The National Impact of the Urban Agenda for the EU 2016–2019
This study was commissioned by the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations of the Netherlands to the European Urban Knowledge Network (EUKN EGTC).

All rights reserved. Elements of this publication can be quoted or referred to only if the source is mentioned correctly and the authors are notified at info@eukn.eu

Opinions expressed in this publication are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations.

Authors: D. Bahl, L. del Conte, E. Diepenbrock, M. Grisel, L. Scheurer, I. Vujic
Date of Publication: 10 October 2019

European Urban Knowledge Network

European Urban Knowledge Network (EUKN EGTC)
Schenkkade 50-K, 2595 AR, The Hague, The Netherlands
www.eukn.eu
It is with pleasure that we present this study, commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, on the impact of the Urban Agenda for the EU at Member State level.

The Urban Agenda for the EU, agreed on in 2016 during the Informal Meeting of Ministers responsible for urban matters as part of the Pact of Amsterdam, is a novel policy instrument. At present, only a few studies and publications on the Urban Agenda’s effects exist. In January 2020, the European Commission will publish its official evaluation. The perspective of Member States on and within this initiative has not been researched in depth yet. Now, more than three years after the start of the first Partnerships of the Urban Agenda for the EU, it is about time to assess its impact on the national level.

The Urban Agenda for the EU is certainly something unique. It is the first time that Member States, the European Commission, cities, civil society organisations and European programmes and institutions like URBACT, EUROCITIES, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, the Committee of the Regions and the European Investment Bank, work together on the improvement of urban policy within a dedicated albeit experimental governance architecture.

All in all, the Partnerships of the Urban Agenda for the EU have brought together more than 250 partners who jointly tackle specific urban challenges. As of today, 23 Member States, 96 cities and/or metropolitan regions, 10 regions, 17 Directorates-General of the European Commission, and 33 external institutions and organisations are involved in one or more of the 14 Partnerships of the Urban Agenda for the EU to produce Action Plans to improve regulation, funding and knowledge exchange within the EU. These Action Plans are now to be implemented by cities, regions, Member States and the European Parliament.

The European Urban Knowledge Network is grateful to all the respondents who filled in the two surveys. Their answers were fundamental to making us understand the impact of the Urban Agenda for the EU at the national level. Our special thanks go to the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration of Romania and to the Council of European Municipalities and Regions for supporting us in the design and dissemination of the surveys.

We thank the Dutch Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations for commissioning this study and we hope it will find its way in the official evaluation of the European Commission.

Mart Grisel
Director
European Urban Knowledge Network EGTC
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study explores the impact of the Urban Agenda for the EU at Member State level during the first three years of its existence. It does so by researching perceived changes in urban governance in ten EU Member States selected by the Dutch Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations: Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Spain. The perceived changes were studied by looking at three components – National Urban Policies, horizontal coordination structures and vertical coordination structures – through three “lenses”: type of change, motor of change, and (in)formality of change. Two surveys are the main source of this study. The first survey was sent by the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the EU to the national ministries responsible for urban matters. The second survey was sent by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions to its national umbrella organisations.

The report ascertains that noticeable changes have been perceived in horizontal and vertical coordination structures in the ten Member States since the inception of the Urban Agenda for the EU. A majority of the perceived changes was caused or influenced by the Urban Agenda for the EU. While there have been changes in the National Urban Policy in some Member States caused or influenced by the Urban Agenda for the EU, it cannot be concluded that the Urban Agenda for the EU has caused changes in, or resulted in, a new National Urban Policy in all ten Member States.

The conclusions and outcomes of this study are:

Mostly positive changes were perceived and no negative changes
An overwhelmingly vast majority of the perceived changes (in National Urban Policy, horizontal and vertical coordination structures) were seen as positive. No change was perceived as negative.

The motor of change is largely the Urban Agenda for the EU
In general, the Urban Agenda for the EU has functioned as the motor of change affecting two of the three components studied in this report much more than national initiatives. Changes in horizontal coordination structures, however, were more due to the national level than to the Urban Agenda for the EU.

The changes are predominantly informal
The majority of change in National Urban Policies, horizontal and vertical coordination structures is informal in nature. The impact of these informal structures was considerable. The question is to what extent these informal structures would need to be supported by more formal structures to make them more robust.

Different roles of Urban Agenda for the EU in relation to National Urban Policy
The Urban Agenda for the EU played different roles as a motor of change towards National Urban Policies. It acted in three different ways: as a facilitator in acknowledging the need for formal change of the National Urban Policy, as a catalyst for awareness of the fundamental importance of urban matters and urban policymaking, and as a coproducer of change together with developments initiated at national level.

New coordination structures have come up
Several new horizontal and vertical coordination structures have been designed by the ten Member States. These new structures, among other purposes, were created in order to support a more organised dissemination of urban knowledge.

Involvement of cities is promising but not unproblematic
A trend of empowerment of cities has been observed in the study. The following perspectives were addressed:

- Urban Agenda for the EU Partnerships help cities address their problems and the voice of cities seems to be heard at the national level
- The involvement of cities in the Urban Agenda for the EU Partnerships is (still) limited
- Small and medium-sized cities face a lack of ample resources to fully participate in the Urban Agenda for the EU
- The influence of cities on EU policies is unclear

Informality and policy innovation
A subtle balancing act exists in the European Union with regard to the Urban Agenda for the EU. On the one hand, the wish to achieve convergence in European urban policy making, and on the other hand, the limitations of subsidiarity, proportionality and informality are clearly felt. One of the main purposes of the Urban Agenda for the EU is to achieve innovation in urban policies and in urban policy making. Informality can function as a means to achieve this innovation. The exact relation between informality and policy innovation is still to be discovered.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword ................................................................................. iii  
Executive Summary ................................................................... iv  
Introduction ........................................................................... 1  
Research Methodology ................................................................. 3  
  Sources of information ............................................................... 3  
  Definition of key elements. ......................................................... 3  
  The Change Matrix ................................................................... 4  
Country Results ........................................................................ 7  
Analysis .................................................................................. 28  
  Results of the Change Matrix ..................................................... 28  
  Overall positive perception of changes ....................................... 30  
  Motor of change was mainly at EU level ..................................... 30  
  High score on informality of change .......................................... 31  
  National Urban Policy (NUP) ..................................................... 32  
  New coordination structures and knowledge exchange. ............... 32  
  Limited involvement of cities? .................................................. 33  
  Informality and policy innovation .............................................. 33  
Conclusions ............................................................................ 34  
Bibliography ........................................................................... 36  
Appendix 1: Responses to the two surveys ............................... 37  
Appendix 2: Romanian Survey .................................................. 39  
Appendix 3: Restraints and difficulties encountered .................. 49  
Appendix 4: Concrete results due to the UAEU ......................... 50
INTRODUCTION

The Urban Agenda for the EU, agreed on in 2016 during the Informal Meeting of Ministers responsible for urban matters as part of the Pact of Amsterdam, is a new policy instrument in which a variety of partners participate. The most recent publication of the European Commission states that “[t]he Urban Agenda for the EU represents a new governance model, involving all levels of government and stakeholders more closely at all stages of European and national urban policy cycles”.

Multi-level governance and horizontal and vertical coordination structures are described as a new mechanism towards this end. These structures contribute towards strengthening the National Urban Policies (NUPs) of EU Member States. At supranational level an increased focus has been put on NUPs by international organisations such as UN-Habitat and the OECD.

The Urban Agenda for the EU
The Urban Agenda for the EU (UAEU) was established by the Pact of Amsterdam, under the Dutch Presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2016. The UAEU is an innovative collaboration between cities, regions, Member States, the European Commission, and civil society; which acknowledges the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality to enhance the urban dimension in national and European policies. Since the EU has no competency in the area of urban matters, this collaboration remains informal. Within the UAEU, there are fourteen thematic Partnerships in which actors cooperate over relevant issues faced by city administrations and other governmental and non-governmental actors. The purpose of each partnership is “to stimulate growth, liveability and innovation in the cities of Europe and to identify and successfully tackle social challenges”.

Each partnership makes an Action Plan with concrete recommendations in the areas of Better Regulation, Better Funding and Better Knowledge.

The UAEU does not have a formal status. It is based on voluntary cooperation and it is a non-binding agreement. The informal approach of the Partnerships themselves is emphasized in statements like, “The Urban Agenda for the EU will not initiate new regulation, but will be regarded as an informal contribution to the design of future and revision of existing EU regulation.”

Multi-level Governance
The Pact of Amsterdam consolidated horizontal and vertical coordination as the two structures of multi-level governance. The UAEU explicitly refers to horizontal and vertical coordination, to which the Thematic Partnerships are “a new instrument.” It is important to understand that horizontal coordination is often called multi-stakeholder cooperation in literature as well as in EU publications/agreements. Likewise, vertical coordination is often referred to as multi-level governance, in which different levels of government interact. This study looks into changes in these two forms of coordination.

National Urban Policies
National Urban Policies (NUPs) are considered to be implementation guidelines, ensuring innovative and better models of development. UN-Habitat stresses the importance for countries to develop and execute an NUP to “make cities and human settlements inclusive safe, resilient and sustainable.” In the words of the Executive Director of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme at that time, Joan Clos: “[…] achieving sustainable urban development requires that stakeholders, through a participatory process, foster urban policies that promote more compact, socially inclusive, better integrated and connected cities that are resilient to climate change.”

The Impact of the Urban Agenda for the EU
The impact of the UAEU at Member State level has not been thoroughly explored yet. This is why the Dutch Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations asked the EUKN to conduct a study on the impact and changes that the UAEU may have caused on select EU Member States. The current research builds upon the existing study by the EUKN and will feed into the official evaluation commissioned by the European Commission on the UAEU, which will be published by the end of 2019, or

---

1 European Commission, 2019, Urban agenda for the EU; Multi-level governance in action, page: 37, emphasis added
2 The OECD formulates it in this way: “A National Urban Policy (NUP) has been recognized by the international community as an essential policy instrument to harness the dynamics of urbanization in order to achieve national and global goals.” (OECD, 2017, The State of National Urban Policy in OECD Countries; A special report prepared for the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, Habitat III, page 8)
3 https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/urban-agenda-eu/what-urban-agenda-eu
4 “[The] Urban Agenda for the EU is […] a new form of informal multi-level cooperation where Member States, Regions, representatives of Urban Authorities, the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Union’s Advisory Bodies (CoR, EESC), the EIB and other relevant actors work in partnership. […]” (Pact of Amsterdam/UAEU, page 9)
5 https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/urban-agenda-eu/what-urban-agenda-eu
6 Pact of Amsterdam/UAEU, 2016, page 9
7 Habitat III (2016), New Urban Agenda, page 23 and Deutscher Städtetag (2016), An urban agenda for the European Union – Views and Perspective of the Association of German Cities
8 Sustainable Development Goal 11
10 EUKN, One Year Pact of Amsterdam, 2017
early 2020. Pending this official evaluation, it is clear that the UAEU has already influenced urban policy making in Europe. As stated in a recent EU publication, “[the] Urban Agenda for the EU has provided valuable support and impetus to urban policy thinking and dialogue in Europe” and “[...] has put multi-level governance into action.”11

Research question
This study seeks to answer the following research question:

Has the Urban Agenda for the EU led to changes in horizontal and vertical coordination structures in urban governance, and/or has it resulted in new (national) urban policies in EU Member States?

Research delimitation
The functioning of the UAEU could be an extensive area of research because of its political embeddedness, large number of involved actors, and ongoing discussions about its future. The primary aim is to research the changes and implications of the UAEU at the Member State level. The study focuses on ten EU Member States: Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Spain. This selection was made by the Dutch Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations. The concrete deliverables of the UAEU Partnerships are not subject of this study.

11 European Commission (2019), Urban agenda for the EU; Multi-level governance in action page 6
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The sources of information used shall be elaborated. Then, the two operationalisation steps towards answering our research question shall be described: the definition of the key elements of the research question and the Change Matrix.

Sources of information

Four main sources of information have been utilised to answer the research question in this study. Two well-developed international reports were used to understand the state of urban governance in the Member States concerned, before or during the inception phase of the UAEU, and to establish a general context for this study. Both reports have data for all 10 countries being analysed in the research. Two surveys were concluded during the period May-June 2019, and reflect the current state of affairs in the 10 Member States. More information on these two surveys can be found in the Appendix 1.

1. A report of the OECD published in 2017, on National Urban Policies in 35 OECD countries. This report shall be referred to as OECD17 in this research.
2. A report of the Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development, which was published in 2017, 10 years after the Leipzig Charter came into existence. For purposes of legibility this report shall be referred to as LC17.
3. A survey executed by the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union (first half 2019) with the collaboration of EUKN. Be referred to as RO19.
4. A survey executed by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), also with the collaboration of EUKN. survey as CEMR19.

Apart from these four main sources additional desk research was required to complement or delve deeper into the information gathered. It shall be clearly indicated wherever applicable.

Definition of key elements

Despite the subjective nature of the research question, this study will attempt to be as objective as possible. To ensure this, the operationalisation is elaborated in this section.

In the research question the following four key elements are identified:

**Change**
The transformation or adaptation of the situation/subject observed at one point in time (2016) compared to another point in time (2019), and expressed explicitly or implicitly by a respondent of the two surveys executed.

**Horizontal coordination structures**
The first component comprises types of collaboration on urban policies between organisations that have a different character and/or belong to a different societal domain, like public institutions, semi-governmental bodies, private and civic sector.

**Vertical coordination structures**
The second component comprises types of collaboration on urban policies between different country-specific governmental levels, e.g. the municipal, metropolitan, regional, national and supranational administrative level.

**National Urban Policy (NUP)**
In this report, National Urban Policy (NUP), the third component, is understood as defined by the United Nations: “A coherent set of decisions derived through a deliberate government-led process of coordinating and rallying various actors for a common vision and goal that will promote more transformative, productive, inclusive and resilient urban development for the long term.”

---

12 All 10 countries are discussed in OECD17, except Romania.
15 (UN Habitat, 2014)
The Change Matrix

The change matrix is designed as a tool to tabulate data/information collected from the aforementioned sources and analyse the research question through the three lenses of: Type of change, Motor of change, and (In)formality of change.

**Type of change**
The change perceived by a respondent could be either positive or negative. “Positive” implies a change towards a beneficial outcome (according to the respondent), whereas “Negative” implies a degrading outcome (according to the respondent). This is denoted in three colours in the graphic below.

![Type of change graphic](#)

**Motor of change**
Motor of change depicts the level at which the perceived change is initiated. In this respect, “Motor” is used as an umbrella term to refer to the cause, accelerator, catalyst, facilitator or influencing factor of the change perceived. For the purpose of this research, the two motors of change are:

- The Urban Agenda for the EU (UAEU), depicted by the EU flag
- The National level, depicted by its country flag

Due to the nature of this study there are different combinations possible of the two levels of motor of change. These are denoted by the graphic below.

![Motor of change combinations](#)

**(In)formality of change**

![Formal and informal combinations](#)

To explain the phrase ‘(In)formality of change’, it is necessary to define the two concepts embedded in it, which are:

- **Formal**: A change officially agreed on, normally reflected in a law, regulation, convention, pact, working plan or any other written agreement which was adopted by a governmental body.
- **Informal**: A change unofficially or semi-officially agreed on, not necessarily reflected in a written agreement which was adopted by a governmental body.

The following page provides a schematic overview of the approach used in this study.
Has the Urban Agenda for the EU led to changes in horizontal and vertical coordination structures in urban governance, and/or has it resulted in new (national) urban policies in EU Member States?

The change of the situation/subject observed at one point in time (2016) compared to another point in time (2019), and expressed explicitly or implicitly by a respondent of the two surveys executed.

The change perceived by a respondent could be either positive or negative. “Positive” implies a change towards a beneficial outcome (according to the respondent), whereas “Negative” implies a degrading outcome (according to the respondent).

Motor of change depicts the level at which the perceived change is initiated. In this respect, “Motor” is used as an umbrella term to refer to the cause, accelerator, catalyst, facilitator or influencing factor of the change perceived. For the purpose of this research the two motors of change are:
- The Urban Agenda for the EU;
- the National level

NATIONAL URBAN POLICY
A coherent set of decisions derived through a deliberate government-led process of coordinating and rallying various actors for a common vision and goal that will promote more transformative, productive, inclusive and resilient urban development for the long term

HORIZONTAL COORDINATION STRUCTURES
Types of collaboration on urban policies between organisations that have a different character and/or belong to a different societal domain, like: public institutions, semi-governmental bodies, private, and civic sector.

VERTICAL COORDINATION STRUCTURES
Types of collaboration on urban policies between different governmental levels, like — depending on the country involved — the municipal, metropolitan, regional, national and supranational administrative level.

Research Methodology

1. RESEARCH QUESTION
Has the Urban Agenda for the EU led to changes in horizontal and vertical coordination structures in urban governance, and/or has it resulted in new (national) urban policies in EU Member States?

2. KEY ELEMENTS

CHANGE
The change of the situation/subject observed at one point in time (2016) compared to another point in time (2019), and expressed explicitly or implicitly by a respondent of the two surveys executed.

NATIONAL URBAN POLICY
A coherent set of decisions derived through a deliberate government-led process of coordinating and rallying various actors for a common vision and goal that will promote more transformative, productive, inclusive and resilient urban development for the long term

HORIZONTAL COORDINATION STRUCTURES
Types of collaboration on urban policies between organisations that have a different character and/or belong to a different societal domain, like: public institutions, semi-governmental bodies, private, and civic sector.

VERTICAL COORDINATION STRUCTURES
Types of collaboration on urban policies between different governmental levels, like — depending on the country involved — the municipal, metropolitan, regional, national and supranational administrative level.

3. CHANGE MATRIX

TYPE OF CHANGE
The change perceived by a respondent could be either positive or negative. “Positive” implies a change towards a beneficial outcome (according to the respondent), whereas “Negative” implies a degrading outcome (according to the respondent).

MOTOR OF CHANGE
Motor of change depicts the level at which the perceived change is initiated. In this respect, “Motor” is used as an umbrella term to refer to the cause, accelerator, catalyst, facilitator or influencing factor of the change perceived. For the purpose of this research the two motors of change are:
- The Urban Agenda for the EU;
- the National level

(IN)FORMALITY OF CHANGE
Formal: Officially agreed on, normally reflected in a law, regulation, convention, pact, working plan or any other written agreement which was adopted by a governmental body.

Informal: Unofficially or semi-officially agreed on, not necessarily reflected in a written agreement which was adopted by a governmental body.
Methodology Template

Urban Governance
This section provides an overview of the Member State researched and its urban governance. Here reference will be made to the three components that are covered by the research question: NUP, Horizontal Coordination Structures, and Vertical Coordination Structures. The sources used to build this section are majorly the ‘Ten years after Leipzig Charter’ (LC17) and the OECD report (OECD17), along with other relevant sources in particular cases.

Change Matrix
Perceived Changes (2016-2019)
The Change Matrix summarises the perceptions of change related to the three components of research: NUP, Horizontal Coordination Structures, and Vertical Coordination Structures. These are analysed through three specific lenses (Type of change, Motor of change, and (In)formality of change), which are visible in the bar above all three boxes. The sources of information are the RO19 survey and the CEMR19 survey.

Observations
This is the first critical reading of the results presented in the Change Matrix. The data within the three boxes are used as the starting point for the observations. Here all four sources (i.e. the two reports: OECD17 & LC17 and the two surveys: RO19 & CEMR19) will be used.
COUNTRY RESULTS

This chapter analyses the answers provided by the respondents of the two surveys described earlier (RO19 & CEMR19) country by country on the basis of the definitions established in the previous chapter. The two reports mentioned earlier (LC17 & OECD17) are also used to draw inferences. In order to facilitate the overview of the analysis, the so-called Change Matrix has been developed.

The legend below gives reading guidance for the Change Matrix.
FINLAND

URBANGOVERNANCE
In Finland, the NUP consists of a set of contracts between national and local government. The last NUP was established during the period 2016-2018, including the Urban Growth Agreements as well as agreements on land-use, housing and transportation. (OECD17, LC17)

The Urban Policy Committee was originally established in 2007. It oversees and promotes the urban policy agenda in Finland and is responsible for the coordination of all policies with urban relevance between different ministries and local levels of government. It also fosters exchange of experiences with urban regions outside Finland. The Urban Policy Committee is managed by the current Minister responsible for urban development, and contains representatives of other ministries, cities, and the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities. (OECD17)

CHANGE MATRIX

PERCEIVED CHANGES (2016-2019)

The respondent (CEMR19) stresses the lack of any improvements in the NUP during the present government (2015-2018).

Two out of three respondents (RO19) deny the presence of any change in the NUP. However, the other respondent (RO19) mentions that substantial changes have taken place in the past three years. Nevertheless, according to him/her, these are not a direct consequence of the UAEU.

No change mentioned.

Two respondents (RO19) point out the establishment of an informal national network of the Finnish partners involved in the UAEU. When asked about “informal structures”, a respondent (RO19) additionally recognises the encouragement to establish national support groups for the Partnerships in which partners from Finland are involved (e.g. the support group for the Urban Mobility Partnership).

Meanwhile, another respondent (CEMR19) also mentions the creation of working groups to exchange knowledge between cities and UAEU Partnerships.
For Finland, data was obtained from a total of four respondents (RO19 & CEMR19). This leads to inconsistent views and statements, especially regarding the perception of NUP change. Only one respondent (RO19) reports significant policy changes, while denying any connection with the UAEU.

Based on the data obtained, there is no clear basis for concluding that the NUP of Finland has changed in the observed period. National elections were held in Finland on 14 April 2019, and according to the respondent (RO19) it is considered rather normal to evaluate policies at the end of the government period. As stated by her/him, the NUP will be re-examined to make it more robust than before.

A number of new informal initiatives concerning vertical coordination structures were mentioned by all the four respondents (RO19 & CEMR19). There are clear indications that the presence of the UAEU was related to the emergence of these informal initiatives.

Including cities in the shaping of EU policies, as stipulated by the UAEU, is considered as a good idea by a respondent (RO19). Yet the outcome of this involvement is not entirely clear. This respondent asserts that this may be since the Partnerships’ Actions are currently in their initial stages.

**OBSERVATIONS**

For Finland, data was obtained from a total of four respondents (RO19 & CEMR19). This leads to inconsistent views and statements, especially regarding the perception of NUP change. Only one respondent (RO19) reports significant policy changes, while denying any connection with the UAEU.

Based on the data obtained, there is no clear basis for concluding that the NUP of Finland has changed in the observed period. National elections were held in Finland on 14 April 2019, and according to the respondent (RO19) it is considered rather normal to evaluate policies at the end of the government period. As stated by her/him, the NUP will be re-examined to make it more robust than before.

A number of new informal initiatives concerning vertical coordination structures were mentioned by all the four respondents (RO19 & CEMR19). There are clear indications that the presence of the UAEU was related to the emergence of these informal initiatives.

Including cities in the shaping of EU policies, as stipulated by the UAEU, is considered as a good idea by a respondent (RO19). Yet the outcome of this involvement is not entirely clear. This respondent asserts that this may be since the Partnerships’ Actions are currently in their initial stages.

---

15 Finland was the only country, within the 10 analysed, with more than two respondents. There was a total of four respondents: three respondents for the RO19 survey and one respondent for the CEMR19 survey.
URBANGOVERNANCE

In France, the NUP is embedded in the City Policy (Politique de la Ville). This policy, updated in 2014, consists of a set of contracts (Contrats des villes) between the national government, municipalities, intermunicipal bodies, regions and departments.

The contracts run from 2015 to 2020 and concentrate on three major topics:
1. Growth of economic activities and employment
2. Social cohesion
3. Improving living conditions and urban renewal

The French City Policy first started in 1977, and gradually broadened its scope. The current Contrats des villes are different compared to the previous city contracts because they give a more prominent role to the inhabitants of the targeted areas. (LC17)

The Commissariat général à l’Égalité des territoires (CGET) is the national body responsible for coordinating, monitoring, and evaluating the city contracts. (OECD17) Both the Interministerial Committee of Cities and the Interministerial Committee of Equality and Citizenship support the CGET in its monitoring tasks. The Contrats des villes are monitored and evaluated by citizen councils and implemented by urban authorities. (LC17)

CHANGE MATRIX

PERCEIVED CHANGES (2016-2019)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NATIONAL URBAN POLICY</th>
<th>COORDINATION STRUCTURES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An occurrence of changes in the NUP is explicitly confirmed by the respondent (RO19). To illustrate this, s/he mentions the recent creation of a new programme, namely the Action Coeur de Ville, which targets city centres in need of revitalisation.

The respondent (RO19) also acknowledged the role of the UAEU in the definition of new priorities. The presence of child poverty and security in public spaces on the national agenda is provided as an example.

The respondent (RO19) explains that the CGET is leading a network promoting communication (for cities, State services, managing authorities) and exchange of information about the UAEU. Instruments to do so are working groups, shared documents and seminars.
**OBSERVATIONS**

The UAEU brought in new priorities, like child poverty and security in public spaces, which are now part of the national urban discourse. This informal change of the NUP goes together with a perceived formal change: the *Action Coeur des villes* (RO19).

No change in horizontal coordination structures was perceived. According to a respondent (CEMR19), horizontal and vertical coordination structures existed in France before the UAEU came into existence. France has been actively involving different levels of government, for example, through its network Europe Urbain. This network is composed of the *Commissariat général à l’Egalité des territoires*, the association of regions (*Association des Régions de France*) and other French regional and municipal authorities like the French Association of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions.

Concerning vertical coordination structures, a change is visible from the perspective of informal cooperation. An indication of vertical multi-level coordination in France is the functioning of the CGET. The respondent (RO19) explains that the CGET is leading a network which has been used to exchange knowledge and to communicate about the urban agenda, specifically on a vertical level, through working groups, shared documents and seminars.

As regards the functioning of the UAEU, the respondent (RO19) indicates that small and medium-sized cities face difficulties in maintaining their involvement in the Partnerships.
The respondent (RO19) affirms that the NUP strategy has been reviewed in the past three years.

The Social City (Soziale Stadt) programme, launched in 1999, plays an important role within urban development. It aims to improve the living conditions and social cohesion in disadvantaged neighbourhoods by means of an integrated approach. (LC17)

All three main levels of government – federal, regional, and municipal – carry the National Urban Development Policy together. Additionally, Germany has an array of horizontal coordination structures for urban policy. (LC17 & OECD17)

In the second half of 2020, Germany will hold the Presidency of the Council of the EU. One of the main contributions of this Presidency to European urban policy will be the update of the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities.16

### Change Matrix

**Perceived Changes (2016-2019)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Urban Policy</th>
<th>Coordination Structures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The respondent (RO19) affirms that the NUP strategy has been reviewed in the past three years.</td>
<td>No change mentioned.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the respondent (RO19), there has been an informal exchange of knowledge among the German partners involved in the Partnerships of the UAEU in 2018. The Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community was involved in this informal and mainly vertical exchange. In 2019 two meetings were organised by the Ministry.
The NUP in Germany has been revised in the past three years (RO19). However, there is no clear indication that the existence of the UAEU has influenced this revision (RO19).

Regarding the numerous horizontal coordination structures in Germany, the survey data (RO19) does not indicate that any of these structures have changed recently.

Concerning vertical coordination, the respondent (RO19) not only highlights a positive change, but also confirms a direct relation with the UAEU. This was manifested in an informal exchange between German participants of UAEU Partnerships taking place in 2018.
ITALY

URBANGOVERNANCE
The national government and the regional, provincial and municipal governments are responsible for urban development policies in Italy. The role of the State is to define the strategic priorities, whereas municipalities, provinces, and regions are the ones dealing with local development policies. (LC17)

The current NUP, the so-called National Plan for Cities, was adopted in 2012. It was meant to improve urban areas, notably deprived and degraded areas. The adoption of the National Plan for Cities was followed by a selection by the National Control Room (Cabina nazionale di regia) of 28 special projects to be funded by the State. These projects were related to urban regeneration and proposed by city councils. (LC17)

When it comes to vertical coordination structures, Italy features several institutionalised conferences: the State-Region, the State-Cities and local authorities, and the Unified Conference, where all government levels come together. (LC17)

CHANGE MATRIX
PERCEIVED CHANGES (2016-2019)

The respondent (RO19) acknowledges the relevant role of the UAEU Partnerships in detecting challenges and issues to be addressed. This specific role allows cities to better define the actions needed to tackle their problems. An example of this is also provided: the Action to improve the resilience of urban areas as developed by the Partnerships of Sustainable Land Use and Climate Adaptation.

The UAEU is the only programme that allows for the widespread horizontal and vertical exchange at national level, according to the respondent (RO19). Also, the respondent mentions the formation of a national operational exchange by the Agency for Territorial Cohesion and its technical secretariat. Within this context, a project to support Italian cities within the UAEU is going to be implemented.

The exchange of knowledge allowed by the UAEU happens both vertically and horizontally, as reported by the respondent (RO19) (see “horizontal coordination structures” above).
OBSERVATIONS

The respondent (RO19) mentions that Italy has been always rather aware of urban policies, especially since the 1990s, when several national integrated programmes for cities were established. The existing urban policies were already in line with the approach of the UAEU. Thus, according to the respondent, the Urban Agenda did not play a key role in increasing awareness or changing urban policies in Italy.

However, the respondent (RO19) is confident that an integrated urban agenda at EU level could be beneficial for countries without national coordination and/or no national ministry directly responsible for urban policies. Focusing on Italy, the respondent (RO19) considers the thematic Partnerships as a positive contribution to the Italian NUP due to:

• their role, which allows to identify issues and to draw Action Plans more easily;
• the direct involvement of cities.

Concerning the Italian coordination structures, the respondent (RO19) highlights the beneficial changes facilitated by the UAEU, both at horizontal and vertical level.
THE NETHERLANDS

URBANGOVERNANCE

The Dutch approach towards urban development has been an integrated one for quite some time already. Over the past years, the consciousness regarding the valuable role of integrated and flexible approaches in tackling urban challenges has increased, resulting in the design of a National Urban Agenda (Agenda Stad). (LC17) The Dutch national urban agenda was passed in 2014 and introduced the so-called City Deals: thematic partnerships between cities and national ministries. The actors involved work together to address challenges at city-level, which could eventually be upscaled and lead to institutional change. The Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations coordinates these City Deals. The Ministry of Infrastructure and Environment, on the other hand, is responsible for the national infrastructure and spatial development vision. It is also in charge of the multi-annual programme for infrastructure, spatial development and transport: two territorially oriented policies where mostly provinces and metropolitan authorities are involved. (LC17) The recent decentralisation in the social domain led to some changes in the way urban policy is organised and implemented. The relationship between cities and national ministries became less hierarchical and municipalities gained (even) more responsibilities. (LC17) Since 2018 the Netherlands has been implementing the Region Deals, which are similar to City Deals, but they contain different actors working on a regional challenge. Cities can also be part of these Region Deals. Local and regional authorities in the Netherlands have specifically insisted on the continuation of the Urban Agenda for the EU, as they see it as an important instrument to promote and safeguard their EU interests. (source: Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations)

The respondent (RO19) points out the key role played by the UAEU in bringing urban matters to the forefront. A concrete example is the establishment of the annual urban conference “Day of the City” (Dag van de Stad), where some positive and concrete examples of UAEU practices are diffused. Furthermore, the same respondent highlights that in the development of new City Deals, there is awareness and interest to align with the outcomes of several UAEU Partnerships (e.g. Partnerships on the Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees, Digital Transition).

The respondent (CEMR19) states that the UAEU helped raise the interest in urban policy-making at the national level again, which decreased after the termination of the previous NUP, the Grotestedebelieid, in 2009. The UAEU may have led into a renewed interest in Dutch City Deals.

The respondent (RO19) reports the establishment of an UAEU Taskforce, composed of cities, regions, representatives of Partnerships, the central government, and knowledge institutes. The Taskforce meets bi-monthly and coordinates urban policies and input at both national and EU level.

According to the respondent (RO19), the UAEU generated a direct channel of communication between Dutch cities and the various Directorates-General of the European Commission. As a matter of fact, the Urban Agenda provided Dutch cities and the central government with a platform to enhance the influence of urban areas on the EU policy agenda.

The Taskforce described above (horizontal coordination structures) is also an example of a vertical coordination structure introduced due to the UAEU. (RO19)
Even though the two respondents (RO19 & CEMR19) do not identify substantial changes in the NUP, they both point out the valuable role of the UAEU at the policy level, albeit in a rather informal way.

The main outcome, acknowledged by both respondents, is the increased awareness regarding the fundamental importance of urban matters and urban policy-making. It resulted in the launch of new initiatives, such as the "Day of the City" event, but also in the rising interest in existing City Deals. These, maybe because of their similarity in structure with the UAEU Partnerships, have been successfully used as a tool to align the thematic priorities of the country with the priorities of the EU.

Some relevant formal and informal changes in horizontal and vertical coordination structures are also mentioned. According to one respondent (RO19), the UAEU has been a catalyst for meaningful exchanges between Dutch cities, the central government, and the EU. The degree of importance of such communication is also reflected in the establishment of the bi-monthly Taskforce, which brings together a variety of ‘horizontal’ and ‘vertical’ stakeholders.
**POLAND**

**URBANGOVERNANCE**
The current Polish NUP was approved in 2015 and is called National Urban Policy 2023. It covers ten major objectives, ranging from investment policy to energy efficiency. The Ministry of Economic Development is responsible for the urban policy at national level. The NUP is coordinated by the minister in charge of regional development and implemented especially by local and regional authorities. Urban and regional policies are coordinated by several institutionalised fora and informal channels, which are both vertical and horizontal coordination structures. In line with that, the current NUP focuses on a participatory approach to development, promoting municipal-level dialogues and public consultations. (LC17)

**CHANGE MATRIX**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NATIONAL URBAN POLICY</th>
<th>COORDINATION STRUCTURES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The respondent (RO19) affirms that there have been substantial changes to urban policy during the past three years. The involvement in the UAEU led to the idea of updating the NUP when the opportunity is there, however this has not happened yet.

The respondent (RO19) also emphasises the relevance of the Strategy for Responsible Development of Poland, which was implemented two years ago. This helps to frame the NUP in defining actions for sustainable urban development. The Partnership Initiative of Cities (PIC) is a direct result of the strategy. The PIC aims to support, at national level, thematic networks of cities. Three networks have been launched so far, with big similarity to three Partnerships of the UAEU: air quality, urban mobility and urban regeneration.

Furthermore, the respondent (RO19) indicates that more emphasis is being put on the development of medium-sized cities that are losing their socio-economic functions.

The respondent (RO19) points out the relevance of the National Urban Forum, which took place in April 2019 as the first multi-level governance conference dedicated to urban policy in Poland. According to her/him, the conference was the first step towards establishing a more permanent platform among various stakeholders (central and local government, scientists, urban planners and architects, the business community, NGOs, and urban movements) in urban policy for discussion and cooperation. During this event, the declaration “Towards cooperation for the implementation of the national urban policy and the New UN Urban Agenda” was signed officially by several ministries and the Association of Polish Cities.

It is affirmed by the respondent (CEMR19) that structures to exchange information on the UAEU, between national and other governmental levels, exist. The main structure introduced because of the UAEU is the PIC (refer to NUP box).

The respondent (RO19) observes that due to the UAEU, representatives from cities are engaged with EU institutions in a direct way. This form of collaboration triggers mutual learning and allows the voice of the cities to be stronger.
The latest NUP was approved in 2015, which could explain why no formal changes seem to have taken place. Nonetheless, the National Urban Forum and the Partnership Initiative of Cities (PIC) showcase the important urban policy developments happening in Poland.

The respondent (RO19) is positive about the UAEU. In particular, s/he points out the role that international commitment played in fostering the debate on existing urban policies: a debate that, in his/her opinion, could eventually lead to their revision.

The respondent (CEMR19) recognises the improved involvement of local authorities in urban policy, but s/he does not identify the UAEU as the main reason for this positive change. Major changes have taken place prior to the Pact of Amsterdam, especially due to the Association of Polish Cities. As a matter of fact, in 2014 the chapter “National urban policy” was added to the Regional Development Policy Act and in 2015 the current NUP was adopted by the Government. These changes, according to the respondent (RO19), also led to better regulation, funding tools and programmes in the area of urban policy.
According to the respondent (RO19), no substantial change has taken place in the NUP. However, s/he mentions that the main benefit of the UAEU has been the national participation of cities in the political agenda setting and policy design.

At regional level, local and sectoral policies for the long term are handled by the five Regional Coordination and Development Commissions (CCDR) in Portugal. These are national bodies that operate as regional planning authorities and that are mainly responsible for intersectoral coordination. Urban development is then supported by municipal governments in respect to their Municipal Master Plan (PDM): an essential tool to regulate land-use and the framework for public and private-led development in municipalities. The Minister of the Environment is in charge of supervising spatial planning, both national and regional, and urban policy agencies. (OECD17 & LC17) Over the past decade, several reforms have been carried out in an attempt to decentralise urban development policy, better coordinate different levels of government, and compensate for the lack of solid strategic development planning. In 2015, the current NUP called Sustainable Cities 2020 was passed. It provides a strategic framework for sustainable urban development. (OECD17 & LC17)

The respondent (RO19) indicates that an intersectional forum will be set up after the recent approval of the revised National Spatial Planning Policy Programme by a Technical group. It will consist of relevant sectors and bodies, and will be supported by a spatial and urban planning observatory, also to be set up.

According to the respondent (RO19), a number of working groups for sectoral policies were established for issues such as urban impact, urban renewal, climate change, urban science, green economy, culture and heritage, etc.

The respondent (RO19) affirms that there has been an informal group for the UAEU chaired by the Directorate-General for Territory since 2016, which includes relevant sectors (housing, migration, mobility, environment), regional bodies, and (associations of) cities.

Similarly, the second respondent (CEMR19) mentions this “Informal National Group for the Urban Agenda for the EU”, including municipalities and its national association. S/he confirms that this informal group shares and monitors the work of the UAEU Partnerships and is used for the communication of information on the evolution of the UAEU at EU level.
OBSERVATIONS

As reported by the respondent (RO19), the lack of substantial change in the NUP could be linked to the fact that the current NUP was passed relatively recently, and usually NUPs are not updated at short intervals. Since Portugal started to redefine the national approach towards the urban dimension already a decade before the launch of the UAEU, it is unclear whether the changes perceived by the respondent were directly linked to the initiative.

The respondent (CEMR19) mentions that local authorities involved in the Partnerships became more active in the discussions within the Partnerships themselves. These discussions reach the central government, which keeps track of the process. This shows the presence of an informal networking structure which gives the municipalities a stronger voice.
**ROMANIA**

**URBANGOVERNANCE**

Romania has three territorial administrative levels: the national, the county and the local level. All levels assume different roles and competences for urban development:

- the national level shapes the country’s legislative, policy and financial framework;
- the county level creates guidelines for urban development and spatial planning in accordance with its priorities;
- the local level implements particular policies, adjusting them to the local conditions. (LC17)

The horizontal and vertical coordination between different levels of administrations takes place via mandatory discussions during the approval process of planning documents, formulated in the Law on Spatial and Urban Planning. (LC17)

---

**CHANGE MATRIX**

**PERCEIVED CHANGES (2016-2019)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NATIONAL URBAN POLICY</th>
<th>COORDINATION STRUCTURES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the respondent (RO19) claims that there is a clear need for a renewed NUP, s/he states that no change has occurred yet. However, a process to revise the NUP in conformity with the results of the UAEU was started in the end of 2018.

The respondent (RO19) also highlights the valuable role of the UAEU in delivering clear directions when designing urban policies.

No change mentioned.

The respondent (RO19) states that the participation of Member States in the UAEU helps improve the regulatory, funding, and knowledge framework at the European level in line with national needs.
OBSERVATIONS

The respondent (RO19) stresses the overall importance of the EU policy framework and the UAEU for all Member States more than its effect on Romanian policy itself. This could be due to the recently concluded Romanian Presidency of the EU and the respective focus on EU policy and coordination.

According to the respondent (RO19), the participation of Member States in the UAEU supports improvements of the regulatory, funding, and knowledge framework at the European level and does so in line with national needs.

The involvement of local actors is considered to be problematic by the respondent (RO19): the involvement of small cities has been limited in the UAEU process due to a lack of financial and technical resources.
SLOVAKIA

URBANGOVERNANCE
The current Slovakian NUP was approved in 2018\textsuperscript{19}. It has been designed by a specialised working group which was established in 2014 and composed of a diversity of stakeholders whose shared goal was to trigger productive and healthy cities. The legislative framework and fiscal policy related to urban development are provided by ministries at the national level. Notably, the Ministry of Transport and Construction is responsible for the NUP. (LC17)

Vertical cooperation between different levels of government happens in regional and socio-economic planning, e.g. in the design of the development plans, which are prepared through a collaboration between public administration, business and the civic sector. (LC17)

A participatory and horizontal approach is used in the development of urban master plans, and programs of economic and social development as well as district-specific action plans which are designed in Regional Councils, where the variety of actors involved define priorities, projects and solutions. A dual structure composed of a decentralised state administration and autonomous regional and local self-governments authorizes self-governments to decide autonomously on the overall development of their territories and to coordinates local- and regional-level administration. (LC17)

The Ministry of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic created the Platform for the Development of Slovak Towns in 2018. It comprises representatives of urban municipalities, other ministries, academia, civic association, NGOs, association of towns and municipalities, trade unions, employer associations, regional structures, and the private sector. The platform is an expert group supporting the work of the Ministry in solving issues related to the development of Slovak cities. (RO19 & CEMR19)

According to the respondent (CEMR19), the UAEU has helped in supporting communication between cities and the national level. However, s/he refines that the complete absence of Slovak cities in the existing Partnerships makes it hard to judge to what extent the fostered inclusion of cities in policy-making at national level is due to the UAEU.

CHANGE MATRIX

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERCEIVED CHANGES (2016–2019)</th>
<th>NATIONAL URBAN POLICY</th>
<th>COORDINATION STRUCTURES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The NUP was created parallel to the UAEU and has fully included its principles following a participatory approach. (RO19)</td>
<td>The Ministry of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic created the Platform for the Development of Slovak Towns in 2018. It comprises representatives of urban municipalities, other ministries, academia, civic association, NGOs, association of towns and municipalities, trade unions, employer associations, regional structures, and the private sector. The platform is an expert group supporting the work of the Ministry in solving issues related to the development of Slovak cities. (RO19 &amp; CEMR19)</td>
<td>According to the respondent (CEMR19), the UAEU has helped in supporting communication between cities and the national level. However, s/he refines that the complete absence of Slovak cities in the existing Partnerships makes it hard to judge to what extent the fostered inclusion of cities in policy-making at national level is due to the UAEU.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**OBSERVATIONS**

There is a disagreement in opinion about the general role played by the UAEU, which seems to be positive for the RO19 respondent and more ambiguous for the CEMR19 respondent. The latter deplores the absence of Slovak cities involved in the UAEU Partnerships.

In relation to the NUP, the respondent (RO19) highlights the value added by the simultaneous development of the NUP and the UAEU, since the contents of the latter were fully integrated in the former. This integration was probably facilitated by the participatory and horizontal character of the group working on the NUP (LC17).

Furthermore, regarding horizontal coordination structures, both surveys (RO19 & CEMR19) mention the creation of a new development platform with the aim to solve issues related to Slovak cities. Nonetheless, the CEMR19 respondent points out that the relation between this platform and the UAEU is not that strict. In general, there is a tendency of the respondent (CEMR19) to portray Slovak cities as aware and proactive towards urban challenges, independently from the UAEU.

---

19 Even though the publication of the “Ten years after the Leipzig Charter” states that the NUP should have been approved by the end of 2017, the year of approval was 2018.
The respondent (RO19) affirms that there have been substantial changes to urban policy, including the formation of a new NUP, during the past three years in Spain. The new Spanish National Urban Agenda was approved in 2019 and, in several cities and regions, action plans were developed as well.

The respondent (RO19) provides a weblink (www.aue.gob.es) which offers more information on the new NUP and the process followed to establish it.

The Spanish Urban Agenda has to be considered as a strategic and non-normative document. In accordance with the criteria established by the 2030 Agenda, the New Urban Agenda of the United Nations, and the Urban Agenda for the EU, it pursues sustainability in urban development policies. In addition, it is also a working method and a process for all-public and private partners involved in urban development; and seeks an equitable, fair, and sustainable development from its different strands of action.

It has been prepared taking into account the contributions of a variety of private and public key actors for urban development. This long-lasting and broadly organised participative process, establishing several working groups, lasted more than a year. The Spanish Urban Agenda is based on the triangle economic, social and environmental sustainability. (Agenda Urbana Española 2019)

### Change Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Urban Policy</th>
<th>Coordination Structures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image2.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Perceived Changes (2016–2019)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Horizontal</th>
<th>Vertical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The respondent (RO19) provides a weblink (<a href="http://www.aue.gob.es">www.aue.gob.es</a>) which offers more information on the new NUP and the process followed to establish it.</td>
<td>According to the respondent (RO19), the permanent pre-defined horizontal coordination structures are the Council of Ministers and the General Commission of Secretaries of State and Undersecretaries. In addition, some ad-hoc working groups are created for specific issues, like the intergovernmental working group for the 2030 Agenda with different ministries.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The respondent (RO19) mentions that Spain has approved a new NUP and several regions and cities have approved their urban agendas and action plans. At the same time, the s/he mentions that there is a limited involvement of cities (4) in each UAEU Partnership. According to him/her this does not fully capture the voice of European cities.
OBSERVATIONS
The respondent (RO19) mentions that Spain has approved a new NUP and several regions and cities have approved their urban agendas and action plans. At the same time, the s/he mentions that there is a limited involvement of cities (4) in each UAEU Partnership. According to him/her this does not fully capture the voice of European cities.

Thanks to the additional data provided by the respondent (RO19), the relation between the UAEU and the Spanish NUP becomes clearer. The online source describes the horizontal and vertical character of the drafting and implementation process of the NUP, including the involvement of different levels of governmental and private partners. For example, the respondent (RO19) directly points out that the UAEU has promoted a new vertical coordination structure between the European Commission, Member States, cities and other stakeholders.
The UAEU has been described as a promising, innovative, even experimental way of urban policy-making. But has it had national-level impact? This question is at the core of this report. Based on the results of the ten country analyses, this chapter summarises and analyses the main observations.

Results of the Change Matrix

On the basis of the results on the ten Member States described in the previous chapter, the data is presented in three tables below. Each table illustrates the results of the matrix applied to the ten countries in relation to the NUP and the two coordination structures (horizontal and vertical).

The three rows of the table reflect the three different lenses used for the analysis (type of change, motor of change, and (in) formality of change). More specifically the row depicts the number and the name of the countries that identified:

1. The presence of positive, negative or no changes.
2. The motor of change is both the UAEU and the country, only the country, only the UAEU, or there was no change perceived.
3. The change perceived as both formal and informal, only formal, only informal, or there was no change perceived.

### NATIONAL URBAN POLICY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Positive:**
- France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain

**None:**
- Finland

**Negative:**
- Finland

**UAEU and Country:**
- France, Italy, Poland, Slovakia, Spain

**Country:**
- Germany

**UAEU:**
- The Netherlands, Portugal, Romania

**None:**
- Finland

**Formal and Informal:**
- France

**Formal:**
- Slovakia, Spain

**Informal:**
- Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania

**None:**
- Finland
### Vertical Coordination Structures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland, France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UAEU and Country</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>UAEU</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>France</td>
<td></td>
<td>Finand, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formal and Informal</th>
<th>Formal</th>
<th>Informal</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The Netherlands, Poland</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td></td>
<td>Finland, France, Germany, Italy, The Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Horizontal Coordination Structures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy, The Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain</td>
<td>Finland, France, Germany, Romania</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UAEU and Country</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>UAEU</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poland, Portugal, Slovakia</td>
<td></td>
<td>Finland, France, Germany, Romania</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formal and Informal</th>
<th>Formal</th>
<th>Informal</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Portugal, Poland, The Netherlands</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formal and Informal</th>
<th>Formal</th>
<th>Informal</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The Netherlands, Poland</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td></td>
<td>Finland, France, Germany, Italy, The Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overall positive perception of changes

According to the respondents, the UAEU has not led to any change perceived as negative in the three components researched: NUP, horizontal coordination structures, and vertical coordination structures. All components researched show 25 changes perceived as “positive”; in 5 cases there was no change perceived, and there were no negative changes perceived. This denotes that the change was perceived as positive in the vast majority of cases.

Motor of change was mainly at EU level

The figure above shows the collated data regarding the motor of change. It is clearly visible that the UAEU has a large impact in bringing change in the three components researched: NUP, horizontal coordination structure, and vertical coordination structure.

Figure 1 - The perceived Motor of Change

Please note that the sum of the National and UAEU is more than a hundred percent. This is due to the fact that in some cases there were both formal and informal changes perceived by the respondents.

The scale of the change initiated or influenced by the national and the EU level, for the three researched components, is shown in the graph above. As can be seen in the graph above, the UAEU is the main motor of change at 67% while the National level is at 37%. Within the UAEU, vertical coordination structures have experienced the largest quantum of change at 30%, closely trailed by NUP at 27%. Horizontal coordination structure has experienced the least change at the UAEU as the “motor of change”, at 10% of the overall change. The National level has understandably initiated the largest change in NUP, at 20% of the overall change. Vertical coordination structures have experienced the least change within the National level, at only 3% of the overall change.
High score on informality of change

The figure above shows the collated data regarding the (in)formality of change. It is clearly visible that the informal nature of changes is much more pronounced than the formal one in the three researched components: NUP, horizontal coordination structure, and vertical coordination structure.

![Figure 2 - The perceived changes in terms of (In)formality](image)

*Please note that the sum of the formal and informal is more than a hundred percent. This is due to the fact that in some cases there were both formal and informal changes perceived by the respondents.*

The graph above shows that informal changes, at 73% constitute an overwhelming majority over formal changes which are 30%. The informal vertical coordination structure component accounts for roughly a third of all changes in the category of type of (in)formal change, closely followed by informal NUP at 23%. The horizontal coordination structure component in informal change is comparatively lower at 17% of the overall change. In the category of formal changes, horizontal coordination structure is the largest component at 13%, followed by NUP at 10%, while vertical coordination structure is the least again, at 7% of the overall change.

### National Urban Policy (NUP)

While only three countries (Slovakia, Spain and France) formally updated their NUP, quite a few informal changes have been observed in other countries NUPs. These results are further explored below.

The relative lack of formal change observed concerning the NUP is presumably linked to the character of NUP itself. Compared to coordination structures, NUPs are relatively rigid structures that are not changed overnight. In the case of Poland, for instance, the involvement in the UAEU led to the idea of updating its NUP. However, this idea has not (yet) been translated into a formal update, since Poland’s NUP had already been revised in 2015 and is usually reviewed every five years.

An interesting finding is that the UAEU seems to fulfil the function of raising awareness on the importance of urban policy-making, particularly in the case of the Netherlands. A respondent (RO19) notes that the termination of the previous Dutch Urban Policy had led to a decreased interest in urban policy-making, but that the UAEU helped raise this interest at the national level again. Another respondent (RO19) calls the UAEU “a catalyst for meaningful exchanges between Dutch cities, the central government and the EU”. It is claimed that the UAEU has offered Dutch cities (as well as the national government) a platform to reinforce the influence of urban areas on the EU policy agenda.
Spain is another Member State that offered intriguing insights. This is because the country, differently from the previous two mentioned, released its NUP in 2018, two years after the establishment of the UAEU. This has allowed Spain to integrate the learnings from the UAEU in its (development process of the) new NUP to a high extent.

These three examples exemplify the different roles played by the UAEU in relation to the NUP. The UAEU has worked as a facilitator in recognizing the potential need of a formal change in the case of Poland, and as a catalyst for awareness in the case of the Netherlands. The Spanish case, on the other hand, helps in identifying possible relationships between the UAEU and the Member State as motors of change. The NUP of Spain is influenced by the UAEU, while at the same time, the national level has played an essential role in its development.

### New coordination structures and knowledge exchange

The strong focus of the UAEU on the exchange of knowledge obliges Member States to develop and implement forms of horizontal and vertical multi-level cooperation. Accordingly, new structures have been created in several Member States to encourage and promote a more organized way of disseminating urban knowledge and the learnings gained. In the two surveys it is observed that Member States have developed and implemented a variety of forms of multi-level coordination, both horizontal and vertical, and both formal (e.g., municipalities) and (especially) informal.

To better illustrate this type of impact, it is interesting to look at the countries where the national government acknowledges the relevance of the UAEU and shows its support by establishing new informal coordination structures. In Finland and Portugal for instance, national support groups came into existence. These national support groups assisted Finnish partners involved in UAEU Partnerships and, in the case of Portugal, helped to monitor the outcomes of the Partnerships and disseminate the lessons learnt. In the Netherlands, a bi-monthly Taskforce has been created to coordinate urban policies and address new inputs in a systematic way. In the case of Italy, a national operational exchange was established and linked to a support programme for Italian cities related to the UAEU.

Poland should be mentioned as an interesting case regarding new coordination structures. In order to support knowledge exchange between national and other governmental levels, the Partnership Initiative of Cities (PIC) came into existence. Furthermore, in April 2019 the first multi-level governance conference dedicated to urban policy, the National Urban Forum, took place. This is recognized as the first step towards the establishment of a more permanent structure supporting urban knowledge exchange among various stakeholders.

These examples show how operating with a more flexible and open approach towards official formal structures – still playing a pivotal role in decision-making processes – can help organizations foster innovation in the field of (urban) policy.

### Limited involvement of cities?

Both surveys, to a certain extent, reflect a trend of empowerment of cities, but this trend is not unambiguous and both positive and negative comments have been noted.

The positive comments: for example, the Italian respondent (RO19) identifies the role of the UAEU Partnerships in helping cities address their problems and that the thematic nature of the Partnerships helps in this regard. This is demonstrated by the Action to improve the resilience of urban areas developed by the Partnerships of Sustainable Use of Land and Nature-Based Solutions and Climate Adaptation. Likewise, the voice of cities seems to be heard at the national level. For example, the Portuguese respondent (CEMR19) mentions that local authorities in Portugal are active in the discussions in the Partnerships. These discussions reach the national government, which keeps track of the whole process.

More negatively, both surveys indicate a noticeable line of thought regarding the (still) limited involvement of cities. The respondents from France and Romania stress the challenge of a lack of ample resources faced by small and medium-sized cities. According to them, this hinders their full participation in the UAEU process. The scale of participation of cities is another problem, mentioned by the respondents from Spain and Slovakia. According to the Spanish respondent, the presence of only three to five cities in each Partnership presents a hurdle in representing the interests of all European cities. Furthermore, the Slovakian respondent holds that there are no Slovakian cities involved in any of the Partnerships of the UAEU. A Finnish respondent addresses another issue relating to the involvement of cities: the goal of increasing the involvement of cities is good, but that the real influence of their involvement and the subsequent effect on EU policies is unclear.

---

1 For further reading on the topic of innovation and experimentation, the reader is invited to refer to Potjer, S., Hajer, M., (2017) Learning with cities, learning for cities. The golden opportunity of the Urban Agenda for the EU, Urban Futures Studio, Utrecht.

2 Additionally, Appendix 2 can be consulted, in which the functioning of the UAEU in thirty Member States is discussed. Involvement of cities and (political) commitment are some of the difficulties addressed.
stresses that it might be too early to assess the influence that cities have been able to exert, since the implementation of the Partnerships’ Actions are still in their early stages.

Informality and policy innovation

Informality plays a key role in the UAEU. Informal changes account for almost three quarters of all perceived changes. In this sense, it is necessary to reflect upon the relation between the UAEU and informality.

The UAEU is an informal and non-binding instrument, due to the lack of competency of the European Union in the field of urban matters. In June 2019, the Bucharest Declaration defined steps to work in the direction of a common framework for urban development in the European Union. At the same time it highlighted the importance of informality, proportionality and subsidiarity of the process within and between Member States. This balancing act between the wish to obtain a degree of convergence in European urban policy-making on the one hand, and limitations of informality on the other hand, is felt clearly in the Partnerships and not always with satisfaction.

Whether informality is considered as a negative or a positive element, informality is indisputably at the core of the UAEU and its Partnerships. This study illustrates several examples of informal structures. One of the main purposes of the UAEU is to achieve innovation in urban policies and in urban policy-making by utilising new forms of cooperation and knowledge sharing.

In the results of this research, a vast majority of informal changes have been noticed in all three components investigated: NUP, horizontal coordination structures, and vertical coordination structures. Having demonstrated that informality plays a key role in a policy process like the UAEU, future studies could address the possible relation between informality and policy innovation.

3 Bucharest Declaration, agreed by the Informal Meeting of EU Ministers Responsible for Urban Matters, June 2019, page 7
4 Please refer to Appendix 2 of this study for further reading
5 Refer especially to the pages 6, 8, 16, iii and iv of the Urban Agenda for the EU. Netherlands Presidency of the Council of the European Union (2016), Urban Agenda for the EU; ‘Pact of Amsterdam’, agreed at the Informal Meeting of EU Ministers Responsible for Urban Matters on 30 May 2016 in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, Netherlands Presidency of the Council of the European Union, Amsterdam/The Hague
6 “The Urban Agenda for the EU is an innovative urban policy initiative, which has put multi-level governance into action. It has enabled cities, Member States, the European Commission and other key stakeholders to come together to jointly tackle pressing urban matters and deliver concrete outputs for the benefit of EU citizens.” (European Commission, 2019, Urban agenda for the EU- Multi-level governance in action, page 6)
The research aims to find an answer to the following question: Has the Urban Agenda for the EU led to changes in horizontal and vertical coordination structures in urban governance, and/or has it resulted in new (national) urban policies in EU Member States?

The answer is moderately positive. From all the information collected during the course of this study, it has been deduced that there have been noticeable changes perceived in horizontal and vertical coordination structures in the ten Member States researched in this study since the inception of the Urban Agenda for the EU (UAEU). A majority of the perceived changes have been led or influenced by the UAEU. While there have been changes in the NUP of some Member States in line with the spirit of the UAEU, it cannot be concluded that the UAEU caused changes or resulted in a new NUP of all ten Member States.

No perceived negative changes
One of our findings is that no negative change(s) was/were perceived. A perceived negative change would imply a degrading outcome affecting either of the three components researched in this study: NUP, vertical and horizontal coordination structures.

Mostly positive changes perceived
All the changes perceived were either positive (defined as beneficial according to the respondent in question) or neutral. An overwhelmingly vast majority of the changes were seen as positive.

Largely UAEU as the motor of change
Overall, the UAEU has been the motor of change in the three components (NUP, vertical coordination structures and horizontal coordination structures) much more than the national level. Except when it concerns the change at the horizontal level, where the change was more due to the national level rather than the UAEU.

Predominantly informal nature of change
As can be observed from the previous chapter, the majority of change which occurs is informal in nature. The concept of informality was previously defined in the chapter “Research and Methodology”. The question is to what extent informal structures would need to be supported by more formal structures to make them more robust.

Different roles of the UAEU in relation to NUP
While analysing and interpreting the results related to the NUP, three main points captured our attention. These were related to the different roles that the UAEU played as a motor of change. The UAEU acted as a facilitator in acknowledging the need of a formal change. It also acted as a catalyst for awareness. Moreover, possible relationships between the UAEU and the Member State were identified in the case that they were both pointed out as motors of change.

New coordination structures have come up
The analysis of the other two other subjects, namely horizontal and vertical coordination structures, provided relevant insights as well. The data showed the establishment of several new horizontal and vertical structures, designed by the Member States. These new structures in general were created to support a more organized dissemination of urban knowledge, among other purposes. The results of our research allowed us to put forward our own interpretation on these new coordination structures: operating with flexibility and openness towards the official formal structures could help in fostering (urban) policy innovation.

Involvement of cities: promising but problematic
During the course of this study a modest trend of empowerment of cities was observed. At the same time, a number of respondents perceived problems and difficulties concerning the involvement of cities in the Urban Agenda for the EU. The following points of view were addressed:

- The Urban Agenda for the EU Partnerships help cities address their problems. The voice of cities seems to be heard at the national level;
- The involvement of cities in the Urban Agenda for the EU Partnerships is (still) limited and not as strong as desired by the respondents concerned;
- Small and medium-sized cities face a lack of ample resources (time, staff, funding) to fully participate in the Partnerships of the Urban Agenda for the EU;

Another point that was raised in the research material, is that the real influence wielded by the participating cities to cause changes in EU policies due to their involvement in the UAEU, is not clear yet.
Informality and policy innovation
This study showed the key role which informality played in respect to the UAEU. A subtle balance act exists in the European Union: the wish to achieve convergence in European urban policy making on the one hand, and limitations of subsidiarity, proportionality and informality on the other hand, is clearly felt when the UAEU is concerned.

One of the main purposes of the UAEU is to achieve innovation in urban policies and in urban policy making. Informality can function as a means to achieve innovation. Although some examples of these informal processes have been described in this study, the exact relation between informality and policy innovation is still to be discovered in the 21st century. The UAEU looks like a fertile playground for urban researchers and city practitioners to do so.
Bibliography

- Deutscher Städtetag (2016), An urban agenda for the European Union; Views and Perspectives of the Association of German Cities, Association of German Cities, Berlin/Cologne
- European Commission, Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (2019), Urban agenda for the EU; Multi-level governance in action, European Commission, Brussels
- European Commission, Joint Research Centre (2019), The future of cities; opportunities, challenges and the way forward, Publication office, Luxembourg
- German Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Development (2012), National Urban Development Policy; A joint initiative by the federal, state and local governments, Urban Development Policy Division, Berlin
- Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration of Romania (2019), Main conclusions of the survey regarding the Urban Agenda for the EU; input paper to the DGUM, Bucharest
- Ministerio de Fomento de España (2018), Agenda Urbana Española, Dirección General de Arquitectura, Vivienda y Suelo, Madrid
- Ministerio de Fomento de España (2018), Proceso de Participación de la Agenda Urbana Española, Dirección General de Arquitectura, Vivienda y Suelo, Madrid
APPENDIX 1: RESPONSES TO THE TWO SURVEYS

As explained in Chapter 1, two surveys are used in this study. Both surveys target at the perception of the functioning of the Urban Agenda for the EU. They address experts from national ministries in order to assess their perspectives and observations on the UAEU:

1. The survey of the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union (1-1-2019 until 30-6-2019). This is a questionnaire developed and executed by the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration of Romania, in collaboration with the European Urban Knowledge Network (EUKN EGTC). It was sent to thirty members of the Urban Development Group (UDG). Out of those thirty, ten UDG members are the national ministries responsible for urban matters in the ten sample countries selected by the commissioner of this investigation. Thus, the data of this selection of ten EU Member States are analysed in this study: Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Spain. Nevertheless, in Appendix 2 of this study, which focuses on other- i.e. not limited to change- elements of the functioning of the UAEU, the point of view of the respondents representing the other Member States is also included.

2. The survey developed and executed by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), also in collaboration with EUKN EGTC. This questionnaire was sent to the national organisations of the ten selected EU Member States mentioned above.

Response to the two surveys
The first survey was filled-in during the period February- May 2019. It was directed to EU Member States and EEA countries, addressing it to the ministries dealing with urban affairs. The survey was brought to the attention of a total of 30 EU Member States and/or EEA States which are members of the so-called UDG (Urban Development Group), and two European Institutions: the European Investment Bank and the Committee of the Regions. The overall analysis of these 30 reflections on the functioning of the Urban Agenda for the EU can be read in Appendix 2 to this study. Subject to the study itself were the ten countries mentioned above.

The second survey was filled-in during the period March- April 2019, when CEMR distributed the survey to ten of its national member organisations.

The response and non-response to the surveys is visualised in the following two maps:

Survey 1: When it concerns the survey of the Romanian EU Presidency and EUKN it can be observed that all ten countries have filled in the questionnaire. So, the sample (n) of the Member States to be investigated were all to be used in the study. A response percentage of 100% was reached.
Survey 2: Regarding the survey of the CEMR and EUKN, the questionnaire was distributed to the national city associations of the ten selected Member States of the EU. As shown in the map, national associations from six countries filled in the survey. Therefore, the response percentage is 60%.

1. Ireland (IE) has sent its responses as well, but these came in too late to be still considered in the main results. A special note on Ireland, offering an overview of its answers, is included at the end of this Appendix. The following graphs and statistics do not include the answers of Ireland.
APPENDIX 2: ROMANIAN SURVEY

Results of survey on general experience with the Urban Agenda for the EU (RO19)

In the main part of this research ten selected countries were studied and defined what changes they have experienced in their NUP and formal and informal governance structures. In this section, an overview will be given of the general experiences with the Urban Agenda for the EU (UAEU).

This overview is based on the results of the survey that the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, represented by the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration, organised in cooperation with the European Urban Knowledge Network (EUKN) in the period February – May 2019.

By the end of February 2019 this survey was brought to the attention of the respective Ministries of 30 Member States and EEA States (Urban Development Group members) and two European Institutions (European Investment Bank and the Committee of the Regions). The questionnaire was addressed to respondents, regardless of their involvement and participation in the current UAEU Partnerships; they were asked to answer building on their experience.

A total of 30 questionnaires were submitted by the respondents:

- 25 countries submitted their responses: Austria (AT), Belgium (BE), Bulgaria (BG), Croatia (HR), the Czech Republic (CZ), Estonia (EE), Finland (FI), France (FR), Germany (DE), Greece (GR), Italy (IT), Latvia (LV), Lithuania (LT), Luxembourg (LU), Malta (MT), Netherlands (NL), Norway (NO), Poland (PL), Portugal (PT), Romania (RO), Slovak Republic (SK), Slovenia (SI), Spain (ES), Sweden (SE) and Switzerland (CH). Of these countries Greece and Finland offered more than 1 response (more respondents per country).
- 2 European institutions submitted their responses: Committee of Regions and European Investment Bank.

In the map below we have made an overview of the 30 countries that were approached, indicating their response and non-response in colour:

![Figure 3 - The response of countries that were asked to answer the survey of the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union (first half of 2019) and the European Urban Knowledge Network](source: Romanian Ministry of Public Administration and Regional Development, 2019 (online survey))

General assessment of the Urban Agenda for the EU

In general, there is an overall tendency towards a positive assessment of the UAEU. From this point of view, a significant share of respondents from Member States that submitted answers consider that the UAEU contributed to a better understanding of urban issues at the national level (68%).
At the same time, the UAEU and its subsequent actions are perceived as coherent with NUP initiatives. From this perspective, 69% of respondents considers that the UAEU is largely coherent with NUP initiatives out of which almost 50% of respondents think that the two are much the same.

Concerning the performance of the UAEU in terms of empowerment of urban authorities in EU policy-making, 45% consider it to be at least “good”. The most outstanding contributions of the UAEU mentioned by experts from Member States can be grouped in two main categories: “contribution to promote multi-level governance” and “give voice to cities to make known their problems and share pathways for solutions”.

---

**Figure 4** - Has the UAEU process contributed to a better understanding of urban issues at the national level in your country?

Source: Romanian Ministry of Public Administration and Regional Development, 2019 (online survey)

**Figure 5** - Are the proposed UAEU actions coherent with national policy initiatives in your country?

Source: Romanian Ministry of Public Administration and Regional Development, 2019 (online survey)

**Figure 6** - On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means “not at all”, and 5 “to a great extent”, to what extent is the UAEU coherent with NUP initiatives

Source: Romanian Ministry of Public Administration and Regional Development, 2019 (online survey)

**Figure 7** - Has the Urban Agenda for the EU process led to any changes in existing or creation of new formalised or informal structures such as committees, working groups, regular chains of information, multi-level partnerships, etc. in your country at national level?
Consequently, a large share of respondents emphasizes the role of the UAEU in creating new opportunities for cities to connect with European Institutions and Member States. As can be ascertained from the statements below:

“Cities have not had opportunities before to directly discuss policy proposals with EU institutions and other Member States”

“Gives opportunities for actors at different levels to interact more directly with EU-institutions”

In addition, it should be also mentioned that a notable share of answers emphasises the fact that it is “too early to discuss the performance of UAEU” and other respondents raise the issue of the functioning of the UAEU. Some of these respondents refer to unequal opportunities for small- and medium-sized cities, as well as for cities in lagging regions to participate:

- “At the moment, it is difficult to assess what the real impact of city involvement in the UAEU is, for instance in the areas of better regulation and better funding. Has the European Commission taken recommendations from cities on board?”
- “Cities who are involved as partners in the UAEU are mostly large cities. That is understandable as the involvement requires a certain amount of resources and capacity (not only funding for travelling, but also staff). However, large cities are also represented by EUROCITIES. It seems that their voice is more easily heard than that of small and medium-sized cities.”

Moreover, respondents also call attention to the insufficient planning of Actions Plans outcomes:

- “Cities have been involved in the partnerships and in designing the action plans, bringing their experiences and their capacities. However, the actual outcome and impact of these actions are still too unknown for the score to be the highest possible”.

Most respondents (45%) indicate that the UAEU has generated added value in addition to national initiatives. However, in terms of matching results and impacts with incurred costs at national level, the results are quite the opposite. 34% of received answers give credit for appropriate match, while 24% of respondents do not see a match, the latter being largely determined by the failure to deliver the expected results.
impacts of the UAEU commensurate with the costs incurred at the national level? Source: Romanian Ministry of Public Administration and Regional Development, 2019 (online survey)

At the level of Member States, the UAEU is perceived at great extent in terms of fostered cooperation and working methods across different levels of governance, by a large category of respondents (73%). The participation and commitment of the Member States is overall considered as effective by only 21% of the respondents, thus indicating that this component should be furthered improved.

Figure 10 - On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means ‘not at all’, and 5 ‘to a great extent’, to what extent has the UAEU fostered cooperation and working methods across different levels of governance? Source: Romanian Ministry of Public Administration and Regional Development, 2019 (online survey)

Figure 11 - On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means ‘not at all’, and 5 ‘to a great extent’, to what extent have the participation, contribution and mobilisation of Member States in the UAEU been effective? Source: Romanian Ministry of Public Administration and Regional Development, 2019 (online survey)

Benefits, advantages and achievements of implementing the Urban Agenda for the EU

Respondents' views on the main national benefits of being involved in the UAEU range from systematic and coherent multi-level European dialogue, to the recognition of the full potential and contribution of urban areas of all sizes to a balanced territorial development. In addition, the wealth of knowledge and expertise is focused upon by many respondents.

The answers can be grouped in nine categories, as follows:

- Systematic and coherent multi-level European dialogue on urban matters
- Opportunity to discuss and influence European principles and instruments
- Better use of knowledge and expertise
- Integrated framework for national urban policies joining up sectoral perspectives
- Co-design of priorities and solutions based on improved knowledge
- Opportunity to call attention to new priorities/trends
- Direct participatory approach to deal with urban matters
- Tailor-made tools for specific/unique urban matters
- Recognition of the full potential and contribution of urban areas of all sizes.

Systematic and coherent multi-level European dialogue on urban matters - There is a significant sense of achievement related to the openness towards European level dialogue, bringing cities around the same table with other levels of government, thus inspiring new methods of co-designing principles and actions that could have a notable impact on urban development.

A majority of respondents indicate that informal multi-level cooperation has vastly increased thanks to the UAEU process, and opened new opportunities of being involved in the discussions of wider challenges experienced by urban areas across the EU.

- “The multi-level procedure through which cities, regional and national authorities enter directly in contact with each other and with European institutions. This strengthens mutual understanding and collaboration across Europe. The collaboration facilitates mutual understanding and challenges the traditional institutional frameworks. It also generates new ideas.”

Opportunity to discuss and influence European principles and instruments - Respondents widely point out that the UAEU gave voice to cities in discussing urban challenges, thus cities being recognised as a key partner in working with other levels of
government towards the aim for better regulation, funding and knowledge sharing.

- “Having a dialogue and international cooperation with various stakeholders on specific theme. Involvement of cities in the international exchange of views. Having the opportunity and impact on preparing recommendations at EU level regarding better regulation and financing, hoping it will help in the future programming period regarding the instruments and initiatives for cities.”

**Better use of knowledge and expertise** - The UAEU ensured that cities, policy-makers and urban practitioners came together to build common ground for sharing practical knowledge, expertise and hands-on best practices that were also made more visible.

- “Peer-learning, exchange of experiences and innovation.”
- “Updated information on urban policy at European level.”

**Integrated framework for national urban policies joining up sectoral perspectives** - Attention is drawn to the recommendations resulted from the activity of the UAEU partnerships that can help national governments to produce a more tailored and cross-sectoral urban policy to address the different needs of cities.

- “Lessons learned from the urban agenda can be utilised in formulating national/regional urban agenda.”
- “Promoting integrated territorial and urban planning.”

Another point touched in the survey are the exemplary actions within the UAEU, which could be used in the development of urban policies in the countries investigated-

![Figure 12 - Are you aware of the exemplary actions within the UAEU that can be used in the development of urban policies in your country?](Source: Romanian Ministry of Public Administration and Regional Development, 2019 (online survey)](image)

More than 60 percent of the representatives of the countries are aware of the actions within the Urban Agenda of the EU which can be used for developing urban policies in their countries. The inherent change in the structure of governance promoted by the UAEU, namely the horizontal and vertical coordination mechanisms, are the most quoted factor which could influence the urban policies of the respondents’ countries according to the respondents. The participation of the various levels of government and other allied organizations from all of over the EU in the partnerships of the UAEU has been an exercise which showcased the new possible forms of inclusive and horizontal and vertical methods of governance. This is mentioned by the respondents to be an influencing factor to (future) urban policies.

Other aspects mentioned by the respondents, are in line with this observation. They mention the inclusivity of the process, cross-sectoral linkages, and the participatory approach. Interesting examples of awareness raising caused by knowledge of good examples in other EU Member States also occur: involvement in the partnerships made a respondent realise that the cities in the respondent’s country were not as ambitious as other smaller cities in the EU, and could therefore do more.
Shortcomings of the Urban Agenda for the EU as perceived by the respondents

There is a common understanding among respondents of the shortcomings of the UAEU, that can be outlined in terms of:

- **Methodological weakness**
- **Lack of political will**
- **Lack of capacity to participate (time and money)**
- **Little commitment of some partners**
- **Lack of awareness about the UAEU**
- **Limited (and basically informal) impact of the Partnerships**
- **Unclear implementation of the UAEU**

### Methodological weaknesses

The lack of a comprehensive methodological structure is often being recognized as a feature leading to inefficiency in the Partnerships. Notably, this, according to some reactions, has led to a less clear roadmap for implementation, an uncertain follow-up, inefficient links to the sectoral field, and inefficient Partnerships grouping. In the attempt to justify the methodological fragility, a respondent focused on the newness and innovative character of the UAEU.

Some of the comments were:

- “Low budget/bad distribution of financial resources including implementation and dissemination”
- “Composition of partnerships and action plans are not representative, therefore actions not always transferable.”
- “There are only 3 or 5 cities involved in each partnership, and they do not represent all European cities”
- “Unclear processes, roles of actors, stakeholders, and goals.”
- “UAEU already justifies its existence. However, it is a new initiative and working method that needs constant evolution.”

### Lack of political will

A lack of political will in the UAEU has also been highlighted by the respondents. For the process to succeed, it is important that the right EU policymakers are involved in order to ensure adequate and structured support in the implementation of the action plans. Securing the right political agreements is recognized as a difficult task, but it is also a crucial feature in unlocking the potential of the UAEU and to ensure its continuation, according to the respondents.

Some of the comments were:

- “Modest commitment from the Member States and stakeholders to participate in the process and implement actions”
- “Lack of political will and awareness at European and national levels”
- “Securing a political agreement on supporting the continuation of the UAEU, as well as for the implementation of actions proposed by the partnerships is a difficult task.”
- “The UAEU lacks strong political support and involvement, financial backing and regulatory integration.”

This is an issue that actually appeared earlier in the “One Year Pact of Amsterdam” report (EUKN, September 2017, p. 30), where it was stated that “the active involvement of key EU institutions helps to embed the process institutionally and to ensure that UAEU gains broader recognition”. In the report, this was also linked to the fact that “the political support of EU institutions will then also be crucial to ensure the implementation of the Partnerships’ action and recommendations”.

### Lack of capacity to participate

Appendix 2: Romanian Survey
Many respondents identified that the shortage of primary resources, such as funds and time, hampered achieving the full potential of the UAEU. A need for more financial support was pointed out, especially for the secretariat of the Partnerships of the UAEU, the implementation of pilot projects and the achievement of more tangible results. Moreover, coordination and dialogue, which play a pivotal role in the process, were identified as extremely resource-consuming, especially in terms of time.

• “Assure funding for secretariat support as soon as practicable”
• “Lack of funding, for the ongoing services of the Secretariat but also for pilot projects”
• “More dedicated funding, for the secretariat but also for pilot projects based on actions.”
• “Limitation of financial resources aimed at supporting partnerships bears the risk of non-fulfilment of all the tasks of the partnerships.”
• “Coordination and dialogue is resource-consuming (especially time)!”

To an extent this confirms the observations of the report “One Year Pact of Amsterdam” (EUKN, September 2017, p. 32) where mentioned in its recommendations that “inadequate resources appear to be one of the main obstacles for Partnerships to achieve optimum results”. Also, it is observed in the survey that a drawback of the process, is the presence of unequal opportunities between large and small cities due to a difference in capacities. Due to their access to larger resources, generally larger and wealthier cities get a greater chance of full involvement in the Partnerships.

• “To participate to the thematic partnerships has a cost that not all the cities can afford (especially the small ones).”
• “Some smaller and medium sized cities not able to meet the challenges.”

**Little commitment of Partners**
The survey seems to indicate that some of the Partners are not truly committed to the UAEU, notably when it comes to implement relevant actions into different national urban policies, as well as to uptake regulative proposals at European level. According to some of the respondents, this is due to the voluntary and non-binding character of the UAEU. This non-binding character results in rather informal forms of cooperation and in an unsteady engagement in Partnerships. Furthermore, the respondents recommend a greater involvement of the relevant Directorates-General of the European Commission and their engagement with cities. Some of the respondents stated the following

• “Maintaining a long-term motivation/participation of all the participants/action leaders”
• “Being rather informal cooperation and non-binding often results in not paying too much attention to the work done or engagement provided.”
• “UAEU being a voluntary agenda thus hard to encourage and motivate partners to continuously engage in partnerships”
• “Increased cooperation and engagement among the relevant DG’s of the Commission, and stronger and more open interaction between all these DG’s and other partners (cities and Member States) of the UAEU.”

**Lack of awareness about the UAEU**
The participants in the survey also identified the issue of insufficient promotion of the UAEU. Therefore, familiarity with the Agenda is lacking amongst stakeholders: the outer circle does not know much about the UAEU of even does not know that it exists. This deficiency of information in the public sphere about the UAEU, hinders the development and participation opportunities for stakeholders. The lack of involvement of a wider group of urban bodies and organizations is a direct effect of this.

In the words of the respondents:

• “Relatively poorly promotion of the results of partnerships among the general public and non-experts.”
• “Invest in communication to other audiences outside the community of urban practitioners”
• “the website (Futurium) could be further developed, more user friendly and attractive”
• “...More communication about the results and current activities of UA Partnerships. It is important that more and more people get to know about UA, not only those who are directly involved in UA process.”

**Limited (and basically informal) impact of the Partnerships**
Sometimes the UAEU is still perceived as a mere networking exercise that does not produce longstanding and formal impacts. This was also linked, by a certain number of respondents, to the unclear or uncertain alignment with other European urban initiatives and programmes. The informal and non-binding nature of the UAEU, discussed here above as well, has limited effect on the envisaged change in the urban development of EU member states according to some respondents:

• “The Urban Agenda offers too much byway of potential to improve the future functioning of our cities to be restricted to a mere networking exercise and must instead be recognised as a binding political commitment on the development and
implementation of legislation and European and national funding programmes.”

- “Informal EU-cooperation has some inherent limits”
- Recommendation: “Alignment of the partnership themes to national/regional priorities and strengthen the overall governance and ownership of the Urban Agenda.”

Another respondent gives the following brief but clear recommendation: “Formalise it; no voluntariness”.

The topic of needed coordination and alignment was also addressed in the “One Year Pact of Amsterdam” report (EUKN, September 2017, p. 31), where it is mentioned that “the alignment of the relevant EU programmes and initiatives to the UAEU can eventually make the work on urban issues at European level more coordinated”, but facing the answers of the respondents, there is still quite a way to go when it concerns the promotion of coordination in general and the reinforcement of the UAEU’s impact on policies specifically.

Unclear implementation of the Urban Agenda for the EU
A number of respondents have expressed their dissatisfaction regarding the implementation of the action plans formulated under the UAEU. The action plans and all the work accomplished will not be of much use until they are actually implemented. However, since the UAEU is a non-binding agreement, either the implementation of the action plans is not explicitly specified or the implementation does not exist (yet). Some comments of the respondents were:

- “Implementation of action plans somewhat unclear”
- “Bridge to implementation is not fully built and good results are in risk of not being utilized”
- “A missing longer-term perspective to exploit the full potential of partnerships and the implementation of the action plans.”
- “A clear implementation mechanism should be put in place...”

Recommendations for improvement of the functioning of the Urban Agenda for the EU
The recommendations provided by respondents in view of functioning, visibility and commitment should be interpreted in view of the shortcomings and drawbacks discussed in the section above. The recommendations brought forward by the respondents can be broadly categorised into six sections, which are mentioned below:

- Methodological opportunities (i.e. partnership structure, funding, secretariat)
- Clearer distinction between European, Member State, city levels in terms of leadership and ownership of the UAEU
- A better link between the European Commission and the UAEU - top-down initiative of EC (i.e. regulatory field)
- Improved outreach (e.g. through associative structures of cities)
- Better alignment to other initiatives (e.g. REFIT), programmes and improve cooperation on cross-cutting issues
- Plan realistic and concrete outcomes of UAEU actions

Taking note that most answers pointed out methodological weakness in the overall functioning of the UAEU, respondents would welcome much simpler workflows to avoid administrative burden, better funding for implementation and for secretariat support, as well as flexibility in organising the activity of Partnerships:

- “Be open to reorganise a partnership if progress is slow / find a way to better make coordinators and participants accountable whilst respecting voluntary nature of the partnerships.”
- “More dedicated funding, for the secretariat but also for pilot projects based on actions.”
- “More capacity to guide and support the partnerships.”

A significant share of respondents emphasises the need for a clearer distinction between European, Member State, city levels in terms of leadership and ownership of the UAEU. Better coordination between all these levels is called upon by better shaping responsibilities.

- “The role of the member states: how do we find a well-suited role, benefits and motivations?”
- “The UAEU needs to involve politicians, policy makers and opinion leaders to further its cause.”

Recommendations for improving the visibility of the UAEU include designing communication plan and tools (e.g. improved Futurium website, events, webinars), ensuring wider access to a wealth of knowledge (e.g. national contact points), increasing cooperation with associations that promote city networking and knowledge sharing (including national associations).

- “Once the Action Plans are finalised, a series of dissemination campaigns with appropriate feedback mechanisms should be organised via national Ministries and/or other multipliers including Brussels-based city/regional offices.”
- “Develop an outreach and capitalisation strategy (similar as URBACT and ESPON) that goes beyond simple publicity and
Recommendations for improving the commitment emerge from acknowledging that the success of the UAEU depends on the willingness of cities, Member States and the European Commission to put it into action and to ensure concrete results on the ground.

Most respondents draw attention to the need to better explain at national level the importance of the UAEU and its opportunities in order to raise political willingness and awareness. Besides focusing on the national level, it is widely acknowledged that the support (i.e. financial, the uptake of recommendations) from the European Commission is pivotal in upholding the interest of the partners in the UAEU. Possibilities to better explore links with NUP making are another way to increase this part of commitment.

• “As a follow-up of a concrete and thorough evaluation process, the cities/MS/EC can be better informed about the whole agenda and its opportunities.”
• “Member states would be more committed after tangible results (recommendations taken aboard by the Commission, action plans work, etc.).”
• “Member States are motivated and committed, but we find that the voice of the Partnerships is not taken into account by the Commission.”
• “Foster linkages and reports of national urban policies and feed them into the action planning.”

Special note on Ireland

General experience with the Urban Agenda for the EU

In general, the answers of the Irish respondent can be considered as positive up to very positive about the functioning of the Urban Agenda for the EU and its spin-off. To the question if the Urban Agenda for the EU process has contributed to a better understanding of urban issues at the national level in Ireland, the answer is positive.

In the section below some concrete benefits are indicated. Moreover, the respondent perceived that the Urban Agenda for the EU and the process around it influenced the revision of urban (development) policy in Ireland, expressed in Project Ireland 2040. Project Ireland 2040 deals with the development of on-going actions that promote urban development in terms of funding instruments, policies and pilot studies.

According to the respondent, the Urban Agenda for the EU is – from the perspective of a Member State and its municipalities perceived as a positive mechanism to promoting cooperation and working methods across different levels of governance and sectoral disciplines. At the same time, when asked to rate the performance of the Urban Agenda for the EU in terms of empowerment of urban authorities in EU policy-making on a scale from 1 to 5, the respondent marks a 3.

Benefits, advantages and achievements of implementing the Urban Agenda for the EU

When asked for the benefits of the Urban Agenda for the EU on national level, in this case Ireland, the answers of the respondent can be judged as very positive. Three benefits were mentioned, which we can summarise as follows:

• The development of further integrating territorial cohesion objectives with that of the EU Urban Agenda would support the further co-joining in areas such as climate change and adaptation at City/Regional level;
• Showcasing: the identification of thematic case studies showcases qualitative spatial policies across the EU. This can function as part of an evidence-based approach to territorial cohesion and urban development;
• Because of the UAEU specific Regions and Cities have opportunities to directly discuss policy proposals with EU institutions and other Member States. This includes the provision for an integrated approach for national urban policies combining sectoral perspectives.

Shortcomings of the Urban Agenda for the EU perceived

Just like the other respondents, the respondent of Ireland was also asked to identify the most significant barriers that prevent the Urban Agenda for the EU from realising its full potential. Three obstacles came up in the answers of the respondent, which can be paraphrased here:

• Unclarity about the follow-up: a follow up is required offering a feedback mechanism and implementation measures regarding various programmes and action plans;
• The uncertain future of the/a secretariat for the Urban Agenda for the EU. According to the respondent there is a need for a dedicated secretariat to support on-going partnerships and future partnerships;
• Inefficient links to some sectoral fields that have more investment and time to spend on better strategic implementation roadmaps.
Recommendations for improvement of the functioning of the Urban Agenda for the EU

When it concerns the recommendations on the functioning of the Urban Agenda for the EU – including visibility of the policy instrument – to be identified by the Irish respondent, many were offered. Seven of these are resumed here:

• Meet the need of having a dedicated Urban Agenda for the EU secretariat to support on-going and future partnerships;
• Offer more possibilities for peer-learning and formal exchange of experiences and innovation at programme level;
• Develop more opportunities for larger and growing cities to get involved in the Partnerships;
• Organise a series of dissemination campaigns with appropriate feedback mechanisms via national Ministries and other multipliers, including cities and regional offices;
• Develop a set of common measurable indicators that could be co-shared at national and regional level on the UAEU;
• Promote the concept that the Urban Agenda for the EU could become an on-going information point on EU regulations, funds and knowledge on all EU initiatives;
• Improve the link between the European Commission and the Urban Agenda for the EU.

Appendix 2: Romanian Survey
APPENDIX 3: RESTRAINTS AND DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED

Dynamism of the UAEU and lack of “baseline”
The UAEU, along with its Partnerships and following policy-making processes, started in 2016. Given the dynamism and recent character of this initiative, this study did not aim at a full and conclusive assessment of its impact. It does provide observations and tentative conclusions mainly based on survey data. When investigating change, it is desirable to establish the status quo of the subject before and after any given intervention. A baseline situation thus helps assess the quality and direction of an effect, impact, or change. Due to the dynamic nature of the UAEU policy process and the corresponding lack of data, no strict baseline is applied within the scope of this report. However, two major overview publications on urban governance in Europe around the year 2016 (LC17 & OECD17) are used to add relevant country-specific information, complement the survey data, and help in identifying potential change.

Data collection
Using a survey as a research instrument implies certain challenges and shortcomings, the most pertinent being non-response, incomplete/incoherent data, and limited sample size. All these factors may affect the validity of the research. Diversifying data collection methods (in the case of this report: by using two surveys) enhances the quality of the data and helps avoid biased interpretation. Both surveys collect the perception of the respondents, which is why it is important to have a diverse group of respondents. This increases the validity of the research. In the case of the CEMR19 survey, a response rate of only 60% was achieved due to non-response. While for the RO19 survey, a response rate of 100% was achieved. This means that in 6 out of 10 countries it was possible to triangulate from different information sources. In some cases, responses have been rather short and difficult to interpret. This could indicate “survey fatigue” among respondents. Lastly, the issue of social desirability may have played a role as respondents were to some extent asked to evaluate their own (field of) work, and/or as they could have had reason to believe that the people analysing the data could trace them back to individuals.

Causal relations and representativeness
Finding evidence of a relation between the UAEU (cause) and changes occurring in a Member State as a result (effect) was expected to be challenging based on the available data. In other words, the report cannot prove that changes in NUP, horizontal coordination structures, or vertical coordination structures, were caused (only) by the UAEU. It is explained earlier that the defined motor of change can refer to the cause, accelerator, catalyst, facilitator or influencing factor of the change perceived. This helps to not only consider direct causal relations. However, a change can also occur due to other causes than the UAEU. It is not within the scope of this study to research any other possible causes. Nevertheless, this research does provide some tentative findings based on original data and directions for further research.

In an attempt to uncover existing (causal) relations, the study vastly relies on the assessments and appraisals provided by the respondents. Since the majority of respondents were answering on behalf of the whole Ministry concerned, it can be assumed that their perception is in accordance with the views of the Ministry. This presumption cannot be guaranteed though. Chapter 2 portrays the respondents’ perceptions in a transparent manner, indicating the survey source at all times.

Frequency of revising NUPs
It is well known that it is not common to change the NUP of a country at short intervals. During the course of this research, some overlaps were noticed between the UAEU’s implementation and the regular updating period of countries’ NUP. In cases where the launch of the UAEU did not coincide with the NUP updating period, any possible effects on formal policy design can be ruled out to start with. This limitation is due to the recent character of the UAEU.
Appendix 4: Concrete Results Due To The UAEU

**Finland**
- Establishment of an informal national network of the Finnish partners involved in the UAEU
- Creation of working groups to exchange knowledge between cities and UAEU Partnerships

**Poland**
- The Partnership Initiative of Cities (PIC) aims to support, at national level, thematic networks of cities. Three networks have been launched so far, with big similarity to three UAEU Partnerships: air quality, urban mobility and urban regeneration.

**France**
- Definition of new priorities (e.g. the presence of child poverty and security in public spaces on the national agenda).

**Portugal**
- Establishment of an informal group for the UAEU chaired by the Directorate-General for Territory since 2016, which includes relevant sectors (housing, migration, mobility, environment), regional bodies, and (associations of) cities.

**Germany**
- Informal exchange of knowledge among the German partners involved in the Partnerships of the UAEU in 2018.

**Romania**
- Improvement of the regulatory, funding, and knowledge framework at the European level in line with national needs.

**Italy**
- Formation of a national operational exchange by the Agency for Territorial Cohesion and its technical secretariat.

**Slovakia**
- Inclusion of the UAEU principles in the new NUP.

**The Netherlands**
- Establishment of an UAEU Taskforce, composed of cities, regions, representatives of Partnerships, the central government, and knowledge institutes.

**Spain**
- The new Spanish National Urban Agenda was approved in 2018 and, in several cities, action plans were developed in accordance with the principles of the UAEU.

---

1. The results presented here are those perceived by the respondents of the Romanian and the CEMR surveys.