



What is IURC?

In its second phase (2025-2027), the [International Urban and Regional Cooperation \(IURC\) EU - Asia and Australasia](#) (IURC AA) is a programme funded by the European Union (EU) to promote *city-to-city* and *region-to-region* cooperation on sustainable urban development and regional innovation, building partnerships between EU and non-EU sub-national entities at global scale.

Thematic workshops, webinars, networking events and study visits will enable local and regional governments to implement pilot projects engaging research, civil society and business partners (*quadruple helix*). IURC topics include *inter-alia* energy transition, mobility, smart city, circular economy, climate adaptation, start-up ecosystems, open innovation, digitalisation and foodtech.

Capitalising on results and lessons learned from the previous phase ([2021-2024](#)), the IURC emphasises the added value of *peer-to-peer* cooperation, strengthening its position as a global network of reference for urban and regional innovation.

The IURC is financed under the [EU Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument \(NDICI\)](#) and jointly implemented by the [Service for Foreign Policy Instruments \(FPI\)](#) and the [Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy of the European Commission \(DG REGIO\)](#).

The programme contributes to the delivery of EU international commitments under the Indo-Pacific and Global Gateway strategies, the Paris Climate Change Agreement, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is coordinated with EU Member States initiatives (*Team Europe*).

The IURC AA project works in Japan, Republic of Korea, China, Hong Kong S.A.R., Taiwan, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, India and Malaysia.

EU - Asia & Australasia

Sustainable and innovative cities and regions

How does it work?

The programme facilitates knowledge exchange through a combination of online tools (webinars, digital learning) and onsite activities (study visits, networking). The cooperation is developed as:

- **Thematic clusters:** Are the entry point to the IURC. Groups of EU- and non-EU cities or regions cooperate in a specific theme in *online* webinars and relevant *onsite* events. They develop one thematic pilot project proposed by IURC experts. Open for all IURC countries (*global network*).
- **Geographical pairings:** Evolve from the thematic clusters to deepen decentralised cooperation between two cities or regions. They can apply for financial support to implement transferable and sustainable joint actions (*IURC competitive fund*).

Planned **activities** include:

- **Up to 60 cities** and **28 regions** from the EU, Asia and Australasia to be involved in online/onsite **thematic clustering/networking** in project areas.
- Identify economically viable **pilot projects** and support to their implementation.
- Thematic **study visits** for subnational entities from the EU and non-EU partners.
- Publication of **thematic reports**.
- Further development of the [IURC knowledge library](#) with resources from across the globe.



Where to find the IURC?

The IURC AA project is coordinated by the **EU FPI Asia-Pacific regional team** based in **Bangkok**. The implementation team is made-up of long- and short-term thematic experts located in the EU, Asia and Australasia. They provide participating cities and regions with **administrative, logistical and technical support, thematic coaching** as well with **mentoring services**. The team coordinates with other IURC regional teams as well as with relevant institutions interested in cooperating.

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Why join IURC?

- To **get inspiration** from different realities to implement sustainable urban development and innovation actions.
- To be part of a **global network** accessing direct experiences and lessons learned 'dos & don'ts'
- **Benchmarking** and international positioning
- Opening doors for your **stakeholders** to international markets & cooperation opportunities
- To showcase your **experiences** in an international multi-governance and multi-level framework

Timeline

May 2025-Sept 2027: Implementation phase

- Selection of EU and non-EU cities and regions
- Online and onsite meetings, trainings, thematic cluster events
- Study visits
- Networking events
- Pilot projects / plans
- Urban knowledge hub

Jan-April 2025:

Inception phase

Definition of the project implementation



Oct 2027: Closing phase

Reporting results
Preparing an exit strategy

Examples of Results in IURC phase 1 (2021-2024) Asia / Australasia

Cities	Christchurch (NZ) – EU Cities
Topic/Project	Smart City / Podcast
Description	Christchurch launched the podcast series “ Smart(er) Cities - Conversations on Innovation ” featuring technology, urban planning and community solutions from several IURC pilot cities including Malaga, Dublin, Hamburg and Melbourne. Christchurch’s innovative tools including the Smart Viewer were showcased.

Cities	Dublin (IE) – Seoul (KR)
Topic/Project	Urban mobility / Joint Study
Description	A joint publication on Digital Transition in Sustainable Mobility was elaborated by both city councils including possible business solutions to achieve climate neutrality in the mobility area by using digital tools. The publication was the result of bilateral study visits in 2022 and 2023.

Cities	Essen (DE), Grenoble-Alpes Métropole (FR) Koriyama (JPN) & Toyota City (JPN)
Topic/Project	Renewable Energy / Hydrogen Business Pitches & Mentoring EU-Japan
Description	The four municipalities cooperated to create a business environment for their start-ups and SMEs in a high growth area while also contributing to the ecological transition of their respective economies. Results included an innovation platform for stakeholder dialogue and the design of a joint training programme for start-ups.