

Discussion paper 3: How to create a tangible and lasting impact

This discussion paper serves to guide the discussion of the break-out session of Day 1 of the Coordinators' – Action Leaders' meeting 2021. The discussion elements presented in this paper are based on the analysis of the results of the 14 surveys "Your multi-level governance experience" shared with Partnerships' members and reflections from the Technical Secretariat in supporting the 14 Partnerships.

Creating a tangible and lasting impact is one of the key objectives of the Urban Agenda for the EU Partnerships' work. But what are the necessary elements to do so? Based on the Partnerships' experience, the following features and items were identified:

- **Bring key actors around the same table.** Such is crucial in the Urban Agenda multi-level governance experience. Key actors at every governmental level (EU, national, urban/local) should be engaged in open discussions. They should pinpoint precise challenges and bottlenecks related to the priority themes of the Partnerships in order to create outputs and outcomes which have a concrete and long-term impact in urban policies.
- **Ensure having the right experience and necessary capacity.** Having the right experience linked to the priority theme of the Partnership, as well as the necessary expertise capacity to carry out the work is a key enabler for the Partnership to deliver results of quality and of relevance to the target audience. Strong imbalances in experience and expertise around the table are to be avoided – as they can frustrate the progression.
- **Narrow the remit of the Partnership's theme.** The priority themes of the Urban Agenda Partnerships are wide and can potentially imply a large number of issues and challenges. Therefore, it is important to ensure that the work is focused, precise and therefore impactful. Thematic narrowing and linking to specific expected results/products (e.g. in the area of regulation and funding), is key to create tangible and lasting impacts.
- **Make sure that policy objectives and priorities are translated into realistic and manageable outputs.** In order to reach a tangible impact, Partnerships' priorities should be turned in a limited number of Actions, whose implementation can be controlled by the Partnership members in a joint-up manner.
- **Develop and agree on a common narrative among Actions.** Each Partnership has developed a number of Actions, tackling different urban issues and challenges. Such Actions should be reflecting the Partnership's common vision and mission - guaranteeing consistency and cohesion in the message which the Partnership wishes to pass on. Similarly, common avenues for joint implementation should be found, in order to focus on one priority area rather than spreading efforts in multiple directions.

- **Link Partnerships' work within existing policy frameworks and initiatives.** In order to effectively produce a concrete impact, Actions should be developed and later implemented taking into account the wider EU context. During the development and implementation of Actions, linkages should be drawn with already-existing and/or future initiatives in order to ensure that the outputs produced are not an end themselves, but rather contribute to the wider policy framework.
- **Actively mobilise stakeholders beyond those involved in the Partnership.** Constant mobilisation and involvement of cities, Member States and organisations is an important element to support the implementation of the Actions, provide a ground for testing and offer specific expertise. Therefore, it is key to create an 'Urban Agenda network' which could support and contribute to achieve a tangible impact on the ground and impactful dissemination of results.
- **Timing is crucial.** Especially for Better Regulation and Better Funding Actions, it is important to get the timing right. After all, the revision of (EU) legislation or the establishment of new funding programmes is done at particular moments in time – and only then can their course be influenced.
- **Stamina required.** Urban authorities may be used to influencing their direct environment in a meaningful way. However, EU-level changes never come easily and may require substantial and repeated efforts – only those with endurance are likely to succeed.