



The first **URBAN-NET** call
for transnational research proposals
on urban sustainability

CALL TEXT AND GUIDELINES FOR APPLICATION

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Description of the call

Strategic objectives of URBAN-NET

URBAN-NET is a network of 15 research funding or facilitating partners in 12 European countries and UN Habitat. Its aim is to structure and coordinate research on urban sustainable development within the European Research Area. URBAN-NET intends to enhance transnational research activities through addressing and identifying shared requirements for research, opening of joint research programmes, and supporting associated activities such as conferences and workshops. URBAN-NET also aims to coordinate the dissemination of existing knowledge, practical experience and applications of research.

URBAN-NET supports innovative, original and ground-breaking research ideas. The URBAN-NET strategic objectives can be applied to different types of research and knowledge development, e.g. in research areas where partner countries have ongoing research but need to define gaps, overlaps and possibilities for concerted actions, in research areas that are hardly explored and in research areas where one partner has generated special expertise and could support knowledge development in other partner countries.

URBAN-NET aims to develop an integrated approach to the complex network of connections and conflicting goals that are significant for urban processes. An integrated approach in urban research implies new combinations of people and perspectives. Institutional and mental divisions have to be bridged in order to tackle the complexity, uncertainty and interdependencies of global environmental threats. An integrated approach aims to stimulate researchers to establish contacts with new people and new fields of knowledge, and to find methods to generate new ideas. Inter and trans-disciplinary research teams are a means to manage the complexity of the urban problems, and a chance to discover alternative futures.

Invitation

This first transnational URBAN-NET call is open from January 15 to April 15 2008. Researchers from universities, research institutes and other research institutions in Bulgaria, Cyprus, France, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Sweden and Turkey are invited to develop new ideas and contacts and submit joint proposals. The URBAN-NET partner organisations of these countries have already firmly indicated their commitment to participate in this first (pilot) transnational call.

There should be a clear demonstration of added value in the proposed partnerships. The proposals should deal with problems which could be better understood if the research activities take place in more than one European country.

The call offers opportunities for two types of proposals:

- A. *Full research projects*
- B. *Pre-research work*

Theme

Sustainable urban development is the wide framework within which research consortia for full research projects and pre-research work are invited to choose a focus and elaborate a research problem. This is an opportunity for researchers to formulate and propose important research topics of common interest that might also inform the focus of future calls and other joint activities of URBAN-NET.

European cities and towns benefit from the advantage of high density but also face growing competition, and are confronted by a range of complex pressures and impacts that demand more sophisticated approaches to planning and management. These must deal with an ageing and more mobile population, urban sprawl and in some cities population decline, large-scale migration and increasing cultural diversity. At the same time, urban areas face both rising costs of, and demands for, space and resources (e.g. energy) caused by decreasing household size and rising material expectations. These features combine to threaten the relative compactness of European towns and cities and result in increasing dependency on car usage, making public service provision more difficult and city management more complex.

Sustainable urban development requires an integrated approach and this is where urban research is relevant: in tackling together related issues such as urban management and governance, integrated spatial planning, economic wellbeing and competitiveness, social inclusion, and environmental stewardship. For example, the implementation of EC Directives and Regulations on urban air quality does not only have implications for pollution control and traffic management. It also requires combined efforts in addressing city and town centre management, spatial planning and urban design, health impacts and social justice (taking account of the different social groups affected and disproportionate burdens of environmental impacts).

The main topics for research are the interactions *between* urban functions and sectors (e.g. economy; environment; housing) rather than developing more sustainable approaches *within* them. ***The resilient city*** is such a crosscutting theme integrating the economic, social/cultural and ecological dimensions of sustainability and demanding a multidisciplinary approach. “Resilience” refers to the ability of the socio-ecological systems to absorb changes, reorganise and develop. Cities must be adaptable, innovative and attractive to survive today’s rapid changes. Urban systems are open and interrelated. Factors such as organisation, governance and planning policies are important in the processes of change. The linkages between spatial, social, cultural, ecological and economic development raise a number of questions open to research, e.g. –Which factors can be influenced by government policy; To what extent are cultural, ecological and physical-spatial issues distinctly dependent upon economic factors; What has made cities grow and decline in the past and what makes them grow and decline today; What makes one city or neighbourhood more attractive or successful than another.

The rapid expansion of many urban areas has brought with it a noisy, polluted living environment that lacks green spaces. These health problems must be tackled along with the ecological demands for a more efficient use of energy, water and other resources. Resilience calls for innovative socio-ecological solutions: How, for example, can the flows of resources be managed in the direction towards zero emissions and zero waste - in a way that is socially acceptable?

Further examples of research themes that expand on this wide framework are outlined in the Discussion paper *Future Research Areas in the field of Urban Sustainability*.

A. Full research projects

All researchers in consortia applying for full research projects must be funded by a funding organisation in the country where they are based, i.e. in Bulgaria, Cyprus, France, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Sweden or Turkey, (see table 1). The consortia must include researchers from a minimum of three of these countries.

The size of the projects will be limited by the contribution from each funding organisation, and it is expected that in most cases one to three people from each country of a consortium will be working (part-time) for duration of a maximum of two years per project.

B. Pre-research work

Pre-research work refers to activities that prepare the way for research collaboration. The aim is to encourage innovative contacts between nations, disciplines and professionals and to contribute to the formation of strong transnational consortia. Pre-research work could include: workshops, seminars, literature studies and minor pilot studies. The result of pre-research work could be reviews of state of the art, theories and methods, an international conference or a regular joint research project proposal. Pre-research work resulting in project proposals can be used in the final URBAN-NET call already planned for 2009/2010. They can also be used for the preparation of project proposals e.g. under FP7.

Pre-research consortia must include researchers from at least three countries. Only the coordinators of the consortia will be funded, which means that only researchers from countries funding this call - Bulgaria, France, The Netherlands and Sweden, (see table 1), can be coordinators. Researchers from any country can participate, but they must have funding from other sources. Funding of minor expenses for other researchers can be made by the coordinator, e.g. travel costs, so long as the regulations of the coordinator's funding organisation allow this, and provided that it is included in the financial plan of the pre-research proposal.

The duration of any pre-research project will be a maximum of one year.

Funding and eligibility rules

- Both call types require consortia that involve researchers from a minimum of three countries.
- Researchers are funded by a funding organisation in the country where they are based. This means that the eligibility rules of the national funding organisation must be followed, and that different rules may apply for researchers funded by different organisations in the same project. There is no common URBAN-NET pot for funding.
- All researchers in full research project consortia must be funded from national funding organisations. A full research project cannot be funded unless all participants are funded.
- Only coordinators are funded in pre-research projects. Researchers from any other country can participate in pre-research consortia.

For more information about national funding rules please contact the respective national funding organisation's website, table 1, or the national contact person, table 3.

Table1. URBAN-NET partner country and national organisation funding the first joint call. X indicates participation.

Country	National funding organisation	Web-site	A. Full research projects	B. Pre-research projects	Funding of the call
Bulgaria	ASDE	www.asde-bg.org	X	X	30 000 €
Cyprus	RPF	www.research.org.cy	X		280 000 €
France	MEDAD/PUCA	rp.urbanisme.equipement.gouv.fr/puca/puca/presentation_uk.htm	X	X	200 000 €
The Netherlands	Nicis, SenterNovem, NWO	www.nicis.nl www.nwo.nl www.senternovem.nl	X	X	120 000 €
Portugal	FCT	www.fct.mctes.pt	X		200 000 €
Romania	IPA	www.ipa.ro	X		200 000 €
Sweden	Formas	www.formas.se	X	X	500 000 €
Turkey	TUBITAK	www.tubitak.gov.tr	X		1 500 000 €

Time schedule

Table 2: Time schedule.

Call published	15 January – 15 April 2008
Deadline for submission of proposals	15 April 2008 by 16 pm
Transnational evaluation process	April – August 2008
Final selection of eligible proposals	August/ September 2008
Final decision by funding organisations	September/ October 2008
Start of project funding	November 2008
Midterm report from research projects	November 2009
End of pre-search/ research projects	November 2009/November 2010

Guidelines for application

Process overview

1. The pre-research or research project consortium submits a proposal to Formas, where the call secretariat is situated, (online submission in English).
2. *Fulfilment of URBAN-NET's basic requirements* is checked by the call secretariat and accepted proposals are passed to the national funding organisations.
3. *Compliance with national regulations* is checked by the national funding organisations. They also check the *adequacy of the budget* to fulfil the project and to be accommodated within the amount of money that is available.
4. *Scientific and relevance criteria defined by URBAN-NET* are examined by an expert panel including evaluators appointed by the national funding organisations.
5. *The expert panel* meets and discusses the evaluations and proposes a ranking of the applications recommended for funding to the URBAN-NET call management group comprising representatives from each of the funding organisations.
6. A *recommendation for funding* (which is limited by available national funding) is made by the URBAN-NET call management group.
7. National funding organisations will take the *formal funding decisions*.
8. Contracts are concluded directly between the researchers and their national funding organisations.

Application procedure

Where and how to apply

Application is a single-stage process.

For proposals to be considered the application form as well as appendices must be submitted electronically; this has to be done online by filling in a template, following the links from <http://direct.formas.se>. In order to complete the registration of the application, you also have to send a signed form to the call secretariat at Formas.

Applications submitted by mail, fax, diskette or e-mail will not be accepted.

All application documents must be written in English.

Deadline for submission is 15 April 2008 by 16 pm.

Application documents

The application must comprise the following documents:

- Application form
- Appendix A: Research/ Pre-research programme
- Appendix B: Detailed financial plan
- Appendix C: CVs of applicants
- Appendix D: List of publications

Application form

The application form is digital and includes a financial plan (an overview) for the entire project period as well as a project summary and a popular science description. The application form is available in the system “Formas Direct” <http://direct.formas.se>. Further instructions for application can be found in the application form.

Appendices A - D are downloaded in the application form. The appendices are converted to PDF format either before or at the actual downloading.

Appendix A: Research/ pre-research work programme

The research/ pre-research work programme should contain a brief text which must not exceed 6 pages including references. Use Times New Roman font, smallest size 11 points or the equivalent. The text should describe the intended pre-research/research activities and address the following items:

- Overview of the state of the art in the research area as well as an outline of the applicants' previous research activities within the research area. Key references should be indicated.
- Specific objectives of the proposed research project/ pre-research work
- Methodology (and underlying theory for research projects) should be conclusive
- Project/ pre-research description indicating the individual parts of the researchers (or national teams) and how these parts are integrated
- A summary of the project's management
- Analysis of ecological, social/cultural and economic relevance
- Dissemination plan for scientific papers and popular science information for research projects and as appropriate for pre-research work.
- The added value of the collaboration between the three (or more) countries should be demonstrated.
- List of milestones to be reached to indicate project progress.

Appendix B: Detailed financial plan

A detailed financial plan is required separately for the participating countries. Among the eligible costs are personnel costs, consumable costs and travel expenses. The rules of the national funding organisations however must be followed.

Appendix C: CVs of applicants

CVs should be provided for the main applicant (project coordinator) and the co-applicants who are listed in the application form. The CV should not exceed a maximum of two A4 pages per applicant (Times New Roman font, smallest size 11 points or the equivalent). Note that the list of publications has to be presented separately in Appendix D.

Appendix D. List of publications

The list of publications should include publications of the main and co-applicants from the last 5 years. Separate lists are required for the individual applicants. The lists should not exceed a

maximum of two A4 pages per applicant (Times New Roman font, smallest size 11 points or the equivalent).

Registration

The application form as well as the appendices shall be registered electronically in the system “Formas Direct” by the user. This is done by saving the application and clicking on “Register”. Read and follow the instructions that appear in the new window. Please note that once the application has been registered, no changes can be made, so be certain that everything is complete before registration.

A form in PDF format will be created for signature at registration. It should be printed by the user, completed, signed and sent to Formas. Please note that this form must have arrived at Formas within eight days of the final date of electronic registration. To be on the safe side, we suggest that you also fax the form before sending the original to Formas, fax number: +46 8 775 4010, att. Ulla Westerberg.

Reporting, dissemination, involvement in URBAN-NET activities

Mid-term report

For the research projects a mid-term report has to be submitted to the URBAN-NET call secretariat and/or to the national funding agencies. The progress will be monitored through the achievement of milestones.

Final report

At the end of the full research projects the research consortia shall submit a final report in the size of a scientific conference paper in English to the URBAN-NET call secretariat. This report shall sum up the project, its hypothesis, its main results, its practical application, its proposals for further research and intended target audience. Pre-research reports are submitted as appropriate to the call secretariat.

The reports made within the framework of URBAN-NET are the property of the national funding organisations. They can use the results in their other activities. Researchers are also free to use the results in their own activities. Scientific conference papers will be published on the URBAN-NET website.

As a general rule, the intellectual property rights and the exploitation of results shall be regulated according to European Commission practice, except if specified otherwise in a Collaboration agreement among the participants of the project.

Joint activities

Each consortium will be invited to participate in joint public activities that will be organised to disseminate and discuss urban sustainability research results with stakeholders within URBAN-NET. This participation will be mostly electronic, but the attendance of one representative of the project in one URBAN-NET conference must be included in budget of the research project.

Further information and inquires

Inquires will be dealt with by the contact persons of national funding organisations (see Table 3), or by the URBAN-NET call coordinator Ulla Westerberg.

Table 3. National contact persons for further information.

Country	Funding organisation	Name	Address	Telephone
Bulgaria	ASDE	Kristian Milenov	asde-urban@online.bg	+359 2 874 50 21 +359 887 985 746
Cyprus	RPF	Katerina Kari	kkari@research.org.cy	+35 72 2205014
France	MEDAD/PUCA	Anne Querrien	anne.querrien@equipement.gouv.fr	+33 1 40816371
The Netherlands	Nicis NWO SenterNovem	Sanne Mohr	Sanne.mohr@nicis.nl	+31 70 3440958
Portugal	FCT	Cristina Costa	cristina.costa@fct.mctes.pt	+351 21 392 4397
Romania	IPA	Sorin Baban	sbaban@ipa.ro	+40 21 230 1879
Sweden	Formas	Ulla Westerberg	Ulla.Westerberg@formas.se	+46 8 775 4018
Turkey	TUBITAK	Özlem L. Sari	ozlem.sari@tubitak.gov.tr	+90 312 468 5300

Common URBAN-NET evaluation

Evaluation by the Expert Panel

When the applications have passed the eligibility checks of the respective national funding organisations they are passed to the expert panel which comprises evaluators appointed by each national funding organisation. There will be one panel for each of the sub-calls (full research and pre-research). The exact composition of the expert panels will be decided when the number of applications is known. The panels examine the projects and propose a ranking of the applications.

The applications are divided in three groups according to the following ranking:

- A granting is recommended; (high level of scientific quality and relevance)
- B granting is recommended; (second group of priority)
- C granting is not recommended; (low level of scientific quality and/or relevance)

Selection of projects

Call management groups comprise contact persons from each national funding organisation. They propose a final selection of applications for funding with respect to the available funds of the national funding organisations. The call management groups are free to make their own priorities within the applications scored A and B, with due consideration to the ranking of the expert panel. (The complicated puzzle of funding from different national resources however demands some flexibility.) The call management group recommends projects to the national funding organisations.

Criteria

Requirements by URBAN-NET and national organisations

- The application must be made on the Formas website and written in English and submitted and registered by 15th April. Signed registration forms must have arrived by the 23rd April.
- The consortia applying for full research projects must include researchers from at least three URBAN-NET countries each with an organisation funding the call.
- The consortia applying for pre-research projects must include researchers from at least three different countries, but only the coordinator must be based in an URBAN-NET country with an organisation funding the call.
- The eligibility rules of the national funding organisation must be followed.

Scientific quality

Question at issue

The aim, theory and hypothesis as well as novelty will be assessed.

The application's originality is assessed under scientific innovation. New ideas, bold hypotheses, and cross-disciplinary approaches will be considered advantageous. The applicant's awareness of and the application's position on existing national and international literature and knowledge within the area should be included in the assessment.

Method and performance

Scientific methodology is what is primarily assessed here, but work schedule, cost plan and plan for scientific publication and dissemination of popular science information are also assessed.

The scientific methodology is assessed in terms of the extent to which it can be considered well chosen and correctly applied considering the objective of the project.

The plan for scientific publication and dissemination of popular science information will be assessed with respect to its relevance for the project or pre-research activity.

The work schedule is assessed in terms of feasibility and coordination of the different parts of the project.

The soundness of the financial plan is also assessed. If stated costs are assessed as unreasonable, a revised financial plan will be recommended. This will be commented upon in the evaluation statement.

Consortium expertise

The applicant's documented experience and scientific excellence are assessed regarding the implementation of the project in accordance with the project description. Each individual researcher in the consortium is assessed separately as well as the group's collected ability to handle the project's undertaking. In addition, the coordinator's experience of project management and ability to implement the project according to the sketched-out plan will be assessed.

The assessments of the applicants are based on previously written work and expertise that has been demonstrated in other ways in the application. Consideration is also given to the applicant's ability to inform the community of his/her research.

Expertise assessments are based on the applicant's previous work, regardless of whether s/he has experience of the project area or if it is a new area.

Sector and societal relevance

The relevance criteria refer to the URBAN-NET strategic objectives as formulated above:

URBAN-NET aims to support research that is relevant for progress towards sustainable urban development and "to enhance European excellence through the support of transnational European research projects. These should be true collaborations among researchers working closely together, and there should be clear demonstration of added value in the proposed partnerships. Special consideration will be given to research with research issues that could be better answered if research takes place in more than one European country."

Mentioned are also "research areas where partner countries have ongoing research but need to define gaps, overlaps and possibilities for concerted actions; in research areas that are hardly explored; and in research areas where one partner has generated further knowledge and could support knowledge development in other partner countries."

URBAN-NET aims to develop an integrated approach implying new combinations of people and perspectives, (multi-, inter- and transdisciplinarity).

Equal Opportunities

The URBAN-NET project actively tries to ensure that its activities are carried out in such a way that equal opportunities for all are promoted and supported. URBAN-NET also offers an opportunity to contribute a positive impact on equal opportunities by addressing relevant topics in coordination activities and in the resulting research programmes. Thus research can focus on issues that promote the inclusion of citizens from excluded and minority groups. The partners will ensure that recommendations and outcomes of this call do not promote the interests of any one social group over others.