

Supporting City-to-City Leadership:

The IURC Programme of the European Union

Prepared for the Global Cities New
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City-to-City Leadership

The European Union recognises the importance and value of fostering city-to-city leadership.

The Urban Agenda for the EU, for example, was launched in May 2016. It aims to realise the full potential and contribution of urban areas.



The Urban Agenda for the EU aims to realise **the full potential** and contribution **of urban areas** towards achieving the objectives of the Union and related national priorities in full respect of subsidiarity and proportionality principles and competences.

<https://www.urbanagenda.urban-initiative.eu/>

Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities Mission, launched by the EU 2021

The Cities Mission is supporting 100 cities from all 27 EU countries and a further 12 coming from Horizon Europe associated countries to reach climate neutrality by 2030 and inspire other cities to follow suit by 2050.

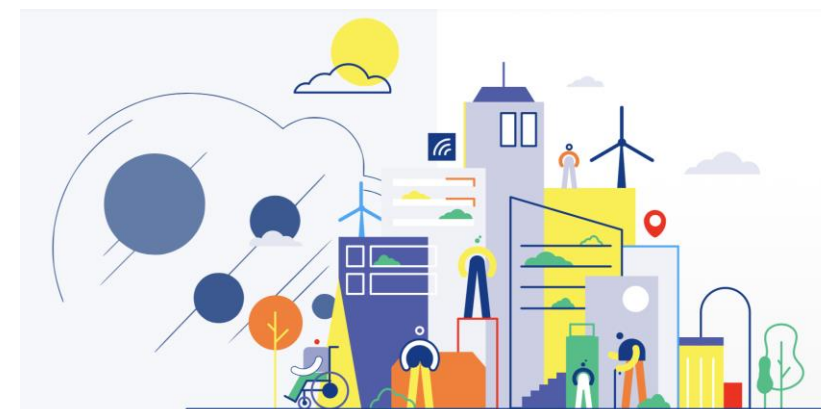


<https://netzerocities.eu/mission-cities/>

International Urban and Regional Cooperation

IURC leads and develops a form of decentralised international urban and regional cooperation whose main axes of activity are two-fold: sustainable urban development and innovation in key partner countries and regions in line with the external dimension of 'Europe 2020'.

<https://www.iurc.eu/about/>

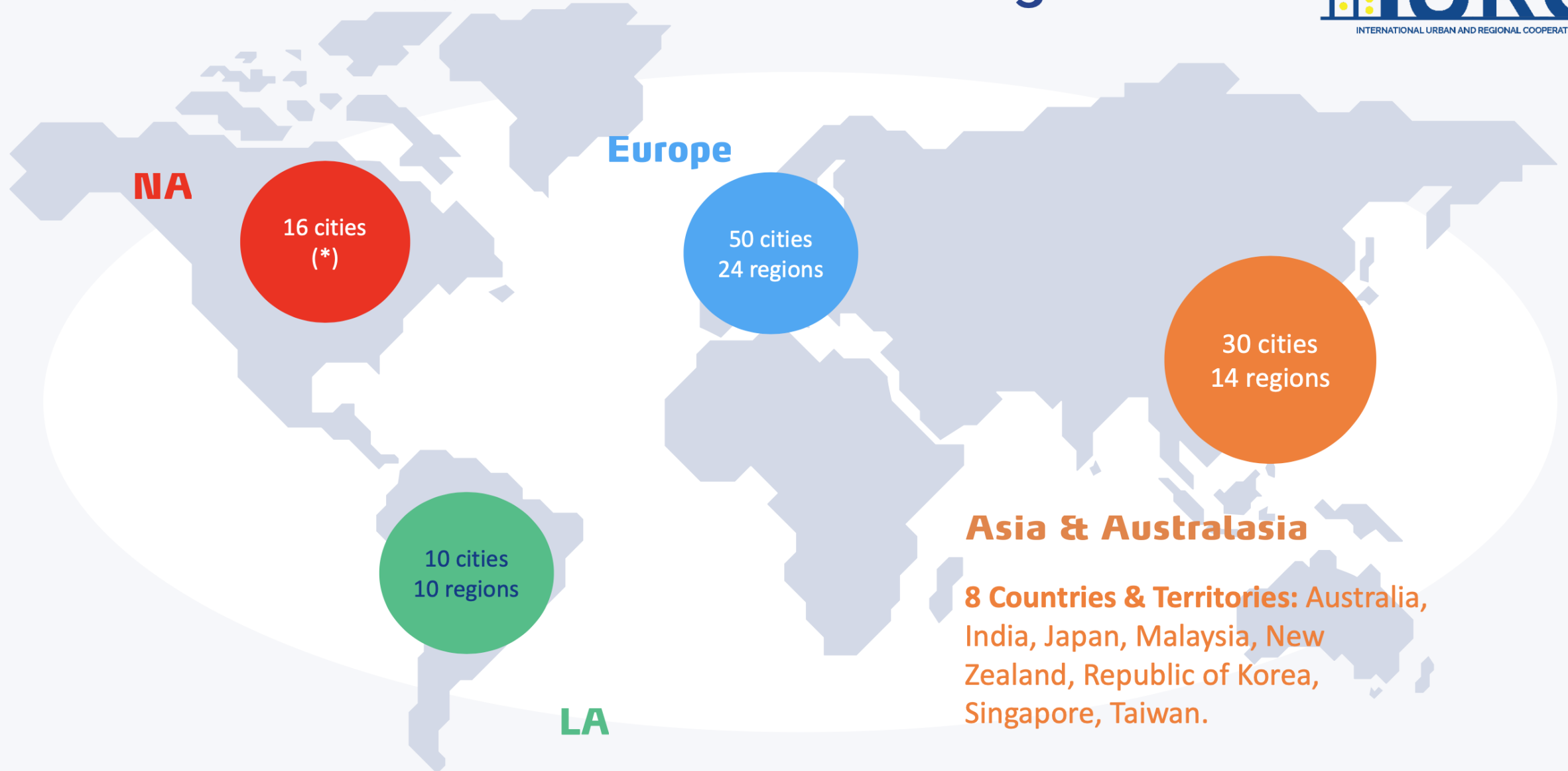


Sustainable and Innovative
Cities and Regions

Phase I: 2021–2024

Phase II: 2025–2027

IURC and EUCG (*): EU-funded Global Programmes



(*) EU Cities Gateway North America

New Zealand and IURC

The New Zealand launch of Phase II was hosted by the EU Delegation in Wellington on 11 September 2025.

The city of Christchurch and the regions of Taranaki and Manawatū are the New Zealand participants.



Four Lessons

Leadership at the city and regional level is essential to address some big challenges being faced by communities.

Local leaders have knowledge about their communities that outsiders cannot access.

Local leaders can inspire local actors to collaborate for the common good.

Local leaders are accountable to their communities.

Four Lessons

One of the best ways to support local leadership is to focus on knowledge exchange.

Knowledge has the property that it can be used by lots of people at the same time.

It means knowledge has a unique ability to support growth in living standards.

Four Lessons

Knowledge exchange within a city or region can be supported by a *quadruple helix* approach to problem-solving and innovation.

Quadruple helix refers to drawing on the knowledge held by four groups:

- Research institutions
- Commercial businesses
- Community organisations
- Public officials

Four Lessons

Knowledge exchange
between cities or regions
can be supported by
peer partnerships and
communities of practice.

Peer partnerships include city-to-city and region-to-region collaborations.

Communities of practice include collaborations within thematic clusters.

This is the approach taken in Phase II of the IURC.

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