

URBAN-NEXUS - FP7



Project title: URBAN-NEXUS - Furthering Strategic Urban Research.

Type of funding scheme: Coordination and support actions (Coordinating).

Work programme topics addressed: ENV.2011.2.1.5-2.

Start: June, 2011; **Duration:** 36 months

List of participants:

Participant no.	Participant organisation name	Participant short name	Country
1 (Coordinator)	Netherlands Institute for City Innovation Studies	NICIS	Netherlands
2	Scotland and Northern Ireland Forum for Environmental Research	SNIFFER	UK
3	Autonomous University of Barcelona	UAB	Spain
4	Svedish Research Council for Environment, and Spatial Planning	FORMAS-SRCESP	Sweden
5	University of the West of England	UWE	UK
6	Agency for Sustainable Development and Eurointegration - ECOREGIONS - Sofia	ASDE - Sofia	Bulgaria
7	Mistra Urban Futures - Chalmers University of Technology	MUF-CUT	Sweden
8	EUROCITIES	EUROCITIES	Belgium
9	Sustainatily Management and Urban Governance	ICLEI-SMUG	Belgium
10	Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe	REC	Hungary
11	French Ministry of Industry	ADVANCITY-FMI	France
12	BDF	Bauhaus Dessau Foundation	Germany
13	Information System and Spatial Reference	SIRS	France

Executive Summary – URBAN-NEXUS:

European cities are some of the most attractive and desirable places in the world, offering unmatched opportunities for culture, recreation, living, and working. Our cities also play a vital role in the development of Europe and contribute to economic growth and innovation, knowledge-building and a cohesive society. However, European cities must work in concert to face a number of important challenges ranging from the current economic crisis, to sprawling development and the natural environment, as well as the longer-term implications related to climate change and resource scarcity (e.g., peak oil and water). The dire implications and potential impact of these challenges for our environment, economy and society suggests that urgent action is needed to ensure for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (Europe 2020). By working together and following a collaborative approach to problem solving Europe will emerge stronger and more resilient.

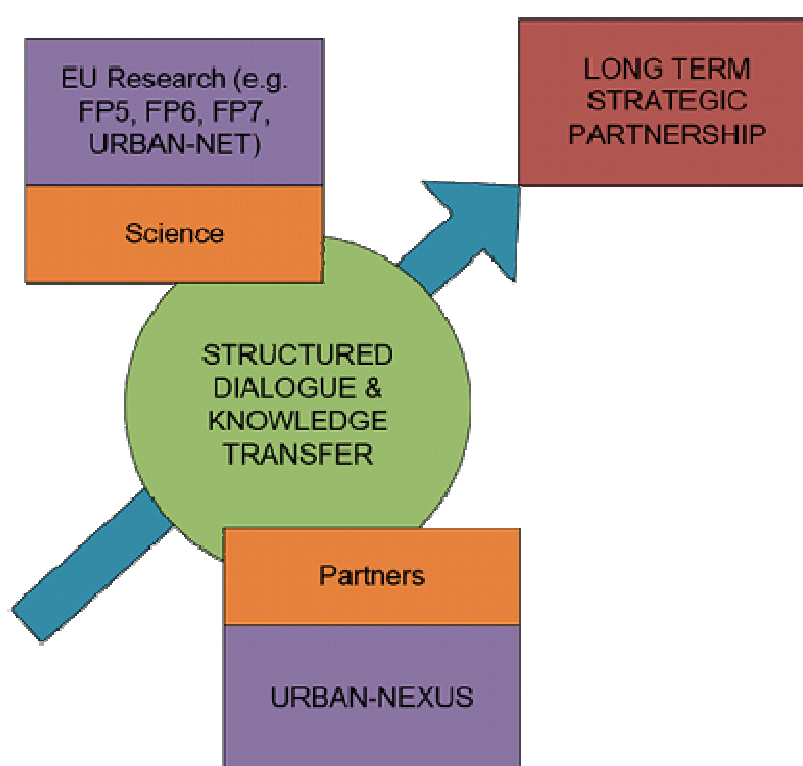


Figure 1. Vision for URBAN-NEXUS.

This coordination action is put forward to enable and further strategic urban research which can address these real challenges and advance sustainable urban development and planning towards reduction of the ‘urban ecological footprint’. Current ESPON estimates suggest that the average European citizen’s footprint is over two times the Earth’s capacity (ESPON 2013 Synthesis Report, p. 75). More than a quarter of the European Union’s territory has been directly affected by urban land use and by 2020 approximately 80% of Europeans will be living in urban areas. As a result, the demands for land in and around cities are becoming increasingly acute. However, through resolute, collaborative working we can address the complex, interrelated issues which drive energy and resource consumption, environmental degradation, and climate change.

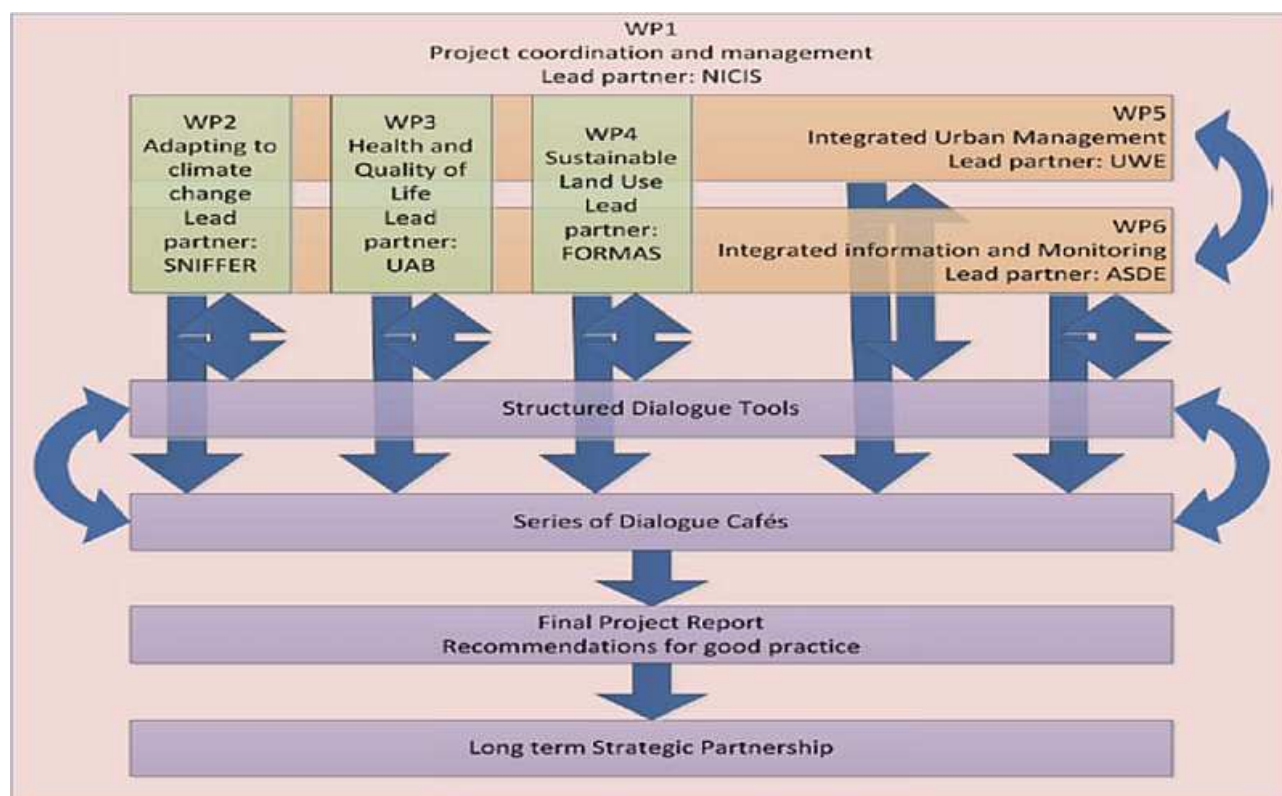


Figure 2. Work package structure for URBAN-NEXUS.

In 2006, URBAN-NET was established through FP5 funding as a European Research Area (ERA) network to strengthen the pan-European approach to research on these critical issues with a remit to forge links between the member state's urban research priorities and to support the development of a common framework for urban policy orientated research and policy understanding. Our URBAN-NEXUS proposal builds directly upon the successes and efforts of URBAN-NET. Including many of the existing URBAN-NET partners, our consortium is wellplaced to deliver this coordination action. As a starting point to our project, we have taken the URBAN-NET themes, developed in consultation with stakeholders in a workshop in Berlin (2008), as an overarching frame for our project framework. However, we have developed and updated our partnership to respond directly to the competencies and expertise required to successfully deliver and execute this project.

The working themes which frame our work, packages and approaches are:

- adapting to climate change;
- health and quality of life;
- sustainable land-use;
- integrated urban management;
- integrated information and monitoring.

Through URBAN-NEXUS we will engage with these issues through the development of a structured dialogue designed to enable rich communication, knowledge transfer and partnership-building. This will include engagement with a wide span of public, private, and civil society organisations involved with urban research ensuring for wide EU27 representation. Our collaborating partners – which include stakeholders in urban governance – will be instrumental to the project. These civic leaders, policy-makers, businesspeople, researchers and educators are

already actively involved with addressing the challenges of urban development. In addition to the 13 partners who make up URBAN-NEXUS, we have over 20 organisations signed on to our proposed approach including, for example, the WHO European Healthy Cities Network, International Society for City and Regional Planners (ISOCARP), METREX (a European network of major metropolitan regions and areas) and Polis (a pan-European network of transport related municipalities and transportation planning agencies). This form of direct engagement will help to build upon and strengthen the relationship between stakeholders and policy-making through engagement, collaborative prioritisation, and knowledge transfer.

Framed by these principles, this coordination action will pursue the following objectives: • Promote innovative problem-solving approaches to the complex and interrelated policy issues concerning sustainable urban development; • Increase awareness, knowledge exchange, cooperation and collaboration through structured dialogue; • Further the Long-term Strategic Framework for Scientific Cooperation through the enabling and building of partnerships.

Accordingly, we see these objectives as leading directly to significant beneficial impacts in terms of information, knowledge and partnership. Together, these impacts will contribute to a cohesive, problem-solving approach to the complex challenges facing contemporary European cities.

The challenge for Europe is clear; the dire forecasts for climate change and resource scarcity suggest that urgent, coordinated action is needed. This is not a time for go-it-your-own activities or silo thinking. Rather, European cities must work together across traditional disciplinary boundaries in response to the complex issues facing our environment and society. This coordination action responds directly to this agenda and aims to facilitate this engagement and support the development of a framework for long-term strategic cooperation and collaboration between urban stakeholders and interests towards the implementation of sustainable urban development.

Initial kick-off Urban-Nexus meeting held in Sofia

Programme

Kick-off

URBAN-NEXUS

17 – 18 November 2011, Sofia

„Collaborate to Accomplish Sustainable Urban Development“

Day 1

- 10.00 Registration, coffee and tea
- 10.30 Introduction
- 10.45 WP5 – short lecture on the focus in the theme and state of the art knowledge
- 11.00 WP6 – short lecture on the focus in the theme and state of the art knowledge
- 11.15 Parallel discussions on the scope of the theme and interrelations with other WPs - participants draw these views on one table-cloth per WP, and write a short introductory text or the WP
- 12.00 Presentation of the results WP 5
- 12.15 Presentation of the results WP 6
- 12.30 Lunch
- 13.15 External speaker (academic background)
- 13.45 Lectures WP 2, 3 and 4
- 14.30 Parallel discussions and the resulting table cloth and short introductory text
- 15.15 Presentation of results by the WP leader
- 15.45 Coffee break
- 16.00 Conclusion of the day – summary based on the tablecloths
- 16.30 Added value of URBAN-NEXUS
- 17.00 Break
- 19.00 Kick-off dinner
- 22.00 End of day 1

Day 2

- 09.00 Opening day 2
- 09.15 Introduction of the Stakeholder Advisory Board
- 09.45 Presentation SDPF
- 10.15 Logo presentation
- 10.30 Onsite visit (the added value of URBAN-NEXUS in practice)
- 12.30 Lunch

17 – 18 November 2011, Sofia

„Collaborate to Accomplish Sustainable Urban Development“

13.15 ...

13.45 Conclusion of the kick-off

14.00 Break and goodbyes

Management Board meeting:

14.15 • Reflection kick-off

• Common approach stakeholder analysis and synthesis paper

16.00 End of day 2

Short description of the initial kick-off Urban-Nexus meeting

From the September onwards the FP7 funded URBAN-NEXUS project is underway. A diverse group of research and knowledge dissemination institutes from across Europe have joined forces in order to promote sustainable urban development and to create long lasting partnerships between key stakeholders. On 17 and 18 November a kick-off meeting was organized in Sofia, Bulgaria.

Cities are hives of economic and social activity, yet they face grand societal challenges. To face these challenges, it has become urgent to collaborate. URBAN-NEXUS promotes integrated, sustainable urban development. URBAN-NEXUS will increase awareness and exchange of knowledge, identify innovative new solutions to sustainability problems and, ultimately, promote long lasting partnerships between various stakeholders. Input from various stakeholders and is crucial within this approach.



The activities during the kick-off meeting focused on identifying the key challenges that European cities face, as well as the essential building blocks for partnership building and information sharing. The meeting was set at a charming location in the east of the Sofia city centre, hosted by the Architects Union Building.

The first day was dedicated to identifying the challenges that European cities face within the themes of Climate Change, Health & Quality of Life and Sustainable Land Use. After presenting their initial ideas, sessions of rotating group discussions helped the organizers to better refine these themes. It came to the fore that the interconnectedness of the themes is an important asset for the project, but need to be managed with care as well. Within the theme Sustainable Land Use, focus will be directed towards good examples of land use and tools that are needed to produce this.

The late afternoon and evening were used for more social activities. The Municipality of Sofia provided a guiding tour to one of the new underground stations, where modern developments go hand in hand with efforts to protect cultural heritage dating back to Roman times. After a guided tour that introduced many of Sofia's cultural attractions, an atmospheric dinner in a traditional Bulgarian restaurant made everyone loosen up.



On Friday the focus shifted towards the necessary elements for partnerships. Mr. Johan van Zoest (urban ecologist) provided input, hinting at the necessity of having a common 'dot on the horizon' that bind the partners and stakeholders together. Another important element is the integration of as much stakeholders as possible, from different backgrounds and origins. URBAN-NEXUS needs to connect to and learn from other networks in that respect. This cannot be done by simply organizing a meeting. An elaborate set of tools need to be developed to allow everyone to express themselves freely. Practical examples are beneficial to provoke discussion, and will allow input from city practitioners as well.

To bind these different stakeholders together, it is vital that various policy spheres get connected. Within the URBAN-NEXUS framework, integrated urban management is essential to develop more sustainable cities. Input from the themes discussed on Thursday (Climate Change, Health & Quality of Life and Sustainable Land Use) will be used to define examples and models for integrated development.

Overall, the meeting was a very productive one. Discussions on the content went hand in hand with more relaxing activities. The partners agreed on several critical follow-up actions: the next step will be the production of a synthesis report on adaptation to climate change. This will form the overture for the first in a series of Dialogue Cafés, meant to exchange ideas and bring stakeholders together.

In the annexes below you will find more detailed conclusions that were drawn during the kick-off meeting for every theme covered by URBAN-NEXUS.