

Commission and European Investment Bank launch new advisory service to help cities plan investments



Cities face particular challenges when it comes to accessing finance. Individual municipal projects, for example in the fields of social inclusion, urban regeneration or energy efficiency, can be too risky or too small for the market. At the same time, funding for integrated urban programmes can also be difficult to access, because they group several small projects across different sectors. Finally, cities can also face borrowing limits.

URBIS intends to help cities tackle these specific issues. It will help them design, plan and implement their investment strategies and projects, with tailor-made technical and financial advice, also on innovative financing options. The objective is to see solid projects get off the ground in the short to medium-term, for example in the field of urban climate actions.

Maroš Šefčovič, the European Commission Vice-President responsible for the Energy Union, said: *“Mayors want to take action and make their cities smarter and more sustainable. On our part, URBIS will make it easier for them to access the investments they need to get this done – through tailor-made advice and leveraging existing funds and assets. Urban innovation needs to be unlocked, get enough scale and be replicated across Europe.”*

Launching URBIS today at [the 2017 Cities Forum in Rotterdam](#), Commissioner for Regional Policy Corina Crețu said: *“We have ambitious objectives for sustainable urban development under the Urban Agenda for the EU and URBIS will help us reach them. Thanks to this initiative, cities will have the support they need to create new opportunities for their inhabitants.”*

“Cities are more attractive than ever: in three decades 8 out of 10 Europeans will live in a city,” said Vazil Hudák, European Investment Bank Vice-President responsible for advisory and project support in cities and regions. *“Towns, cities and regions need finance as well as advice to become smart, modern, green and innovative, and with the help of our pilot project URBIS we can deliver just that.”*

URBIS will consist of European Investment Bank (EIB) experts from the institution’s different advisory and project services, including EIB staff located across Member States and experts from [JASPERS](#), the independent team specialised in preparing quality EU-funded projects.

Where needed, it would bring on board experts who can explain how to blend EU

funds with national and local promotional banks financing and with innovative financing opportunities. For example, such opportunities include impact investments, i.e. investments made into companies or funds with the aim to trigger social and environmental impact alongside a financial return.

Cities of all sizes in all Member States can apply for URBIS' support via a web page hosted on the [European Investment and Advisory Hub](#).

URBIS will help:

- Improve a city's investment strategy by giving advice in strategic planning, prioritising and optimising of investment programmes and projects.
- Bring projects and investment programmes to a bankable stage, for example by providing analysis on demand or support in financial structuring and by reviewing draft grant applications.
- Explore opportunities for financing under the European Fund for Strategic Investments ([EFSI](#)), Cohesion Policy funds – under which over €100 billion is being invested in urban areas over 2014-2020 – or both combined.
- Support the preparation work for investment platforms and facilities combining funds, liaise with financial intermediaries and set up implementation arrangements for these facilities.
- Develop financing approaches aiming at alleviating the burden on municipal debt and at helping municipal companies and private urban service providers access funding.

Next steps:

URBIS will start by using the existing advisory and project services of the European Investment Bank and will focus on a selected number of assignments.

This initial work, as well as the cities' demand for URBIS' support, will be assessed by the EIB and the Commission in the second half of 2018. If URBIS proves successful, additional resources could be considered, with a view of continuing, improving and scaling-up the initiative.

URBIS' work and analysis will feed into the [ongoing reflection](#) on the next budget framework after 2020, especially as regards the access and management of Cohesion Policy funds by cities.

For More Information:

[Urban Agenda for the EU: one-stop-shop for cities on the European Commission website](#)

[EIB support to the Urban Agenda](#)

[The Juncker Plan](#)

[Cohesion Open Data Platform](#)

Care homes: cost of increased private provision could become barrier to user access unless subsidies rise

With people living longer, the need for affordable care of high quality to support Europe's population increases. In recent years, the Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs) have repeatedly emphasized the need to contain costs in long term care in order to ensure their sustainability. Yet no harmonised data exists at the European level to accurately map public and private providers of care homes for older people and to assess whether nursing homes and residential care are increasingly becoming a business as a result of the gap left by the cuts in public services during the crisis.

Eurofound's new report Care homes for older Europeans: Public, private and not-for-profit providers is the most comprehensive exercise to date to gather all available data across Member States. The report provides a picture of the quality, accessibility and efficiency of services. Over the last ten years, there has been a substantial increase in the number of private care homes, which has doubled in Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. At the same time, the number of public care homes is either decreasing or growing at a slower pace, with the exception of Malta and Spain, where the number of public homes is increasing faster than private ones. There is a need to agree definitions about public, for-profit and non-profit provision, taking into account legal status, ownership and economic activity of providers.

As demand increases so too does the challenge to maintain public funding and spending for long-term care, which may ultimately lead to higher co-payments from service users. Some countries already have schemes in place to limit the percentage of a service user's assets that can be used. With results differing between studies and between countries, this report provides a starting point for further research which could ultimately pave the way for reforms that meet the demands of Europe's ageing population.

Publication: [Care homes for older Europeans: Public, private and not-for-profit providers](#)

Care homes: cost of increased private

[provision could become barrier to user access unless subsidies rise](#)

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Publication: [Care homes for older Europeans: Public, private and not-for-profit providers](#)

[EESC hosts Platform for Roma Inclusion addressing education and employment prospects for young Roma](#)

On Monday 27 and Tuesday 28 November 2017 the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) hosted the 11th European Platform for Roma Inclusion, organised by the European Commission and focusing on the transition of young

Roma from education to employment.

The Committee, which has worked on Roma inclusion in recent years, thanked the Commission for the opportunity to host the European Roma Platform on its premises for the first time since it was set up in 2009 to help boost cooperation between stakeholders on successful Roma inclusion.

The high-level event addressed the problem of **extreme marginalisation of Roma in Europe, who face segregation in schools and are largely excluded from labour markets**. The participants included ministers from Member States, the EU Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, vice-presidents and members of the European Parliament and the EESC, and other high-ranking officials from the EU institutions and various civil society organisations representing Roma.

The EESC's Vice-President for Communication, **Gonçalo Lobo Xavier**, said: "Hosting the platform here in the house of civil society signals the importance of civil society organisations as an agent for positive change for Roma inclusion. We know the importance of bringing all stakeholders together, such as national governments, the EU institutions, international organisations and Roma civil society groups to stimulate cooperation and exchange of experience and good practice."

The EESC has set up a permanent study group with a mandate to monitor and report on how civil society sees the implementation of Roma integration strategies and facilitate further dialogue on Roma issues between civil society groups and the EU institutions.

The group also organises country visits and holds hearings with various stakeholders to raise awareness about Roma discrimination and exclusion in many Member States.

This year's Platform is seeking solutions to the fact that **Roma are the most under-represented group on the labour market**. Many Roma do not finish primary or secondary level education, and often face discrimination when looking for work. According to the European Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), as many as 63% of young Roma aged between 15 and 24 do not work, attend school or training courses.

The EU Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, **Věra Jourová**, said: "Europe cannot afford to let young Roma fail to fulfil their potential. The growing proportion of young Roma not in education, employment or training is worrying. Policy-makers need to look carefully at the causes and address them".

The platform held at the EESC consisted of two workshops which looked closely at the education and employment prospects for young Roma. The recommendations put forward in the workshops were then presented at the high-level political debate on the second day of the event.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION (MAIN EESC OPINIONS ON ROMA):

<http://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/e>

[esc-opinion-roma-citizens](#)

<http://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/esc-opinion-socio-economic-integration-roma>

<http://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/esc-opinion-intercultural-dialogue-and-roma>

<http://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/esc-opinion-integration-minorities-roma>

<http://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/esc-opinion-roma-societal-empowerment-and-integration>

<http://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/publications-other-work/publications/civil-society-prize-2014-integration-roma>

Press Release: EU Auditors conduct online survey as part of their on-going passenger rights audit

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