

## ERRIN CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE:

### DRIVING URBAN TRANSITIONS TO A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE (DUT) PARTNERSHIP

Established in 2001, ERRIN promotes the regional and local dimension in European research and innovation policies and programmes. The network gathers over 120 members who primarily collaborate through 13 Working Groups, covering both thematic areas and overarching policy issues. ERRIN supports project development and knowledge exchange between members to enhance regional and local research and innovation capacities, with the aim to foster sustainable and inclusive growth in all regions.

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## 1. THE DUT IN THE EUROPEAN URBAN POLICY ARENA

Through the continued engagement of European urban and regional networks, urban issues and urban policies have, in recent years, strongly featured on the overall EU policy agenda. A milestone in this was the Pact of Amsterdam that, in May 2016, launched the Urban Agenda for the EU. This agenda represents a multi-level working method promoting cooperation between Member States, cities, the European Commission and other stakeholders in order to stimulate growth, liveability and innovation in European cities, while identifying and successfully tackling societal challenges.

Similarly, European platforms such as the EIP on Smart Cities and Communities and the Covenant of Mayors bring together and support cities and urban stakeholders to address, find and share solutions to a wide range of urban challenges.

The Horizon 2020 programme has, through its funding, significantly contributed to the take-up of innovation in a wide range of urban topics. One good example of this is the Smart City lighthouse initiative funded under Horizon 2020. The Interreg programmes have also supported cities and regions in their efforts to find and implement innovative solutions for the key challenges they face.

Today, the European Commission is discussing the launch of a new initiative, the European Mission to realise 100 climate neutral cities by and for citizens by 2030. While the current health situation, which is rapidly expanding across the EU, is calling into question the exact timing of a possible launch of this Mission, the relative importance of it is not questioned.

The Driving Urban Transitions (DUT) Partnership will need to demonstrate its added value and complementarity among the multitude of already existing urban initiatives. The strength of the DUT partnership is that it has a strong, integrated and holistic approach to green transformation and places the local and regional dimension in its centre. It has the potential to gather a wide understanding of the existing initiatives and funding programmes as well as funding gaps in the area, by involving the key multipliers (network organisations) in its governance. Finally, it is also high time to establish a partnership that tackles place-based research and innovation challenges in an integrated way directly involving local and regional actors.

## 2. ADDED VALUE OF THE DUT

The key questions to address are therefore:

- What does the DUT deliver/offer that existing funding programmes, instruments or initiatives do not?
- How does the DUT complement and create synergies with other existing initiatives, notably the Mission on Climate Neutral and Smart Cities by and for citizens?

The integrated and place-based approach is the key selling point of this partnership. This is what makes it different from other partnerships with potentially overlapping themes, such as the Energy Transition Partnership. Thus, the focus of the partnership should be on the interplay of the different relevant urban policy thematic priority areas and the enablers of the green transition. It is also an

important reason for the partnership to actively support the Mission on Climate Neutral and Smart Cities.

## 2.1 Strength of the DUT

The specific strength of the DUT is, without a doubt, its strong research and innovation fundament and its implementation, which focuses more on knowledge creation than on implementing concrete solutions to the key urban challenges. However, ERRIN considers that the contribution of the DUT should go beyond the purely academic and include measures that achieve practical impact and implementation on the ground in cities. In other words, the DUT should not only study cities but involve them and encourage the key actors of the quadruple helix, including city administrations, to take part in the partnership.

The DUT can acquire know-how on the issues where it is needed. On the other hand, we also think it could have the capacity to interpret and adapt existing know-how with a view to make it applicable in different cities and, as such, contribute to the scale-up and impact of existing innovative solutions.

Therefore, we think that the ambition of the DUT, when it comes to research and innovation should be twofold:

- Develop new knowledge and innovation based on its own Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda well as on the knowledge-needs, emerging from the roadmaps drawn up in the context of the Mission on Climate Neutral and Smart Cities.
- Collect, interpret and adapt existing relevant knowledge and solutions, with a view to scale up already developed work and, through this, enhance its impact.

In addition, contributions can be realised through measures achieving impact and implementation. ERRIN suggests harnessing expertise on:

- i. The use of existing co-creation tools and methodologies
- ii. The development of financial/business plans to accompany climate/decarbonisation plans
- iii. The creation and facilitation of local and regional platforms, both digital and physical, for developing and implementing innovations
- iv. Key areas could include the elements of the city climate contract identified in the city mission:
  1. The transformation of cities into innovation hubs
  2. New forms of governance
  3. New economic models for climate action
  4. Modelling for integrated urban planning and operations
  5. Smart technologies, data platforms and urban system modelling

Replication and scale-up of innovation and innovative solutions are two key elements that contribute to raising the impact of the DUT. These can be difficult to achieve, as cities are unique structures and often exist within quite different regulatory frameworks. The DUT Partnership can play a significant role in highlighting the existence of such barriers and proposing solutions to these barriers, as it brings together both Member States and the European Commission. Therefore, the partnership can have a

coordination role to better understand and potentially also align European, national and subnational research and innovation agendas further.

## 2.2 The DUT and the Mission

Although the approaches of the DUT and the Mission are somewhat different, the broad objective is generally the same: the future proof city. Therefore, complementarities and synergies between these initiatives should be utilised.

Firstly, the composition of the partnership today does not engage all EU Member States. On the one hand, this makes the DUT less equipped to contribute to such initiatives as the Mission on Climate Neutral and Smart Cities, as the Mission aims to cover the entire EU. On the other hand, and this is perhaps the favoured scenario, aligning itself with the Mission could bring onboard the remaining Member States which have not yet been convinced of the added value of the DUT.

Secondly, the DUT should not only offer services to support the transformation effort of 100 European cities, but potentially to all EU cities and towns. The Mission should also go beyond these 100 cities in order to be relevant, as the EU has committed to be a climate neutral continent by 2050. If the EU 'only' achieves 100 climate neutral cities - of the more than 6,000 cities and towns that currently exist in Europe - by 2030, it would mean that the EU only has 15-20 more years to replicate the ambition in at least 5,900 more cities and towns. Hence, it is our view that 100 is merely the first wave and the Mission should, from its very start, work for all EU cities, towns and regions.

Thirdly, looking at the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda 2.0, covering the period until 2026, the key themes are digital transition; from resilience to robustness; sustainable land-use and urban infrastructure and inclusive public spaces for liveability. Climate change, the focus of the Mission, is likely to be a topic under any of the above themes and transition in these areas would contribute to reaching the goal of climate neutrality.

Furthermore, we think it is essential for the DUT - and for the Mission on Climate Neutral and Smart Cities by and for citizens at the same time - to closely align with the European Green Deal and, in particular, with the European Climate Pact. The latter is focused on bringing together regions, local communities, civil society and industry.

## 3 THE DUT PARTNERSHIP

### 3.1 Funding the DUT and its Projects

The model for the DUT Partnership is a co-funded partnership. This means that its "format" draws from the existing ERA-NET co-funds. The ERA-NETs are today very much driven by the focus that individual Member States include in their funding requirements and the selection of representative national agencies. These are, in some cases, agencies funding fundamental research. This means that there are currently significant differences between individual Member States with some (e.g. Finland) putting a strong focus on innovation and the private sector, allowing the knowledge sector only to participate in specific project proposals if and when closely aligned with private enterprise, whereas

others (e.g. The Netherlands) solely focus their available funding, and thus the EU ERA-NET top up, on financing research and innovation.

While, naturally, it is the prerogative of individual Member States to determine the eligibility criteria when spending their own funds, it is important to realise that the existing disparities make any claims of the DUT to contribute the achieving progress on the ground a tentative one as:

- In terms of eligible actors: If local authorities (cities, towns, districts, metropolitan or other functional areas, including provinces and the regional level) that are the main actors when it comes to safeguarding the holistic urban sustainability agenda, cannot partner in projects it will be difficult to achieve meaningful and, above all, practical and visible results.
- Similarly, urban challenges are, by default, complex and require a systemic and holistic approach, not only in terms of content, but also in terms of stakeholder engagement. For meaningful impact, the full ecosystem (quadruple helix approach including public administrations, private sector, academia and civil society) should be eligible for projects funded under the DUT.
- ERRIN considers that the rules concerning the geographical scope and collaboration should allow partnerships to involve actors from different Member States.
- ERRIN suggests that further coordination at Member State level is needed to ensure that all relevant actors and necessary measures can be supported through the partnership. ERRIN also suggests that the DUT should consider defining common funding rules for the partnership at EU level (instead of following national funding rules).

### 3.2 Governing the DUT

If we want to increase the impact of investments and efficient use of research and innovation funding, better coordination between research and innovation agendas on a local, regional, national, and European level, as well as between the public and private sector will be needed.

One way to achieve this, is to set up a governance model for European partnerships where regional and local authorities are involved. This would include a clear role in defining the partnership, as well as in designing the calls for proposal, and other activities within the framework of the partnership. Some level of flexibility should also be included to ensure that the DUT is open for evolving situations and local needs.

The DUT partnership already foresees a structure where local and regional stakeholders could be part of the different bodies such as funding agencies WG (regions), AGORA stakeholder platform or an Advisory Board.

The key multipliers (network organisations covering the key urban actors) should formally be part of the Partnership to ensure the necessary synergies with relevant urban initiatives (additionality) and that the local needs are adequately included in the partnership priorities and annual programmes that define the modalities of the calls.