



Network of Universities  
from the Capitals of Europe



## **Programme Meeting November 18<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup> 2024**

### **Methodologies for addressing urban challenges in Europe. How academia and cities can jointly create practical impact in cities?**

The collaboration between academic institutions and cities holds tremendous untapped potential when it comes to addressing urban challenges. Universities often possess the expertise, research capabilities, and innovative thinking necessary to tackle complex issues like housing, sustainability, and public health. Cities, on the other hand, offer real-world laboratories where these academic insights can be tested and applied.

However, despite this clear potential synergy, there remain significant blind spots in this collaboration. In many cases, partnerships between academia and urban policymakers are either underdeveloped or underutilized, leaving valuable knowledge and resources on the table. These blind spots can stem from differing priorities, communication gaps, or even institutional barriers that prevent meaningful engagement.

This workshop aims to explore the underlying reasons behind these blind spots and investigate how we can better align the goals of academic institutions with the practical needs of cities. By identifying these obstacles and fostering stronger partnerships, we can unlock the full joint potential of universities and cities to address pressing urban challenges.

To address this, the workshop brings together different networks of universities and cities to explore where these blind spots lie and how these networks can collaborate more effectively. Since these networks are not yet familiar with each other, establishing connections and fostering introductions will be a key component of the workshop. An important goal of the workshop is to formulate an initial agenda for collaboration by identifying key themes and methodologies that can guide future joint efforts

## **November 18th**

Venue: Auditorium, City hall Amsterdam, Amstel 1, 1011 PN Amsterdam

Invitees (link to website of the network via hyperlink):

- [City Science Initiative](#) (CSI) network
- [EUROCITIES](#)
- [UNICA](#) (European Network of Universities from capitals)
- [AURORA](#) (European University Network)
- [EUniverCities \(Urbact\)](#)
- [NetZeroCities Cities Mission Platform](#)
- [Horizon Europe DUT Partnership](#) (Driving Urban Transition for a sustainable future)
- European Commission representatives (DG RTD, REGIO, JRC)

12.00 Doors open - registration

12.00 – 13.00 Sandwich lunch

13.00 Welcome by chair Pedro Campos Ponce (Coordinator team EU/International, City of Amsterdam)

13.05 – 13.15 Overview of activities at DG Research and Innovation (European Commission) aimed at cities by Marie Yeroyanni (European Commission, DG Research and Innovation, Unit Strategy, Policy coordination and Urban Transitions, Senior Expert on Innovating Cities)

### **Session I Getting to know each other**

13.15 – 13.30 Introduction of the CSI network by Caroline Nevejan (Chief Science Officer, Amsterdam)

How does the City Science Initiative (CSI) network function? How come so many cities have created a function like a Chief Science Officer? What does research in the city entail? What are characteristics of City Science and what are the elements of an Urban and Regional Research ecology? What is required from universities and what is required from city administrations when cooperating? What has CSI been working on in the last years? How does this CSI meeting link with the past work of CSI, especially the last CSI meeting about ESG in Brussels in March 2024?

13.30 – 14.30 Round table of the participating networks about their mission and activities and potential contribution to FP10 collaborations

Reflecting on the introduction by Caroline Nevejan and introduction of the different networks, as an open exchange among speakers.

- EUROCITIES – André Sobczak, Secretary-General at EUROCITIES
- UNICA (Network of Universities from the Capitals of Europe) – Joe Carthy, former College Principal for College of Science of University College Dublin and Coordinator of the UNICA & The City activities
- AURORA (European University Network) – Ramon Puras (Secretary-General Aurora Network)
- NetZeroCities - Thomas Osdoba (Program director NetZeroCities, Climate KIC)
- EUniverCities network - Willem van Winden

14.30– 15.00 *Tea break*

## **Session II Urban challenges: methodologies and frameworks to tackle these challenges together**

15.00 - 16.00 *Presentations: urban challenges we face*

- Speaker 1: Urban mental health and wellbeing: Despoina Mantziari (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki)
- Speaker 2: Community Service Learning on designing Public Urban Spaces: Jacqueline Ruffen and Mona Gutmann (Universität Duisburg-Essen) and Barbara Buchenau (Universität Duisburg-Essen)
- Speaker 3: Circularity: Mahsa Doostdar (Hamburg University of Technology)
- Speaker 4: Citizen participation and Governance: Adriano Contardi (Free International University of Social Studies (LUISS))
- Further speakers on themes like climate neutrality and technology in cities to be confirmed

16.00 – 17.30 *Workshop: Methodologies and frameworks to work together on urban challenges*

The workshop will be chaired by the five speakers of the previous workshop. How can we develop shared methodologies for tackling the following five urban challenges, while aiming for equal opportunities? What is the added value of collaboration between academic and city networks? How can the networks present orchestrate this in an efficient and effective way? The themes will also mirror those of the previous session. Each workshop will address key challenges in developing an impactful collaboration between cities, universities and the research ecosystem: identification of knowledge gaps; dialogue mechanisms between policy-makers and researchers; alignment of timings (political/policy-making fast-changing priorities vs. time-intensive research processes); funding; research uptake by policy-makers, among others.

- Circularity
- Urban Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Citizen Participation and governance
- Public Urban Spaces
- Mobility/Climate Neutrality
- Technology

## **Session III Thinking dinner**

Venue: De Bazel Amsterdam - Conference & Event Center, Vijzelstraat 32, 1017 HL Amsterdam

Host: Caroline Nevejan (CSO Amsterdam)

18.30 – 21.00 *Thinking dinner*

After the discussion in the afternoon which is related to more specific urban challenges, the thinking dinner focuses on more strategic topics related to the contribution of cities and universities to solutions for urban challenges.

Table topics (every table will have three rounds with the participants choosing a new table each round):

- *Climate Justice*, also in connection with Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities: How can universities and cities cooperate in developing equitable climate solutions and influencing policy?
- *Learning between cities and universities*: How are evidence-based knowledge capacities built in city administrations, and how can universities contribute to it? How can people with no spare time and full agendas learn from each other? How can academic institutions and city administrations facilitate effective knowledge exchange, offer training, and support collaborative learning?
- *Sharing research and data management*: How can we dare to share knowledge in an era of geopolitical sensitivity and knowledge safety concerns? How can universities and cities lead by example in responsible data sharing and create secure frameworks for international collaboration?
- *Agency of the city*: How can cities, as territories of policy application, acquire more agency in regional, national, and international collaborations and negotiations (EU, trade agreements, UN)? What role can universities play in empowering cities with the research and strategic insights needed for greater influence?
- *Transition of the city and its impact on different sectors*: How can we innovate in the city while maintaining high-quality infrastructure for the energy and mobility transition? Can multidisciplinary research from universities meet this challenge? How can academic institutions and cities contribute to organizing a sustainable collaboration between people, government, industry, and academia?
- Strengthening the importance of urban challenges in the new European Framework Programme for financing innovation and research: How can the new EU innovation funding programme for 2028–2034 help tackle urban challenges? How can cities and universities ensure that urban issues have a relevant place in research agendas and funding frameworks?

21.00 Closing day 1

**November 19<sup>th</sup>**

Venue: Auditorium, City hall Amsterdam, Amstel 1, 1011 PN Amsterdam

Chair: Pedro Campos Ponce (Coordinator team EU/International, City of Amsterdam)

**Session IV What can we create together? Collaboration between academia and city networks.**

9.00– 10.30

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Presentation and reflection on outcome of the thinking dinner table sessions.

What can we create together? In this session we explore possible concrete products we can create together. The group will break up in two groups discussing the following:

- Fourth report of CSI (c.s.): One idea would be to focus the fourth report of CSI on the methodologies of collaboration between cities and universities. What challenges and what kind of methodologies should we focus on with regards to a fourth CSI report?
- Training curriculum: European urban challenges like climate mitigation and adaptation, the housing crisis, or people-centered digitalisation, require impactful policies that are based on emerging, specific knowledge and skills – which city administrations often lack and universities are in a capacity to provide. This session will be aimed at identifying concrete skills gaps that often found in European city administrations, and discussing how universities and educational and research institutions can contribute to filling them. Participants will also help design a training curriculum for city officials, which will guide the work of the Eurocities Academy as the network's training and capacity-building hub.

10.30 – 11.00 coffee break

**Session V Future collaboration**

11.00 – 12.00

- How can the different networks present work together in developing methodologies in the context of urban challenges?
- What are next steps?

12.00 – 12.30

- CSI and EUROCITIES cooperation, André Sobczak (Secretary General EUROCITIES) and Caroline Nevejan (Chief Science Officer, Amsterdam) Closing by Pedro Campos Ponce (team EU/International, City of Amsterdam)
- Closing by Pedro Campos Ponce (coordinator team EU/International, city of Amsterdam)

12.30 – 13.30 Sandwich lunch