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**[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](#)

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**[EU Platform for Change launched at](#)**

## **EESC**

**EESC President Georges Dassis and European Commissioner for Transport Violeta Bulc, joined by Estonian Minister of Economic Affairs and Infrastructure Kadri Simson and Chair of the European Parliament's Transport Committee Karima Delli, officially launched the EU Platform for Change at a major conference at the EESC in Brussels on 27 November 2017. The platform aims to increase female employment and equal opportunities in the transport sector.**

The EU Platform for Change was officially launched by **Georges Dassis**, EESC President, and **Violeta Bulc**, European Commissioner for Transport, in the presence of **Kadri Simson**, Estonian Minister of Economic Affairs and Infrastructure, and **Karima Delli**, Chair of the European Parliament's TRAN Committee, at a conference co-organised in Brussels by the Section for Transport, Energy, Infrastructure and the Information Society (TEN) and DG MOVE on 27 November 2017. The Platform has been developed by the EESC in cooperation with the European Commission with a view to increasing female employment and equal opportunities in the transport sector. It will enable stakeholders from all transport sectors to highlight their specific initiatives promoting gender equality and to exchange good practices.

"Trying to improve equality between men and women in the transport sector is not only a question of gender equality: it is an economic and social imperative, and it is about employment, innovation, sustainability and growth in the EU," stated the EESC President, **Mr Dassis**. According to Commissioner **Bulc**, "Only 22% of transport workers are women. There is huge potential for the sector to improve equal opportunities and I am excited that companies and organisations agree on this and are committing themselves to increasing female employment. By involving women and men together to promote gender equality we will ensure that our societies will flourish at all levels."

"Transport is going through a time of turbulent changes, and women should enjoy equal opportunities in this sector that offers new challenges – we need to make progress in order to achieve a more gender-balanced transport sector," echoed the Estonian Minister of Economic Affairs and Infrastructure, **Ms Simson**. "The Platform is an excellent initiative to bring together stakeholders and promote dialogue. We need to find solutions quickly," acknowledged **Ms Delli**, the Chair of the European Parliament Transport Committee, who also underlined "the question of women as users of transport and the issue of safety as a priority."

Other high-level speakers included **Pierre Jean Coulon**, President of the EESC TEN Section and **Madi Sharma**, EESC member and initiator of the idea to set up a Platform (please see the [EESC opinion](#) on "Women and transport – Platform for Change"). During the launch event, participants actively participated in a brainstorming session where they explored the functioning of the Platform and reflected on key topics such as setting targets for female employment, the opportunities brought by innovation, effective initiatives to fight gender-based violence in the workplace and the feasibility of more flexible shifts to increase work-life balance. Interested parties were also invited to

sign a [declaration](#) to make their endeavours in favour of gender equality more widely known.

The Platform, to be managed by the European Commission, will work on a collaborative basis and membership will be open to all stakeholders in the transport sector taking specific measures. Members will set priorities together, have the opportunity to comment on each other's commitments and discuss any other relevant topic.

Further information:

- [Programme](#) of the event
- Sign up to the Platform on the [Commission website](#)
- Twitter: @EESC\_TEN #WomenInTransport