



## ACTION PLANNING NETWORKS

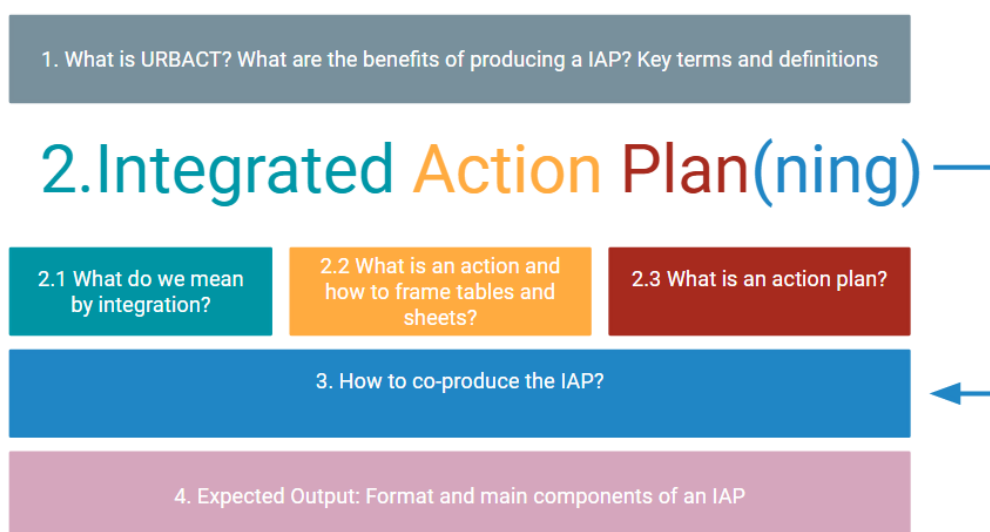
# GUIDELINES FOR CO- PRODUCING AN INTEGRATED ACTION PLAN



**URBACT Guidance**

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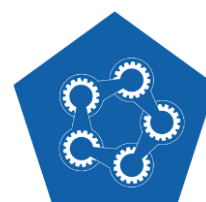
# 1. GUIDANCE OVERVIEW

This Guidance is aimed at URBACT Action Planning Networks to support **the production of Integrated Action Plans as the main local level output for participating cities during Phase 2**. The Plans should be co-produced with local stakeholders to identify a concrete and coherent set of actions to address a local policy challenge.

## 1.1. URBACT principles

The URBACT programme fosters integrated sustainable urban development in cities across Europe. Its mission is to enable cities to work together and develop integrated solutions to common urban challenges, by networking, learning from one another's experiences, drawing lessons and identifying good practices to improve urban policies. The URBACT method embraces several principles:

**Integration:** An integrated approach to sustainable urban development which promotes a holistic approach that takes into consideration the physical, economic and social dimensions of urban development, from a sustainable perspective.



**Participation:** A participative approach based on strong partnerships between public bodies, the private sector, knowledge institutions and civil society (including associations, NGOs, citizens), which is recognised as a cornerstone of local democracy and efficient urban development policies.

**Action learning:** A structured and facilitated approach to gather knowledge by working with peers and to solve concrete problems by designing tailor-made actions.



The URBACT Method is explained in more detail in this [video](#).

These principles underpin capacity building of urban practitioners to drive change. The Integrated Action Plan captures and frames this change to improve local level policy development.

The benefits for participating cities of producing Integrated Action Plans include:

- > Transformed approach to stakeholder engagement and local participation in decision-making
- > Improved cross-departmental cooperation within the municipality
- > Improved shared sense of understanding of the local context and policy challenges
- > Improved thematic knowledge and understanding
- > Greater community awareness of problems and potential options for solutions/actions
- > Stronger evidence base to underpin policy and plans
- > Political support and/or official approval of the integrated action plan at local level
- > Funding and resourcing strategies, and in some cases secured funds



## Key Terms and Definitions

**URBACT** = the European Territorial Cooperation programme that supports cities through transnational exchange and learning, with the aim of fostering integrated sustainable urban development across Europe.

**Integrated Sustainable Urban Development** = an approach to urban development that addresses economic, environmental, and social challenges and objectives (sustainable) based on coherence and complementarity between the various policies, sectors, stakeholders and levels of decision-making (integrated).

**URBACT Action Planning Networks (APNs)** = networks of cities supported by URBACT. Each participating city works with local stakeholders to develop a local plan of action, while benefitting from a shared process of transnational exchange and learning.

**Integrated Action Plan (IAP)** = as main output of cities participating in Action Planning Networks, IAPs define the local actions to be carried out in response to the sustainable urban development challenges addressed in the network.

**URBACT Local Group (ULG)** = the local body that is responsible for co-producing the IAP, composed of all relevant stakeholders having an interest in the policy challenge addressed by the city.

**URBACT Baseline Study** = the document produced by each network as the main output of Phase 1 that strengthens understanding of the network theme and provides the foundations for exchange and learning, capacity building and the development of Integrated Action Plans in Phase 2.



The URBACT Local Groups and the transnational exchange undertaken within the networks form the foundations for the development of strong IAPs.



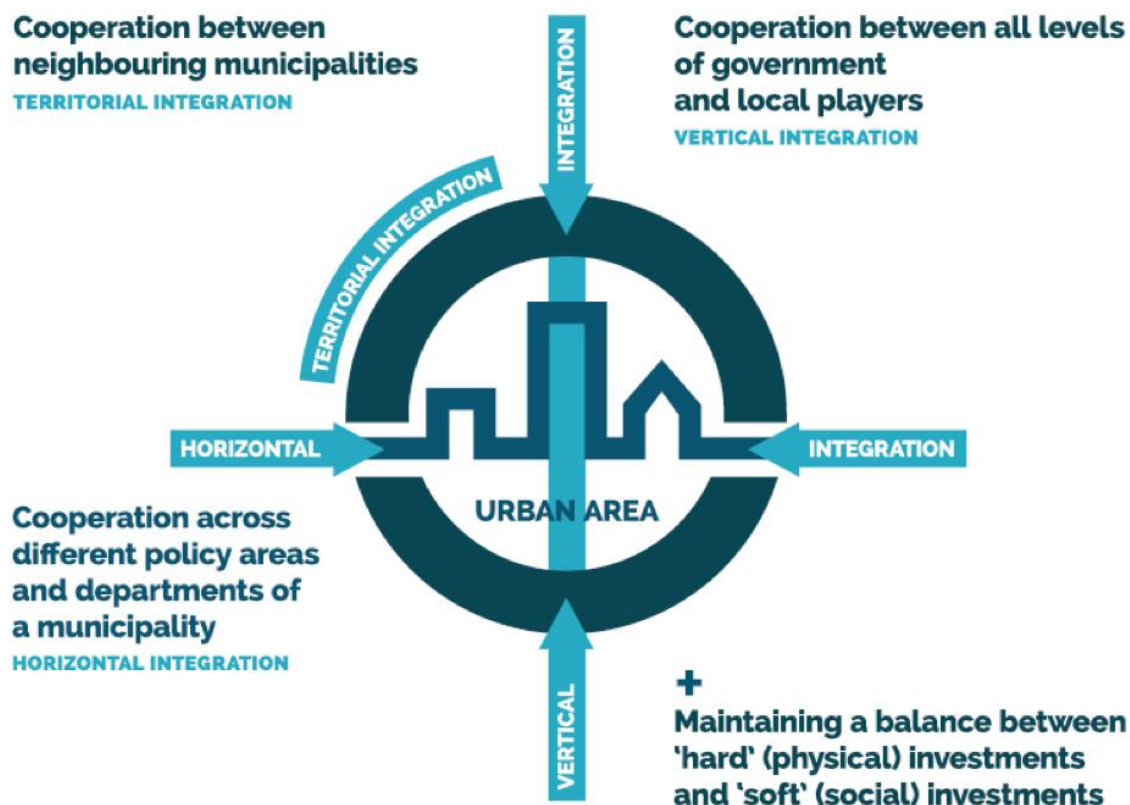
## 2. INTEGRATED ACTION PLANNING

### 2.1. What do we mean by integration?

There is lots of discourse around integration and its definition within the field of urban development. At a basic level URBACT focuses on four broad types of integration set out on the [URBACT website](https://urbact.eu/).

- **Vertical integration:** meaning cooperation between all levels of government and local players;
- **Horizontal integration:** meaning cooperation across different policy areas and departments of a municipality;
- **Territorial integration:** meaning cooperation between neighbouring municipalities;
- **Resources integration:** between 'hard' (physical) investments and 'soft' (social) investments.

## Integrated Urban Development MEANS...



## 2.2. What is an Action and how to frame Action Tables and Action Sheets?

For URBACT IAPs there is a diversity of approaches, designs and formats of describing and presenting actions. In general actions should be:

- > **Needs-based:** actions respond to real needs based on a sound understanding of the local context, challenges and opportunities
- > **Inspired by transnational exchange and learning:** actions have been demonstrably informed or inspired by practices from other cities
- > **Contributing to Sustainable urban development:** actions address all three pillars of sustainable development in terms of economic, social and environmental objectives
- > **Fitting with Internal strategic logic:** actions are designed to meet overall and specific objectives defined by the city
- > **Involving stakeholders in implementation:** the full range of relevant stakeholders (horizontally and vertically) are engaged in the implementation of planned actions

Most important is that IAPs should be able to present their planned actions in ways that are clear, detailed and yet succinct. Developing an Action Table is a helpful exercise to start thinking about the actions although the list of actions can take different formats depending on the city.

Cities can use action tables both as a tool to help their planning and to help communicate their plan to others (notably in a way that is short and easy to translate). Table 1 below is a good starting point that can be adapted to need.

**Table 1 – Action Table**

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE					
ACTION	Intended Result	Resources / Assets	Lead Agency	Key partners	Timescale




The action table above can act as a preparatory step for each of the specific objectives identified for the Integrated Action Plan. The table helps a city focus on and narrow down the number of actions linked to each specific objective. It can help provide a comprehensive overview of all the inter-related activities necessary to deliver the objectives. It is at this stage that some of the risks or challenges ahead will become apparent. The table can be formulated in different ways, for instance also with inspiration from social innovation tools and business canvas models, which can help for developing Gantt charts.

The URBACT programme has developed several tools to help with the identification of actions. Further details of these can be found in the URBACT Toolbox [‘Refining an Action’](#) toolsheet. By analysing each action considering which stakeholders need to be involved, what are the timescales for delivery, what outputs and indicators are concerned, how will the action be funded and what potential risks exist, cities can be more confident that the action can be successfully delivered. The action sheet below in Table 2 covers all of these aspects.

A more detailed explanation of these tools with examples of completed action sheets can be found on the URBACT Website [‘Preparing for Implementation’](#) section.

**Table 2 – Detailed action sheet**

ACTION Title		ACTION Owner		
Short Description	Stakeholders	Links to Strategy	Risks	
		Finance & Resources		
		ACTION Readiness		

ACTIVITIES				
ACTIVITY	Dates	OUTPUTS	Related ACTIVITIES	BLOCKERS / Concerns








## 2.3. What is an Action Plan?



An Action Plan is a succinct document defining actions to be implemented, covering the planned timings, implementation responsibilities, costings, funding sources, monitoring indicators and risk assessment of the actions.

Table 3 below is a useful checklist for aspects to be covered.

**Table 3 – The 7 identified aspects of a detailed action plan**

	Aspect	Description
1.	<b>Defined actions</b> 	Does the IAP define a set of actions to be implemented?
2.	<b>Time-defined</b> 	Does the IAP set out when the actions should be implemented?
3.	<b>Responsibilities allocated</b> 	Does the IAP define which body or bodies are responsible for implementing the IAP's actions?
4.	<b>Costed</b> 	Does the IAP estimate the costs of implementing the actions?
5.	<b>Potential funding identified</b> 	Does the IAP set out the potential funding sources for the planned actions?
6.	<b>Monitoring indicators</b> 	Does the IAP identify a set of indicators which can be used to monitor progress?
7.	<b>Risk assessment</b> 	Does the IAP set out a risk assessment for the planned actions?

**The Integrated Action Plan should bring together both INTEGRATION and ACTION PLANNING.**

Further examples of different formats for presenting actions can also be found in the [IAP Study](#) and case studies.





### 3. HOW TO CO-PRODUCE AN INTEGRATED ACTION PLAN?

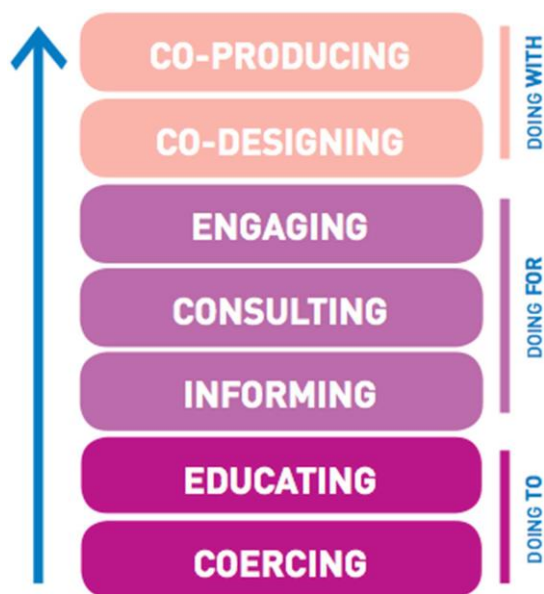
The IAPs are valuable tools in defining what a city plans to do next on a particular theme. But for many cities, the **process** of developing the IAP is just as valuable, in terms of transforming cross-departmental cooperation, local stakeholder involvement, understanding of thematic challenges and possible integrated solutions. As a result of the co-production process the IAPs have strong implementation potential, ongoing stakeholder engagement and political buy-in.

#### 3.1. Co-Production



The development and validation of each IAP should be a collective undertaking, designed to strengthen commitment and to increase the prospect of sustainable delivery. Co-production is the best guarantee for an integrated approach and increases the chances of successful implementation.

There are different degrees of participation from information to consultation to co-production. Each city will be starting from a different stage of experience and progress on the co-production journey will be shared in the transnational meetings.



Source: new economics foundation



### 3.2. URBACT Local Group

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The URBACT Local Group is the forum for co-production and the local coordinator leads the process, by supporting the engagement of stakeholders, with a series of meetings, events and inputs. The URBACT [Guide to setting up and running a multi-stakeholder group](#) gives advice and examples for success. In terms of final production, in some cases, URBACT Local Group members can take responsibility for drafting and revising all or parts of the document.

The best Integrated Action Plans reflect all URBACT Local Group members' knowledge and perspectives in addition to learning from transnational exchange with other URBACT cities. All Integrated Action Plans from previous networks are available on the URBACT website, at the bottom of each network page, and can provide models for content, structure and format. Seven case studies of different approaches to IAPs can be [read here](#).

Using the Baseline Study as a foundation the ULG embarks on a co-production process exploring the challenges, focus and the future objectives.

### 3.3. IAP Milestones

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As outlined in the [Phase 2 Guide](#) the overall timetable for Phase 2 is split into 4 stages. In each of the first three stages there is a milestone linked to the co-production of the IAP.



The **first milestone** is the co-production of an IAP Roadmap expected in December 2020. It should map out the programmed activities at local level that drive the co-production of the IAP draft and final versions. It should also show the clear link to and feedback loop from the transnational meetings of the network. The core content will be:

- > a snapshot of the city's starting point, in relation to the policy challenge addressed (including local analysis, experience and legacy of previous projects, legal framework, etc.);
- > the process and resources the city will use for the action and implementation planning process (including raising awareness, for example);
- > a forecast of the expected extent of progress to take place during the lifespan of the URBACT network compared to the initial situation (including transfer or learning from other European cities).



The snapshot can draw upon material provided in the Baseline Study produced at the end of Phase 1, as this will contain relevant content provided by each city. The process and resources section should explain the steps and procedures the city will apply at the local level to co-produce and co-implement the Integrated Action Plan. The forecast section can also draw upon the Baseline Study, which will assess the extent of progress (including testing of small scale actions) likely to take place in the URBACT network period.

The IAP roadmap should be seen as a working tool. Its primary audiences will be the ULG members, other city stakeholders, the wider network membership and the URBACT Secretariat. The ULG Coordinator will be responsible for the production of the IAP roadmap (and possible updates along the way), which should be written in English.

The **second milestone** is the co-production of the first draft IAP which should be ready by December 2021. All IAPs will be peer reviewed during a transnational network meeting in Autumn 2021.

Once the drafts have been reviewed and finalised there should be a focus on moving into implementation, including seeking resources and funding, with a **third milestone** for the completion of the IAP in June 2022.

The last 2 months of Phase 2 will be focused on communication and dissemination, sharing the results of the networks both at local, network, national and programme level.

There is flexibility in the boundaries between stages and networks are encouraged to progress to the next stage quicker if they wish. The timetable has already been adjusted for Covid 19.

May-December 2020	December 2020- December 2021	December 2021- June 2022	June 2022- August 2022
<b>Activation - 7 months</b>	Planning Actions - 12months	Planning Implementation 6 months	Finale - 2 months
	ULG activities Small Scale Actions	ULG activities	
<b>Roadmap due December 2020</b>	Draft IAP due December 2021	Final IAP due June 2022	Disseminating and Sharing

## 4. EXPECTED OUTPUT: FORMAT AND MAIN COMPONENTS OF AN IAP

### 4.1. Introduction

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The main components of an Integrated Action Plan are set out below. This is not an exhaustive, nor a compulsory list, but an indication of what could be included. The components can be separated into two parts: a short narrative presentation of context and process, followed by a more detailed Action Plan.

Part 1 - Presentation of context and process (around 5 pages)

- a) City context and definition of the initial problem/ policy challenge
- b) Focus
- c) Description of the process

Part 2 - Action Plan (around 10 – 20 pages)

- a) Objectives, actions and schedule
- b) Small Scale Actions (SSA)
- c) Framework for delivery
- d) Resourcing
- e) Risk analysis

Each element is outlined in detail in sections 4.3-4.8 below.

### 4.2. IAP Format

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The format of each IAP will vary depending on the policy challenge or process being addressed, the territorial coverage and the local context in which it is to be implemented. Different formats of the same plan could be created, depending on the different target audiences for instance:

- applying for funding,
- discussing with decision-makers and elected representatives,
- sharing with the external world, citizens, the media, etc.

For communication and advocacy, presenting to particular stakeholders, such as politicians, citizens or businesses, the IAP could be more framed in a creative way with for instance pitch decks, videos, posters. Examples from the last URBACT Action Planning Networks include:

- MAPS used a [platform](#) to gather all the content related to the IAPs, including posters and some videos
- PROCURE produced an [IAP summary](#) for each city
- [Sub>urban](#) created standardised PDF booklets of each IAP including rich maps, graphics and images, as well as a video summarising the overall challenge and each city's response.

**The IAP has to be in English.** Local language versions, or at least summaries, will probably also be needed to communicate with local stakeholders. Each city can decide how to proceed in this regard.

The main elements for each part of the IAP are listed below.

### 4.3. Part 1a City context and definition of the initial policy challenge

- > Statistical and referenced evidence to demonstrate and define city context and challenges relevant to the themes addressed, updated from the Baseline Study, for example:
  - Population statistics and demography
  - Location, territorial context
  - Industrial composition, employment statistics, air quality, CO2 emissions
  - Summary of relevant Operational Programmes (ERDF and ESF) covering the city
- > Current state of play with regard to the theme tackled by the Integrated Action Plan, for example:
  - Summary of institutional context – roles and responsibilities of different agencies
  - Summary of existing strategies and policies relevant to this field (local, regional and national)
- > Presentation and analysis of problems and options for solutions
- > A brief explanation of how the problem has evolved since the start of the project, to set context but without repeating the detail of the Baseline Study



This information is already present in the network Baseline Study, and it can be constantly updated throughout the process.

**URBACT Tools:** [Problem Tree](#), [Problem & Solutions Table](#), [Evidence Analysis & Improvement Table](#)

**Examples:** [Södertälje](#), [AGRI-URBAN](#) city context

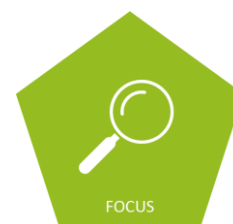
[Dubrovnik](#), [TechTown](#) pages 13-15 Problem Trees analysis

[Porto](#), [SmartImpact](#) pages 17-25 Description of Local strategic context



## 4.4. Part 1b Focus

- > Description of focus of Integrated Action Plan
- > Information on why this is a key priority, where possible making reference to input from URBACT Local Group members / external stakeholders in this process
- > Summary of main aspirations for the Integrated Action Plan
- > Summary of how it links to the URBACT network as a whole and if / how learning from transnational exchange has informed the choice of focus
- > Information on any other learning which has been used from elsewhere to inform the choice of focus
- > Presentation of strategic goal or vision

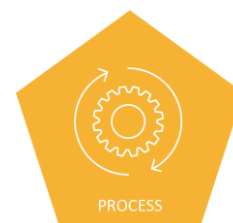


This information is already present in the Baseline Study, and it can be updated throughout the process.

**Examples:** [Klaipeda Gen Y City](#). Page 13 description of the Vision, objectives and focus of IAP  
[Albacete Procure](#) Page 3 – Learning from network partners and EU exchange

## 4.5. Part 1c Description of the process

- > Composition and role of URBACT Local Group and its role in the process of co-production and co-implementation
- > Role / impact of transnational exchange and learning (e.g. peer-review, possible transfer of good practice, bi-lateral exchanges, development of new common projects etc.)



**Examples:** [Medina del Campo \(City Centre Doctor\)](#) description of the participative process  
[Dún Laoghaire, CHANGE](#) pages 10-16 Local Group, co-production process and transnational learning

## 4.6. Part 2a Objectives, actions and schedule

- > List of key objectives —Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timebound (SMART)
- > Breakdown of planned activities / actions / projects which will be developed and delivered to help meet these objectives and achieve the expected results
- > Information on when these activities will be delivered- start and end dates
- > Gantt chart showing actions and timetable
- > The linked expected results and indicators for each action – see URBACT Results Framework



**URBACT Tools:** [Action Table](#), [URBACT Results Framework](#)

**Examples:** [IAP Study](#) presents several examples on pages 17-25

[Hengelo RetailLink](#) Section 5 Detailed Action Tables with 4 thematic pillars



#### 4.7. Part 2b Small Scale Actions (SSA)

- > Detail of what SSA were tested as part of the IAP co-production process
- > Evaluation of these SSA with a description of the lessons learnt and changes needed to add, reformulate or delete some actions which might not be relevant or suitable



#### 4.8. Part 2c Resourcing

- > Resources which will be required to make this happen such as staff, physical infrastructure (offices, buildings, open spaces, etc.), capital and revenue expenditure, bearing in mind some actions do not need budget, but could be about structural changes. This section can include possibilities of innovative financing solutions (co-financing, crowdfunding, etc.)
- > Potential sources of funding (including but not limited to ERDF and ESF)
- > Presentation of how these activities relate to the (emerging) priorities of ERDF and ESF Operational Programmes
- > Presentation of how these activities relate to other EU Urban Initiatives such as Urban Innovative Actions or Horizon 2020 etc



**URBACT Tools:** [The Ranking Tables](#) and [the Funding Matrix](#)

**Examples:** [Szombathely, MAPs](#) - Identification of funding streams (page 55)

#### 4.9. Part 2d Framework for delivery

- > Detail of who will deliver actions – roles and responsibilities of stakeholders
- > Detail of governance during and after URBACT support

**URBACT Tools:** [Implementation Capabilities grid](#)

**Examples:** [Cluj Napoca in REFILL- IAP](#) page 20-23 Governance, Monitoring and Evaluation Framework



#### 4.10. Part 2e Risk analysis

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- > Description of type of risk (e.g. operational, financial, legal, staffing, technical, behavioural)
- > Categorisation into low, medium or high risk
- > Outline of steps which could be taken to mitigate risk.



**URBACT Tools:** [Coherence Check list](#) , [4Cs table](#) and “[What could possibly go wrong cards](#)”

**Examples** [IAP Study Page 40](#) Figure 17: Petrinja (Agri-Urban) IAP - Part of the implementation risk assessment

#### 4.11. Lessons from URBACT networks: Self assessing your integrated action plan

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As outlined in Section 2.2 URBACT focuses on four broad types of integration as set out on the [URBACT website](#)

- **Vertical integration**, meaning cooperation between all levels of government and local players;
- **Horizontal integration**, meaning cooperation across different policy areas and departments of a municipality;
- **Territorial integration**, meaning cooperation between neighbouring municipalities;
- **Resources integration** between ‘hard’ (physical) investments and ‘soft’ (social) investments.

However a [Study](#) of IAPs produced by partner cities involved in the last round of URBACT Action Planning Networks found that, in reality, cities understood and addressed integration in many ways. A deeper look at the IAPs showed complexity and diversity in the interpretation of integration itself, as well as the processes used and the plans produced. These were formulated into 14 different elements across 3 themes (Table 4).

The Study showed that the types and level of integration demonstrated by any IAP depended on several aspects including the theme being addressed, the existing level of thematic knowledge, existing actions and processes in place, local governance processes, the priorities identified by the ULG and so on. Whilst a theoretical ‘perfect’ IAP would show full integration for all aspects, in practice the reality is that for some topics certain forms of integration are less relevant. Some cities will be more advanced than others, but all cities will have areas where they could improve the integration of planning. This may be by incorporating a new form of integration or strengthening one aspect of integration already addressed to some extent.

This checklist in Table 4 may help to explain these variations and guide cities in focusing objectives, checking their own progress in prioritising actions and determining the scope of the plans required to achieve the desired ends. The aim is to break down, capture and categorise the complexity that URBACT cities are working with into more manageable ‘bite-size chunks’.



**Table 4 – Checklist of the 14 identified elements of integrated action planning**

<b>a) What is needed for an integrated planning process?</b>	
<b>i.</b>	<b>Actions are needs-based:</b> actions respond to real needs based on a sound understanding of the local context, challenges and opportunities
<b>ii.</b>	<b>Stakeholder involvement in planning:</b> the full range of stakeholders (considered horizontally and vertically) are engaged in identifying priorities and potential solutions
<b>iii.</b>	<b>Transnational exchange and learning:</b> actions have been demonstrably informed or inspired by practices from other cities
<b>b) What is needed for an integrated urban development?</b>	
<b>i.</b>	<b>Sustainable urban development:</b> actions address all three pillars of sustainable development in terms of economic, social and environmental objectives
<b>ii.</b>	<b>Sectoral integration:</b> addressing the full range of policies/sectors of activity, including infrastructure, transport, employment, education, green spaces, housing, culture...
<b>iii.</b>	<b>Spatial integration:</b> coherence of actions at different spatial levels from site-specific, through neighbourhoods, city-wide and regional
<b>iv.</b>	<b>Territorial integration:</b> coherence and complementarity of actions and policies implemented by neighbouring municipalities
<b>v.</b>	<b>Multi-level governance:</b> actions are planned coherently at different levels of governance, covering local (district, city), regional and national levels
<b>vi.</b>	<b>Stakeholder involvement in implementation:</b> the full range of relevant stakeholders (horizontally and vertically) are engaged in the implementation of planned actions
<b>c) What is needed for an integrated action plan?</b>	
<b>i.</b>	<b>Internal strategic logic:</b> actions are designed to meet overall and specific objectives defined by the city
<b>ii.</b>	<b>Coherence with existing strategies:</b> actions and objectives are aligned and complementary to existing strategies in place at city, regional, national or European levels
<b>iii.</b>	<b>Complementary types of investment:</b> the plan effectively balances the need for both ‘hard’ (physical/infrastructure) and ‘soft’ (human capital) investments
<b>iv.</b>	<b>Planning over time:</b> planning of relevant actions in the short, medium and longer-terms and consideration of any necessary order in the implementation of actions
<b>v.</b>	<b>Mobilising all available funding:</b> seeking to use the full range of funds available to support implementation of planned actions, from EU Funds to private local sources

Throughout Phase 2 APNs will be provided with tools and training, such as self-assessment checklists, to help partner cities address this complexity and learn to reflect on different forms of integration, as they relate to their own priorities and challenges.



## 5. CONCLUSION

This guide to Action Planning Networks for co-producing an Integrated Action Plan in Phase 2 is a comprehensive summary of all the activities all participating cities are expected to undertake in relation to the production of Integrated Action Plans.

It is, however, only a guide – cities involved in Action Planning Networks are encouraged to follow the framework and main key components of an IAP as described in these guidelines, nevertheless cities are encouraged to structure it according to their network specific approach whilst maintaining a coherent and logical methodology.

