

Call for Action Networks – URBACT

Proposal from Nice Côte d'Azur Metropolis (France)

Nice Côte d'Azur Metropolis (France) intends to be the lead partner of the network and is looking for other coastal cities/territories to join the proposed network.

This Call is part of the URBACT IV programme.

Call Information:

URBACT Action Networks support European cities in moving from planning to implementing concrete urban actions. Cities collaborate in transnational networks to co-develop, test, and implement solutions to shared urban challenges.

Local authorities jointly produce an Actions Playbook around a common urban theme. This process follows the implementation logic of “Co-design-Implement-Transform”, enabling cities to move from territorial analysis to experimentation and the replication of proven solutions.

Title of the proposal: Sharing strategies for runoff management and marine pollution prevention between local authorities and civil society organizations in coastal and waterfront regions (Coalition for « sponge » coastal territories).

Context:

The land–water continuum is a major environmental challenge at the international scale. One of the leading sources of water pollution is urban runoff. In many urban and peri-urban areas, runoff can transport significant quantities of pollutants into nearby water bodies, either directly or via overloaded drainage and wastewater systems.

Sustainable runoff management is therefore essential. It requires planning approaches and infrastructure that integrate Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) as much as possible. These solutions support the transition toward “sponge territories”—urban or rural areas capable of naturally absorbing, retaining, and treating rainwater.

Examples of such interventions include:

- De-impermeabilization of surfaces
- Rain gardens and vegetated retention areas
- Infiltration swales and bioswales
- Sustainable roadway and pathway drainage systems

These solutions can be co-designed and co-implemented with community participation, allowing them to function not only as water-management tools but also as shared public and social spaces.

Actions:

The project will help coastal cities improve runoff management and reduce marine pollution by strengthening coordination, ensuring smooth partner collaboration, and meeting URBACT's basic management and communication requirements.

Through a series of focused transnational exchanges (kick-off, mid-term, final meeting, thematic sessions and field visits) partners will compare approaches, learn from each other and jointly produce the network's Actions Playbook summarising shared results.

Locally, each city will co-design and test small, practical measures such as simple sponge-inspired interventions, light monitoring tools and awareness actions, while also improving internal coordination and adapting a useful practice from another partner. These experiments will feed each city's Action Portfolio, the main local output required by URBACT.

Duration: The planned duration of the project is 30 months (November 2026 to April 2029).

Budget: EUR 1.000.000 (subsidy from 65% to 95% depending on the territories + local contributions).

Partnerships Requirements:

The proposed partnership will include between 6 and 8 partners (including the Lead Partner city) from European and partner countries.

The covered territories correspond to countries from the European Union, IPA countries and NDICI countries.

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Contacts:

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