025: OBJECTIVES AND TARGET AUDIENCES

The 6th edition of the Cities Forum is set to take place tentatively in **June 2025** (first three weeks of June are targeted) and aims to welcome around 800 onsite participants for a green, grounded, and interactive 2 to 3 days event. The event will be taking place in English. Interpretation might be provided.

The Cities Forum 2025 is designed to bring together a diverse group of Cohesion policy stakeholders and beneficiaries, urban policymakers, and practitioners to debate on sustainable urban development in Europe. The event will target:

- Cities of all sizes
- Cohesion policy stakeholders
- Urban policymakers and practitioners
- Urban Agenda for the EU partners

It will be the right moment to contribute to the urban dimension of EU cohesion policy and provide a platform for dialogue, learning and policy recommendations. The choice of the **first three weeks of June for the organisation of the event** allows flexibility in setting the exact dates and ensuring the availability of the venue.

4. ELIGIBILITY

Any EU city with the capacity of hosting a major event can apply. There is no geographical restriction for this call.

5. KEY REQUIREMENTS FOR THE HOST CITY

Candidate cities must meet comprehensive requirements and are encouraged to articulate a vision for the event, showcasing their city's potential and capability to serve as a great location for the event.

Venue requirements

The venue must be:

- suitable for large attendance (around 800 participants expected). The number of attendees may vary until the end of the registration process around 2 weeks before the event which requires flexible spaces and capacity to adapt quickly.
- available in June 2025 for a full week (or at least four days), counting the setting, the event days, and the dismantling of the event. The event days should not be placed before Tuesday and should not finish after noon on Friday.
- accessible to participants with public transport in a central area of the selected city, as well as parking spaces if available; but also allow easy access to all event facilities for persons of reduced mobility.

- flexible for different event formats. This may vary depending on the agenda that will only be defined at a later stage, but it should include the following type of areas or rooms:
 - a big plenary room (for around 800 participants) with good quality acoustics and good visibility of stage area (including screens)
 - several break-out rooms (at least 3 of minimum 100 participants) for parallel sessions (sound proofed). Additional rooms are a plus: they need to be easily accessible from the main rooms (plenary and networking areas). The breakout rooms should allow a good distribution of participants and several activities in parallel for a large audience up to 800 persons.
 - adequate space for catering and breaks (light standing lunch/coffee breaks). The venue should be equipped to host catering services.
 - spaces for networking
 - an exhibition area
 - cloak rooms, restrooms, at least 2 additional meeting rooms to welcome speakers and VIP, and a separate room for the event organisers
 - natural light at least in the networking and break area.
 - outside areas would be a plus
- modern or recently renewed, including strong and stable internet connection for a large number of participants. Equipped as much as possible with audio-visual set-up and furniture.
- Emblematic building of the urban development or renewal for the host city. The aesthetic of the venue would be a plus.

Site visits

Site visits represent a highly valued component of the event, offering participants a unique opportunity to engage with the host city's most innovative and impactful urban projects. These excursions, taking place in English, should be designed to highlight the city's achievements in sustainable urban development and EU-funded projects. We encourage host cities to emphasize this aspect in their application, providing detailed proposals for site visits that not only showcase the city's best practices and initiatives but also align with sustainable urban development and EU Cohesion Policy.

Dissemination of the event

Effective dissemination of the event is crucial, requiring the host city's active engagement in promotional activities before, during, and after the forum. The selected city should collaborate closely with the organisers to engage urban communities, and national press, ensuring visibility of the event.

Catering and additional services

In some cases, where venues have exclusive agreements with external companies, different options for the lunch should be proposed and it will be expected to consider dietary requirements of participants. In these cases, it is also expected from the catering services to provide any menu at the best quality and to perform the service in a timely manner. Should the catering services not be included in the venue services and covered by an external provider, the EUI PS will manage directly with the external provider. Support from the city would be expected regarding additional support services on site. Additional services may be proposed based on the city's possibility e.g. maps/stationery for participants, technical equipment, furniture, decoration.

Overall management and coordination with the venue

The host city must be willing to facilitate all exchanges with the venue and coordinate closely with the EUI Permanent Secretariat and the event management provider. It is expected from the city to assign one contact person in charge of the coordination and some logistical aspects of the event. Some meetings on spot and online for each major step should be foreseen.

Sustainability

Concrete measures shall be taken to ensure that the events have the lowest environmental impact possible. Such as:

- Sustainably sourced and served food (fresh, local, organic, seasonal, healthy)
- Use of reusable and recyclable containers and materials
- Efforts to reduce waste, including food-waste prevention strategy
- Limited use of linen for tables and chairs. No use if not needed.
- Reduced use of plastic (e.g. serving local mineral water instead of water in plastic bottles) and paper (napkins instead of paper tissues).
- Efforts to save electricity, water consumption and CO2 emissions
- Use of energy-efficient equipment (led-lights etc.)
- Sustainable transport offer
- Reduced use of paper

4. SELECTION CRITERIA

The assessment will be based on a set of defined criteria, considering the city's capacity to host and contribute to the forum's success.

Venue spaces (45%)

The selected venue must have sufficient capacity to host the forum and should offer flexible spaces suitable for a variety of activities. Refer to the venue requirements specified in section 5 of this document.

Contribution to the urban dimension of EU Cohesion Policy and urban-related EU initiatives (5%)

Cities need to articulate their engagement and contributions to Cohesion Policy, including involvement in ERDF-funded programmes and status as either Article 7 or Article 11 ERDF cities³. Emphasis will be placed on implementation of sustainable urban development strategy, policies and projects.

City's contribution to the event (20%)

The contribution of the host city to the event is an important factor in its selection, with cities evaluated on their level of involvement and the range of services they can offer or support. A city's commitment to offering the venue, organising comprehensive site visits, including arrangements for transportation, or the engagement of local experts and community members, will be highly valued. Furthermore, the city's effectiveness in facilitating communication efforts—before, during, and after the event—and its ability to mobilise urban stakeholders and local officials and attract media attention will be considered in the selection process.

³ <https://www.urban-initiative.eu/article-11-cities>

Sustainability (20%)

Cities should demonstrate a commitment to sustainability in event management, aligning with EU's environmental goals. As we are favouring sustainable means of transport, we ask you to describe how your city takes care of transporting bigger groups of people in the city. Cities should outline specific actions aimed at minimizing the environmental footprint of the event.

Accessibility and infrastructure (10%)

Candidate cities must showcase excellent connectivity, offering direct public transportation links from various European locations. With the forum expecting approximately 800 attendees, suitable spaces must be available within proximity to the event venue. Additionally, cities should provide details on the public transport duration from the nearest airport to the city centre. The proposed venue should be centrally located or readily accessible from the city centre, with ample hotel accommodations close to the event location.

KEY MILESTONES

Milestones	Date
Call opening	4 April
Call closure and start of the assessment by EUI PS	13 May 14:00 CEST
Decision by DGUM on the basis of the EC shortlist of candidate cities	26 June
Announcement of the selected host city	End June
First online meeting	Beginning July
First visit to the city and venue	July