URBAN AGENDA FOR THE EU

Food Partnership

Orientation Paper

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Disclaimer:

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Table of Acronyms

Acronym	Full Name in English
CAP	Common Agricultural and Fisheries Policies
CFP	Common fisheries policy
CEMR	Council of the European Municipalities and Regions
CLLD	Community-led local development
COR	Committee of the Regions
DG	European Commission's Directorate General
DG AGRI	European Commission Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development
DG EMPL	Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion
DG MARE	European Commission Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
DG REGIO	European Commission Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy
DG RTD	European Commission DG Directorate-General for Research and Innovation
DG SANTE	European Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety
DGUM	Directors General on Urban Matters
EAA	Ex-Ante assessment
EC	European Commission
EIB	European Investment Bank
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
EUI	European Urban Initiative
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
F2F	Farm to Fork Strategy
FPC	Food Policy Council
ITI	Integrated Territorial Investments
JRC	European Commission Joint Research Centre
MMS	Minimum mandatory standards
MUFPP	Milan Urban Food Policy Pact
PPPs	Public-private partnerships
NGO	Non-governmental organization
R&D	Research & Development
RIS3	Research and Innovation Smart Specialisation Strategy
S3	Smart Specialisation Strategies
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMEs	Small and Medium sized Enterprises

UAEU	Urban Agenda for the EU
TA	Thematic Area
TP	Thematic Partnership
TPM	Thematic Partnership Meeting
TPO	Thematic Partnership Officer
UDG	Urban Development Group
UATPG	Urban Agenda Technical Preparatory Group
WGs	Working groups

Definitions

An Orientation Paper is a document that narrows down the thematic scope of the Partnership and defines its objectives, considering the mandate (of the partner organisations), knowledge (available) and resources (available) of the members of the Partnership.

General Definitions

Thematic focus is the scope of the partnership presenting the areas of focus and list of topics partners will work on.

Cross cutting issues represent key aspects to be considered in the overall work of the Urban Agenda for the EU and its Partnerships. Each Partnership shall therefore consider the relevance of the Cross-cutting Issues (Gijon Agreement clause 5).
The Cross-cutting issues are:
a) Promoting urban policy for the common good, inclusiveness, accessibility, security and equality.
b) Enhancing integrated and innovative approaches, notably through financing and in correlation to the green, digital and just transitions.
c) Supporting effective urban governance, participation, and co-creation.
d) Promoting multi-level governance and cooperation across administrative boundaries.
e) Harmonising measures at different spatial levels and implementing place-based policies and strategies.
f) Supporting sound and strategic sustainable urban planning, and balanced territorial development.
g) Contributing to the acceleration of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda SDGs, the New Urban Agenda and Habitat III principles.

Synergies are thematic links and connections with other Thematic Partnerships and possible collaborations can be established with other Partnerships on common areas of interest/actions.

Working group leader is the coordinator of a specific working group with the responsibility of managing, coordinating, supervising the work of the other group members.

Capacity for implementation is the Partnership's ability to work on the selected topics of interest by having the skills/knowledge, the human and financial resources, and the political mandate needed to further explore and build actions on the identified areas of focus.

Timeline means a graphical representation of a period, on which important events are marked.

Definitions specific for the topic of the Partnership

Food System embraces the entire range of actors and their interlinked value-adding activities involved in the production, aggregation, processing, distribution, consumption, and disposal (loss or waste) of food products that originate from agriculture (incl. livestock), forestry, fisheries, and food industries, and the broader economic, societal, and natural environments in which they are embedded (*FAO, 2018*) and the 'food system' is central in food policy and governance discourses as a response to the challenge of understanding the complexity around food *(De Schutter, 2020).*

Sustainable Food System is one that: provides and promotes safe, nutritious and healthy food of low environmental impact for all current and future EU citizens in a manner that itself also protects and restores the natural environment and its ecosystem services, is robust and resilient, economically dynamic, just and fair, and socially acceptable and inclusive. It does so without compromising the availability of nutritious and healthy food for people living outside the EU, nor impairing their natural environment (*SAPEA Report, 2020*).

Food System Transformation has been linked to the aspirations of the 2030 Agenda and refers to the objective of pursuing fundamental change of food systems, for instance, to aim for climate neutrality and achieving the SDGs. The Global Sustainable Development Report defined transformation as "a profound and intentional departure from business as usual" with the intentional departure being specified as "transformation toward sustainable development" (*United Nations, 2019*).

Food environment is the consumer interface with the food system that encompasses the availability, affordability, convenience, promotion and quality, and sustainability of foods and beverages in wild, cultivated, and built spaces that are influenced by the sociocultural and political environment and ecosystems within which they are embedded (*Downs et al. Report "Food systems, food environments and their drivers", 2020*).

Sustainability refers to the long-term ability of food systems to provide food security and nutrition in ways that do not compromise the economic, social and environmental foundations that create food security and nutrition for future generations (*FAO, 2022*).

Inclusive food systems Inclusive food systems reach, benefit, and empower all people, especially socially and economically disadvantaged individuals and groups in society. Inclusive food systems reach vulnerable people by way of reducing barriers that currently prevent them from participating in food system activities, for example, by enabling them to gain the skills needed to work within evolving food value chains. (*Global Food Policy Report, IFPRI, 2020*).

Food 2030 is the EU's research and innovation policy framework supporting the transition towards sustainable, healthy and inclusive food systems, that respect planetary boundaries, based on four pillars: nutrition, climate, circularity and communities.

Farm to Fork Strategy is at the heart of the European Green Deal aiming to make food systems fair, healthy and environmentally friendly. It addresses comprehensively the challenges of sustainable food systems and recognises the inextricable links between healthy people, healthy societies and a healthy planet. The strategy is also central to the Commission's agenda to achieve the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

EU Child Guarantee is an initiative of the European Commission which aims to ensure that the most vulnerable children in the European Union have access to healthcare, education, childcare, decent housing and adequate nutrition, ultimately aiming to ensure progressive realisation of child's rights in Europe. Particularly relevant is the link with school meals programmes to ensure access to healthy and nutritious food.

EU School Scheme is an initiative of the European Commission that supports the distribution of milk, fruit & vegetables to millions of children, from nursery to secondary school, across the EU. It is applicable since 2017 and in 2022 the Commission has launched a review of this scheme as part of the Farm to Fork strategy.

Milan Urban Food Policy Pact MUFPP is an international agreement signed in 2015 among 280 cities from all over the world, committed "*to develop sustainable food systems that are inclusive, resilient, safe and diverse, that provide healthy and affordable food to all people in a human rights-based framework, that minimize waste and conserve biodiversity while adapting to and mitigating impacts of climate change*". It is composed by a preamble and a Framework for Action listing 37 recommended actions, clustered in 6 categories, here explained:

1. Governance The recommended actions falling into the "Governance category" are all those actions aimed at ensuring an enabling environment for effective action in cities, such as: to facilitate collaboration across city agencies and departments, to strengthen urban stakeholder participation, to identify, map and support local and grassroots initiatives, to develop or revise urban food policies and plans and to develop a disaster risk reduction strategy.

2. Sustainable Diets and Nutrition Cities that want to promote sustainable diets, better consumptions and nutrition can be inspired by the recommended actions falling into this category of the MUFPP, for example: to address non-communicable diseases associated with poor diets, to develop sustainable dietary guidelines for urban environment, to explore regulatory and voluntary instruments to promote sustainable diets in cities and public facilities, to commit to achieving universal access to safe drinking water in urban and peri-urban areas.

3. Social and economic Equity City leaders that want to address inequality and poverty related to food systems, can undertake different recommended actions of this MUFPP category, such as: to use forms of social protection systems such as cash and food transfers, food banks, community food kitchens, emergency food pantries etc. to provide access to healthy food for all citizens, to encourage and support social and solidarity activities, to promote networks and support grassroots activities, to promote participatory education, training and research.

4. Food Production The recommended actions falling into this category are all those actions aimed at strengthening sustainable food production, stressing the importance of rural-urban linkages, such as: to promote and strengthen urban and peri-urban sustainable food production, to apply an ecosystem approach to guide holistic and integrated land use

planning and management enabling secure access to land for sustainable food production, to provide services to food producers in and around cities, to support short food chains, to improve waste and water management and reuse in agriculture.

5. Food Supply and Distribution There is a variety of actions and measures that can be adopted by cities that want to ensure a sustainable, safe, fair, continuous and efficient supply and distribution of food into and within cities. For example: to review and strengthen food control systems, to ensure seasonal and local food consumption by linking peri-urban and near rural areas transport and logistics, to develop sustainable public procurement and trade policy to facilitate short food supply chains, to support for municipal public markets, to support for municipal public markets.

6. Food Waste City leaders and policy makers that want to reduce food waste, as well as manage it in a more sustainable way, adopting a circular economy approach, can use the recommended actions of this category that lists down actions such as raising awareness of food waste, recovering and redistributing food, etc.

Whole School Food Approach (WSFA) is a method used to achieve a healthy and sustainable food culture in and around school meals. It is an evidence-based intervention that contributes to community-wide systemic change and positively affects education, sustainability, inequalities, communities and health. *(A Whole School Food Approach, SchoolFood4Change, 2022).*

Right to food is realized when every man, woman and child, alone or in community with others, has physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or means for its procurement. (*General Comment No. 12 of the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*).

Food Justice is a holistic and structural view of the food system that sees healthy food as a human right and addresses structural barriers to that right.

Food Security A situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. Based on this definition, four food security dimensions can be identified: food availability, economic and physical access to food, food utilization, and stability over time (*FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION IN THE WORLD, FAO-Unicef-IFAD, 2020*).

Food supply chain encompasses all those activities that help ensure the delivery of finished products to the consumer from the primary producer. Such activities can include storage, transport and distribution, processing, wholesale, retail and consumption (*Food losses and waste in the context of sustainable food systems, A report by The High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition, 2014*).

Food Policy is the area of public policy concerning how food is produced, processed, distributed, and purchased. (*Drake University Agricultural Law Center, 2011*). Since this definition the concept has evolved, referring now to the wider range of actions, initiatives, societal issues linked to food systems and regulated by formal acts approved by public authorities.

Food Council (Food Policy Council, FPC) is a formalised or informal governance structure that brings together different stakeholders of the food system to diagnose and improve the local food environment.

Public Food Procurement relates to both the purchasing of (raw) food and the contracting out of catering services fully or in parts by public bodies. (*Public Procurement of Food for Health, EU Commission, 2017).*

Planning urban food systems consists of organising the food system in biophysical, spatial and functional terms, through a spatial planning exercise that allows for sustainable and resilient ways of supplying healthy and accessible food to a given city or city-region, including 3 phases: (i) definition of a strategy based on a vision for a given time horizon; (ii) definition of a strategic framework and action plan, which embody the objectives to be achieved and their operationalisation through interaction between the public, private, governmental and non-governmental sectors; (iii) integration of the guiding principles into territorial management instruments or other public policies, based on the articulation between policy, knowledge and action.

Food Resilience is the capacity over time of a food system and its units at multiple levels to provide sufficient, appropriate and accessible food to all, in the face of various and even unforeseen disturbances. This definition emphasizes the ability of food systems to adapt and sustain food security despite challenges or disruptions. (*Tendall et al. (2015). "Food system resilience: Defining the concept." Global Food Security, 6, 17–23).*

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Context

In 2016, the Pact of Amsterdam agreed upon by the EU Ministers Responsible for Urban Matters on 30 May 2016 established the Urban Agenda for the EU. The latter is an integrated, coordinated, and multilevel governance initiative pursuing to better enhance the urban dimension in European and national policies and to improve the quality of life in urban areas by focusing on concrete priority themes within dedicated Thematic Partnerships. 16 Partnerships have been defined so far on the following themes: - air quality - circular economy - climate adaptation - culture and cultural heritage - digital transition - energy transition - housing - inclusion of migrants and refugees - innovative and responsible public procurement - jobs and skills in the local economy - sustainable use of land and nature-based solutions - urban mobility - urban poverty - security in public spaces - greening cities - sustainable tourism.
Under the deal established by the Ljubljana Agreement on 26 November 2021 also a Thematic Partnership on Food was established to gather relevant stakeholders from all parts of the food system to build a shared vision together with the necessary means for its sustainable implementation and will prioritise the role of cities in leading this transformation by adopting innovative urban food policies. It will bring added value by creating a major one stop shop platform of exchange enabling a better visibility on and synergies between the ongoing initiatives.

Its sustainability and effectiveness are ensured through:

- A multi-layered organisation enhancing the visibility and contribution of cities and allowing alternative punctual involvement of multiple local authorities depending on the subject at stake and needed expertise and input;
- A series of data collection, analysis and visualisation digital tools facilitating an overall comprehensive perspective on the topic and action in the field as well as collaborative contributions, comparative scenario building and evaluation and informed decision making.

Under the Ljubljana Agreement the UAEU Partnership on Food is substantiated by a dedicated Ex-Ante Assessments (EAA).

The Orientation Paper builds on the EAA for the following aspects:

- Identification of relevant topics and policy areas identified in the EAA
- Connections with EU policy initiatives and past or other UAEU partnerships
- Identification of working methods and arrangement.

1.2 Governance of the Partnership

The **Food Partnership consists of 26 partners**, including 2 national authorities, 10 urban and metropolitan authorities, 2 European umbrella organizations, 6 DGs of the European Commission and 6 other European stakeholders (for detailed information regarding the partners, see table n.1)
Coordinators of the Partnership (City of Milan and Metropolitan Area of Lisbon) are responsible for the overall coordination of Partnership activities and are the main contact person for internal and external communication and outreach. They organise and chair Partnership meetings, organise and coordinate the work in between meetings, represent the Partnership in conferences, monitor and report on the Partnership's activities.
Partners are the key actors of the Food Partnership and are fully engaged in the works on the agreed thematic areas and subtopics and contribute to the work needed for the definition of the Action Plan and its implementation, by bringing inputs, by making the link to relevant activities or resources and by taking part in meetings.

The partnership established **three working groups,** each linked to one of the thematic areas relevant to the Partnership:

1. **Innovative Funding**
2. **City-Region Framework**
3. **EU/National Regulation**

Working groups will research, analyse, discuss and prepare solutions that can be transposed into draft actions for the Action Plan for their specific working area. Each working group will be facilitated and coordinated by two **co-leaders**.
The Partnership composition may be expanded to include other partners and external stakeholders (experts, NGOs, economic and social partners, private sector representatives), interested in the process and outcome of the Partnership's works.
The Partnership receives administrative and technical support from the **Thematic Partnership Officer** (TPO) and the **European Urban Initiative Secretariat**, which will work closely with the Partnership's Coordinators, working groups co-leaders and members of the Partnership.
The activities of the Urban Agenda for the EU are coordinated through the **Directors-General on Urban Matters (DGUM)** meetings, which will also provide feedback to the Partnership's Orientation Paper and Action Plan. The DGUM is composed of all EU Member States, the European Commission and city representatives and associations (European Committee of the Regions (CoR), Eurocities, Council of the European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) and is co-chaired by the country holding the EU Presidency and the Commission (European Commission, 2017). This means that the work of the UAEU Food Partnership is followed, monitored and connected with the action of the 27 EU Member States and EU Institutions.
The **Urban Development Group** (UDG) is an informal advisory body to the DGUM, where the deliverables and progress will be discussed before being presented to the DGUM.

1.2.1 Coordinator(-s) of the Partnership

The UAEU Partnership on Food is coordinated by two urban authorities:

- City of Milan
- Metropolitan Area of Lisbon

1.2.2 Members of the Partnership

The UAEU Partnership on Food includes partners representing 2 national authorities, 10 urban authorities (including the two Coordinators), 2 European umbrella organisations, the European Commission represented by 6 DGs, as well as 6 other stakeholders. The full list of partners is presented below.

Table 1: List of Food Thematic Partnership members

National authorities	Urban authorities	Umbrella organisation	Other stakeholders	EU institutions
Food Systems Directorate, Ministry of Agriculture of Malta (MT)	City of Milan (IT)	Eurocities (BE)	Ellinogermaniki Agogi (EL)	EC - Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO)
French National Council for Food Resilience (CNRA) (FR)	Metropolitan Area of Lisbon (PT)	ICLEI European Secretariat (DE)	University of Barcelona (ES)	EC - Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE)
	City of Ghent(BE)		AESOP Sustainable Food Planning (IT)	EC Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG MARE)
	City of Zory(PL)		Metropolitan Area of Lille (FR)	EC Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI)
	Urban Municipality of Kranj(SL)		Metropolitan area of Cagliari(IT)	EC DG Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (DG RTD)
	City of Vantaa (FI)		Brasov Metropolitan Agency (RO)	EC Joint Research Centre (JRC)
	Dublin City Council (IR)			
	Municipality of Kristiansand (NO)			
	Environmental Studies Centre, Vitoria-Gasteiz City Council (ES)			
	Municipality of Mouans-Sartoux (FR)			

1.2.3 Process and timeline of the Partnership in defining the Orientation Paper

The first six months of the Partnership, from January to June 2024, were dedicated to the Orientation Paper preparation, through an articulated process of brainstorming and narrowing down the topics of interest, starting with the analysis of the priority themes identified in the Food Ex-Ante Assessment.

In particular, the process was articulated into **3 main phases:**

A. **Phase 1: Brainstorming**
B. **Phase 2: Narrowing down**
C. **Phase 3: Clarification of the thematic focus**

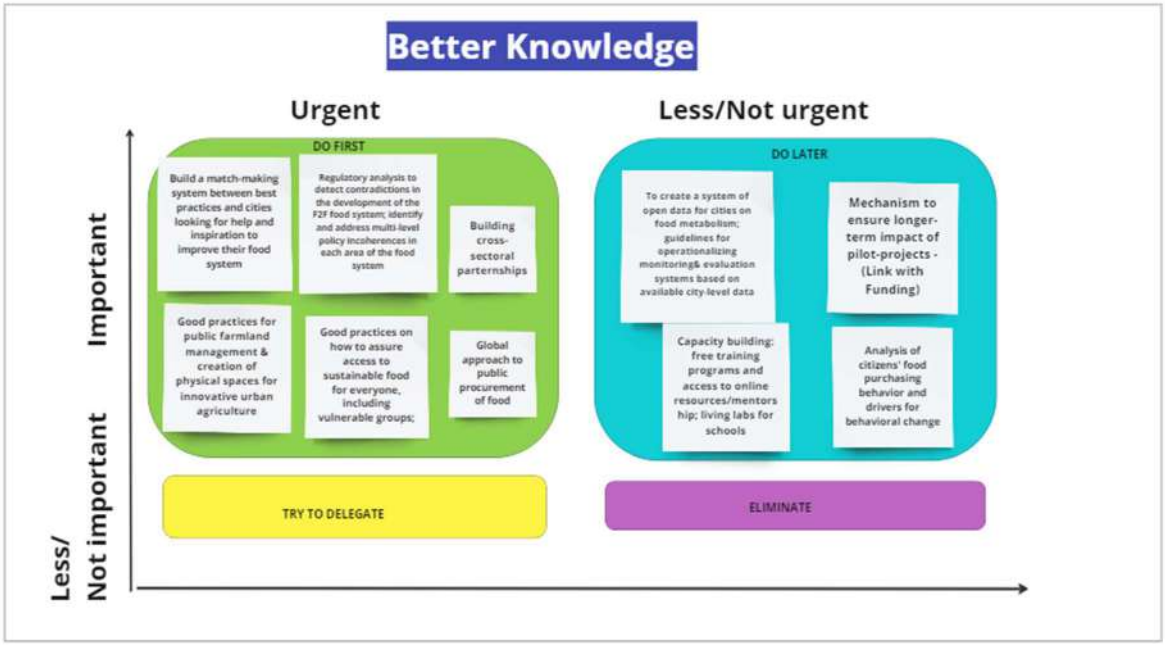
Phase 1: Brainstorming
In this phase each member of the Partnership expressed its specific topics of interest in relation to the possible areas of interventions identified in the Ex-Ante Assessment for each of the 3 pillars of the Urban Agenda for the EU. From the first brainstorming an initial map of 126 topics emerged, divided as follow:

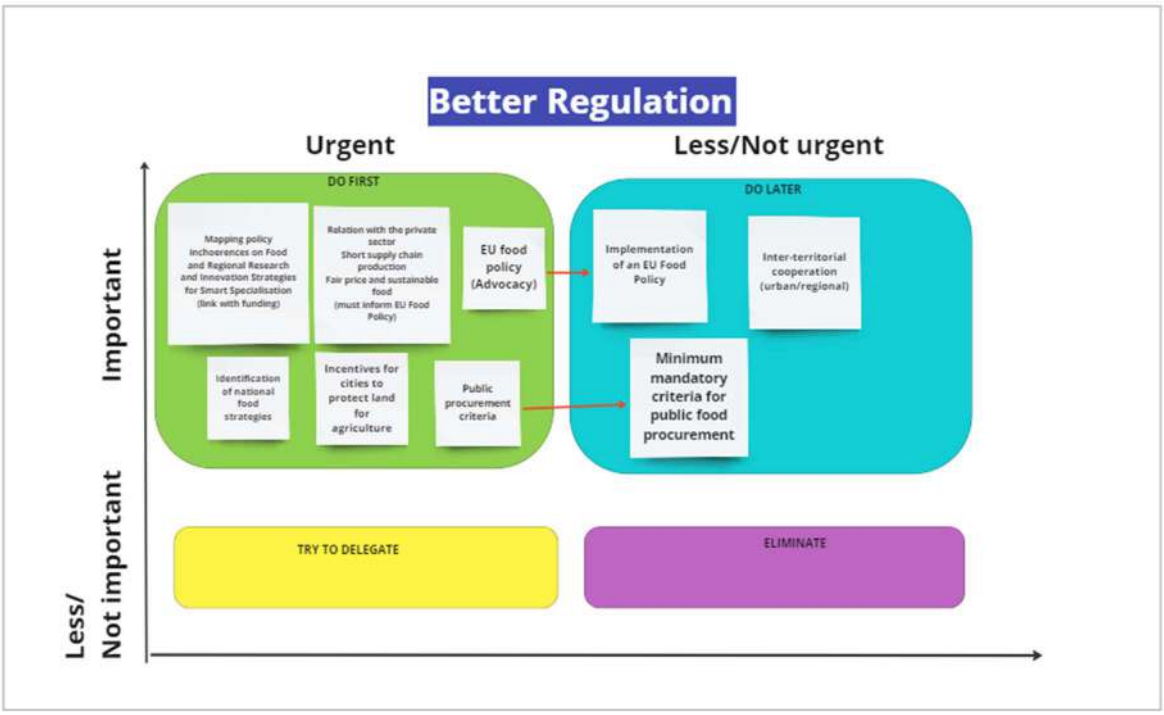
- **Better Regulation: 53 topics of interest**
- **Better Knowledge: 49 topics of interest**
- **Better Funding: 24 topics of interest**

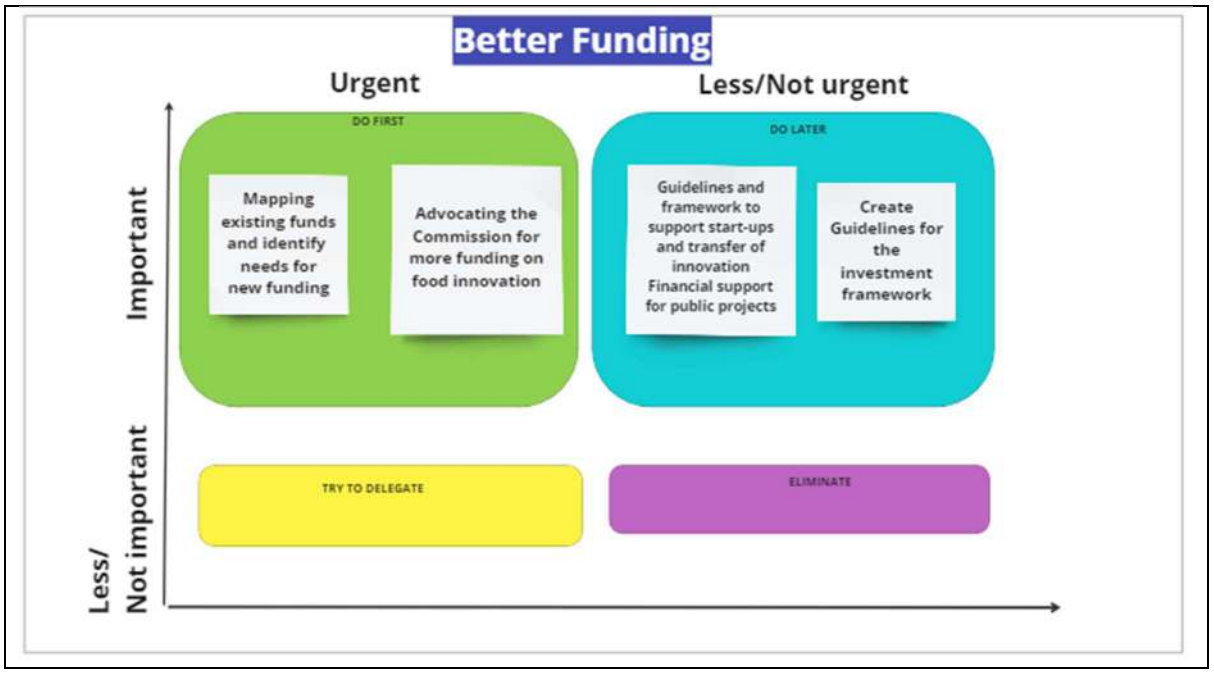
Phase 2: Narrowing down
During the second phase members of the Partnership identified, among the wide range of topics of interest, those more relevant and aligned with the partnership's objectives.
To this end, partners explored the intersections and connections between different topics; by recognising common themes, areas of overlaps, and merging similar ideas into broader themes, partners narrowed down over 100 topics to around 30.
To further specify the focus area, partners **prioritized the selected topics** for each pillar of the Urban Agenda for the EU, **according to their degree of importance and urgency**, using the Eisenhower matrix, as shown in the following tables.

Table 2: Prioritization Matrix, Better Knowledge, Better Regulation and Better Funding Pillars

Prioritization Matrix







Phase 3: Clarification of the thematic focus

The third and final phase of the process was dedicated to better clarify the thematic focus of the Partnership by identifying overarching themes that encompass the most relevant and priority topics. As a result, the Partnership defined three main umbrella themes that provide a structured framework for organizing the partnership's activities and initiatives:

1. **Innovative funding**
2. **City-region framework**
3. **EU and national regulation**

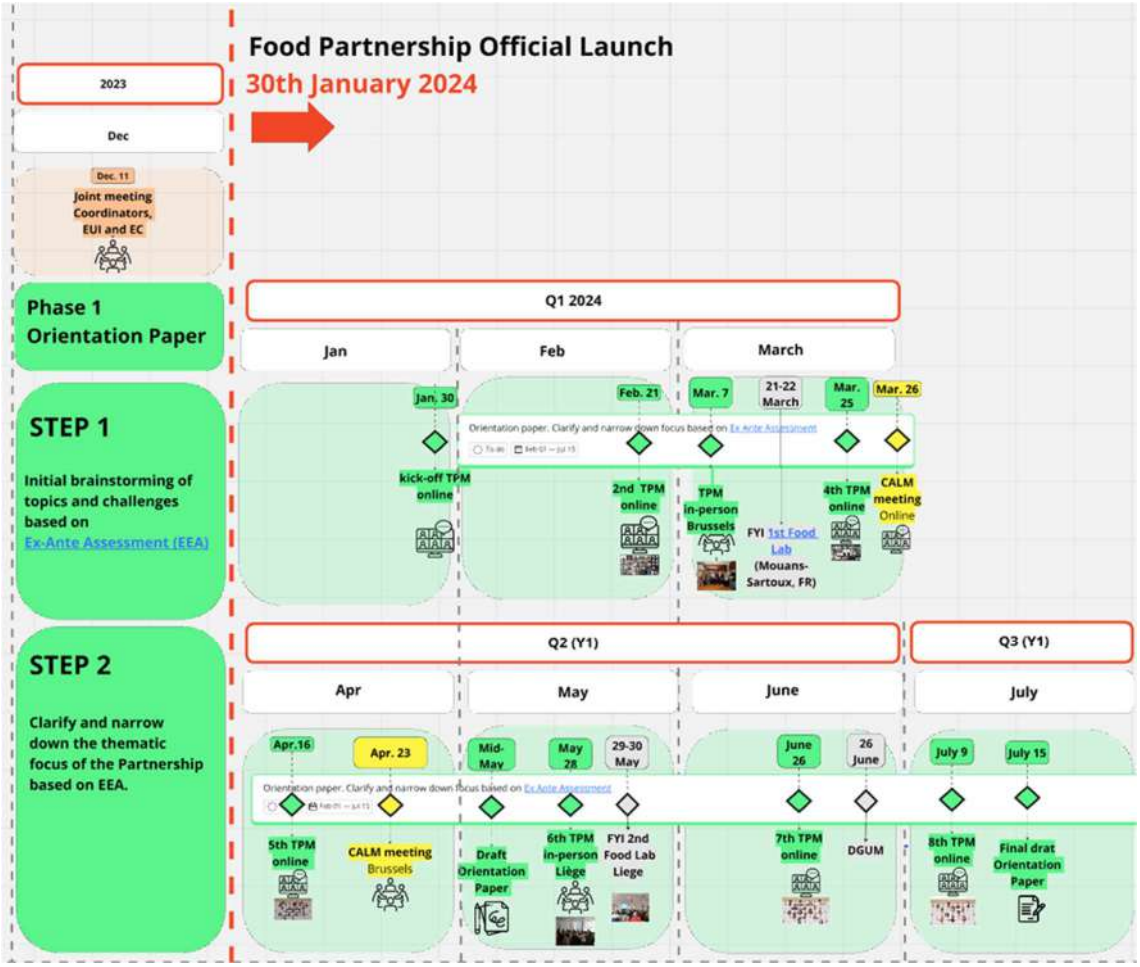
Each of these umbrella themes represents a distinct area of focus for the working groups within the Food Thematic Partnership. The final effort of the partners was dedicated to describing more in detail each thematic area and related sub-topics; this process led to the definition of the "*Thematic Focus*" section of the present paper.

During the entire process members of the Partnership met several times, both online and in-person:

- 1st Partnership meeting, online – 30th January 2024
- 2nd Partnership meeting, online – 21st February 2024
- 3rd Partnership meeting, in-person, Brussels (BE) – 7th March 2024
- 4th Partnership meeting, online – 25th March 2024
- 5th Partnership meeting, online – 16th April 2024
- 6th Partnership meeting, in-person, Liège (BE) – 28th May 2024
- 7th Partnership meeting, online – 26th June 2024
- 8th Partnership meeting, online – 9th July 2024

The whole process is represented in the Food TP Timeline.

Figure 1: Food Thematic Partnership Timeline, January/July 2024



2 STRATEGIC GOALS AND VISION, GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The transformation of food systems requires a systemic approach, and the Thematic Partnership will prioritise the role of cities in leading this transformation by adopting innovative urban food policies.
The main objective of the partnership is **to foster coordination and collaboration among partners and food related initiatives**, leveraging their combined efforts to drive transformative changes in food systems and position cities as catalysts for this change. The partnership recognises the importance of flexibility and a systemic focus, enabling it to adapt and align with ongoing processes.
The UAEU Partnership on Food operates based on core values that guide its monitoring activities. These values include maintaining a food system perspective, supporting multilevel governance, and recognising food as a human right and a common good.
To promote sustainable and equitable food systems in Europe, the partnership will address key themes such as food policy implementation, food related local public services, innovative fundings, food aid systems, public procurement, rural-urban interdependencies, urban agriculture and farmers' markets, globalized supply chains. It emphasises the importance of localising food systems, incorporating all these dimensions in broader urban strategies to achieve sustainable and inclusive local food systems.
By advocating for policy alignment and resource pooling, also by involving the private sector, the partnership has the potential to drive systemic transformation within the European Union and contribute to broader objectives, such as the European Green Deal and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.
As a result of the first phase of brainstorming and analysis members of the Partnership reached consensus on shared values and principles guiding their approach, as well as on priority themes, a critical step in focusing the efforts of the partnership and ensuring alignment among stakeholders.
The **adoption of a multi-level governance, multi-sector, and multi-stakeholder approach, in line with the Urban Agenda for the EU framework,** will serve as the cornerstone of the Partnership's overall strategy, enabling to find a holistic and inclusive response to the multifaceted challenges of the food system, relying on the quadruple helix as the main framework to build such strategy. The Food Partnership seeks to work on how to support the transformation of urban food systems to be more sustainable, resilient and inclusive, addressing issues such as food security, nutrition, education and the environmental impact of food production and consumption. This is going to be key to merge existing knowledge and foster the food system transformation in EU cities. The kind of solutions developed by municipalities already active, especially those developed in EU funded projects and in the network of the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact, will drive to a sounder understanding of the path ahead, based on metrics and monitoring tools capable of guiding the innovation. The Milan Urban Food Policy Pact, as an agreement among more than 280 mayors around the world, offers to the Partnership a unique framework when linked to the General principles.

The vision this Partnership is willing to bring on is linked to the development of a policy shift on food systems. The change needed in the European policy landscape will be at the centre of the Food Partnership work, focusing on the definition of a policy domain dedicated

to European food systems and as expressed in the EAA, the multilevel governance will be kept as key approach.

Food system perspective and multilevel governance are not enough for systemic change at all levels and therefore integrated food policies are a relevant methodology for tackling food resilience.
Integrated food policy approach, together with the implementation of shared strategies, is a relevant methodology for tackling food resilience because it takes a holistic view of the food system and recognizes the need for coordinated and coherent policies at multiple levels of governance. The purpose is to maximise their positive impacts on food resilience, while minimising negative impacts on other areas. This can take a range of different forms, such as cross-sectoral coordination, participatory governance, and policy coherence assessments, forums for building common rules with all the range of stakeholders, including the private sector.
The food system is complex and interconnected, and that policies in one area can have unintended consequences in another. Therefore, it is important to coordinate and align policies across different sectors and levels of governance, to achieve more coherent and sustainable outcomes in the food system.

Based on the experience developed over 10 years within the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact actively engaging more than 100 European cities in developing concrete efforts towards the sustainability of their local food systems, the key goals are:

COHESION AMONG STAKEHOLDERS: a better understanding of multilevel governance potential for transformative change will be built among stakeholders in the Partnership, as well as mapping the current relations.
REGULATION: the aim is to build momentum for broad EU initiatives that can improve the food system, focusing on the most relevant issues for urban areas while identifying the main obstacles to such transformation, having a positive impact on legislative processes and which guide future urban investments on the European food system.
KNOWLEDGE: experiences developed by cities to make their food systems more sustainable will be part of a detailed exchange mechanism, meant to exploit the existing innovations and contribute to the design of future actions.
FUNDINGS: a great effort will be put into connecting with EU bodies and funding schemes for EU projects available for cities and other stakeholders.

The complexity and multidimensionality of the food thematic necessitate the consideration of a wide variety of policy objectives, tools, and actors to ensure its sustainability and resilience. Over the past decade, there has been an exponential increase in emerging initiatives at the city-region level, experimenting with local participatory governance in food systems. This has pushed food onto the urban agenda, even though it traditionally falls outside the jurisdiction of municipalities. Various platforms at the EU and global levels are supporting cities in formulating food strategies and taking action at the city-region level. Activist and umbrella organizations are advocating for the consideration of food systems at the EU political level, advocating for more coherent multi-level governance to facilitate integrated and effective policies.

Given the momentum that has been built around the food system approach and the pressing need for overarching legislation in this regard, it is important for the Thematic Partnership to align with the current trends. This involves striking a balanced focus on the three pillars of **Better Regulation, Better Funding, and Better Knowledge.**

Better regulation processes are gaining importance, which are planned to be launched in the period after the start of Thematic Partnership for the Urban Agenda for the EU and

cities are where actions and changes materialize, and the scale of their engagement is crucial.
The intense dynamics that have emerged from the local to the EU level require greater flexibility and a systemic focus within the Partnership. This allows for better adaptation and correlation with ongoing processes. The Partnership must be able to align with and complement the existing initiatives, frameworks, and platforms, integrating the knowledge and experiences gained from local food governance experiments. This systemic approach ensures that the Partnership remains responsive to evolving needs and effectively contributes to the broader transformation of food systems.
In conclusion, the wide-ranging and dynamic nature of the food thematic necessitates a flexible and systemic approach within the Thematic Partnership for the Urban Agenda for the EU. By aligning with ongoing processes, coordinating with the Framework for a Union Sustainable Food System and the European Food Policy Council, and incorporating the experiences from local initiatives, the Partnership can contribute to food system transformation and empower cities to play a central role in driving positive change.

Relevance for EU policy Goals
The Thematic Food Partnership intends to work closely with key European frameworks to ensure constant alignment with EU institutions priorities and discuss the most pressing issues for today's food system challenges. In the section 'Thematic focus' of the Orientation Paper, a detail of the most relevant EU policy goals can be found.

The main policies taken into account are:

- EU Green Deal
- Farm2Fork strategy
- Mission Soil
- EU Child Guarantee
- Cohesion Policy
- Common Agricultural and Fisheries Policies (CAP and CFP);
- Biodiversity Strategy
- The EU procurement directive
- The Horizon Europe Mission on Adaptation to Climate Change (focusing on supporting EU regions, cities, and local authorities in their efforts to build resilience against the impacts of climate change)
- Food 2030: the EU's research and innovation (R&I) policy to support food system transformation.

The complexity of the policy realm of the European context will be kept in the discussion to align the Partnership's work with the ongoing initiatives and measures.

3 THEMATIC FOCUS

Food Thematic Partnership adopts, as a conceptual reference framework, the following definition of a "**Sustainable Food system**"[1], proposed in the evidence review report of SAPEA:

'A sustainable food system for the EU is one that: provides and promotes safe, nutritious and healthy food of low environmental impact for all current and future EU citizens in a manner that itself also protects and restores the natural environment and its ecosystem services, is robust and resilient, economically dynamic, just and fair, and socially acceptable and inclusive. It does so without compromising the availability of nutritious and healthy food for people living outside the EU, nor impairing their natural environment.'

A sustainable food system lies at the heart of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Adopted in 2015, the SDGs call for major transformations in agriculture and food systems to end hunger, achieve food security and improve nutrition by 2030. To realize the SDGs, the global food system needs to be reshaped to be more productive, more inclusive of poor and marginalized populations, environmentally sustainable and resilient, and able to deliver healthy and nutritious diets to all. These are complex and systemic challenges that require the combination of interconnected actions at the local, national, regional and global levels.

A food systems approach is a way of thinking and doing that considers the food system in its totality, taking into account all the elements, their relationships and related effects. It is not confined to one single sector, sub-system (e.g. value chain, market) or discipline, and thus broadens the framing and analysis of a particular issue as the result of an intricate web of interlinked activities and feedback. It considers all relevant causal variables of a problem and all social, environmental, and economic impacts of the solutions to achieve transformational systemic changes. As such, the **food system approach addresses the limitations of many traditional approaches** to improving food security and nutrition, which tend to be sectoral with either a narrowly defined focus that leads to technical fixes, which are subjected to the scope of one ministry or public agency, or which use systemic thinking to tackle objectives but are limited to sub-systems. Encouraging development practitioners and policymakers to see the bigger picture will also help facilitate multi-stakeholder collaboration and policy coordination at different levels to promote a more balanced relationship and jointly address future challenges. While there will clearly be trade-offs to be made (i.e. between key priorities of the food systems: inclusive poverty reduction, increased agricultural productivity, improved nutrition, and enhanced environmental sustainability), there will also be opportunities to simultaneously accomplish multiple objectives. A food systems approach can help identify such synergies and co-benefits, as well as facilitate the coordination needed to achieve them.

The partnership's focus areas, as identified by the EAA, encompass a range of critical themes that need to be addressed. Food Partnership, considering the available knowledge, mandate and resources of the Partnership members, decided to focus on three main thematic areas/topics that provide a structured framework for organizing the partnership's activities and initiatives.

[1] A Sustainable Food System for the EU, SAPEA, 2020

Table 3: List of topics and sub-topics

N°	Topic	Short Description	Indicated in the EAA
1	**INNOVATIVE FUNDING**	Identification and mobilisation of funding for local and regional authorities to support the development of sustainable food systems.	**Strongly/** Partially/Not at all
1.1	**FUNDING MAPPING** - Funding and financing sources and mechanisms mapping		
1.2	**SMEs SUPPORT** - Local and regional support for entrepreneurship and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)		
1.3	**RESEARCH & INNOVATION** - Support and integration of research, innovation and transfer of innovation in food systems' development		
1.4	**PPP** - Public-private partnership (PPP) and investment framework for sustainable regional and local food systems		
2	**CITY-REGION FRAMEWORK**	Facilitate dialogue, knowledge and best practices exchange between different stakeholders, including policymakers, research centres/universities, cities, farmers, producers, distributors, and consumers, to develop integrated approaches that address the complex challenges of food resilience at the local level.	**Strongly/** Partially/Not at all
2.1	**GOVERNANCE** - City-region food governance and planning		
2.2	**PROCUREMENT** - Sustainable food procurement criteria		
2.3	**MONITORING** - Data and impact monitoring		
2.4	**COMMUNITIES** - Defining an approach to build local food communities		
3	**EU & NATIONAL REGULATION**	The EU/national regulation topic focuses on the need for a systemic approach and overarching legislation ensuring coherence and synergies at all levels.	**Strongly/** Partially/Not at all
3.1	**EU FOOD POLICY** - An integrated EU Food Policy		
3.2	**POLICY BARRIERS** - National & regional key policy barriers and enablers for the integration of sustainable food in urban agendas		
3.3	**FOOD IN 3S** - Enhance the role of urban authorities within Smart Specialisation Strategies targeting food related topics		

3.1 Topic n.1 – Innovative Funding

The transition to a sustainable EU food system implies systemic changes that are needed by all actors of the food system, including policy makers, business operators and consumers. Moreover, the urban integration of food, and embedding innovation and equitable business models in food supply chains are key for a fair and resilient EU food system[2].

Hence, funding and financing must consider a systemic and integrated approach, the opportunity posed by more localised food systems, and the different roles cities, regions and national authorities can play in this context: from direct beneficiaries and project promoters in the case of public projects, to facilitators and promoters of food topics and innovation, or partners in public-private partnerships, co-creation or innovation processes.

Table 4: List of sub-topics related to the "Innovative Funding" thematic area

	Sub-Topics
1.	**FUNDING MAPPING - Funding and financing sources and mechanisms mapping:** the mapping of funding and financing opportunities for food-related projects for cities and regions, linked to all stages of the food policy cycle and the stakeholders involved, and the identification of gaps and needs for new funding/ financing mechanisms. Both integrated (e.g. inspired from community-led local development in urban and rural areas) and project-based approaches will be explored. Opportunities to scale-up or replicate good practices will also be considered, as well as simplification of procedures and processes for obtaining funds in the framework of existing programmes.
2.	**SMEs SUPPORT - Local and regional support for entrepreneurship and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs):** entrepreneurs and SMEs are key to local development and innovation. Innovative targeted financing mechanisms and targeted support at local/ regional level can enhance sustainable food systems and should consider the specificities of the food ecosystem (e.g. the specific needs of local farmers/ producers). They are directly linked to the **national and local/ regional policy frameworks and ecosystems** supporting entrepreneurship and SME growth within the food sector. Local and regional support for SMEs can address **access to funds**, **capacity building and training**, **market access and networking**, and **support for scaling up**. Cities and regions can play a key role in setting up business development services and infrastructure, either by providing direct support, or acting as facilitators. However, limitations of national and regional public aid schemes (e.g. de minimis, regional public aid etc.) should be considered.
3.	**RESEARCH & INNOVATION - Support and integration of research, innovation and transfer of innovation in food systems' development** depends on **EU national and local/ regional policy and funding frameworks** fostering regional/ local food innovation ecosystems (incl. RIS3). It entails **inclusive dialogue and community-centred approaches** that local/regional governments can facilitate, involving all relevant stakeholders, including farmers, food service workers, and community members. Such approaches should start from

[2] Reducing Risk for a Fair and Resilient Food System, *https://www.eitfood.eu/missions/reducing-risk-for-a-fair-and-resilient-food-system*

	mapping local/regional value chains and stakeholders and can enable regional/ local platforms/ open innovation platforms. Nevertheless, innovative funding instruments should consider the creation of agri-food **research and innovation hubs** and structures enabling **collaboration, transfer and experimentation** (e.g. campuses, testing grounds, innovation transfer centres, hubs, living labs etc.).
4.	**PPP - Public-private partnership (PPP) and investment framework for sustainable regional and local food systems** will look at the role of cities and regions as facilitators for the establishment of functional PPPs, and guidelines on cooperation for the localization of food systems as a unique opportunity to strengthen food system resilience (including independence from weather conditions) and access different (and combined) public and private funding sources. The issues of bankability and scale of projects will also be considered, as key factors for investment attraction. The frameworks will also explore the possibilities of experiment impact financing tools to food system transformation actions.

3.1.1 What are the specific problems to be addressed?

Policy and Funding Coherence: Ensuring alignment between various food-related policies at EU, national and regional/ local levels is challenging, all the more so as food policy is at the intersection of urban and rural development, agriculture, cohesion with their respective policy and funding frameworks. While the Sustainable Food System Framework (proposal), emerging from the Farm to Fork strategy, proposes a systemic approach to food, the funding landscape is still fragmented, with no dedicated, integrated approach to food. Moreover, the urban-rural relationship and cooperation and urban approach to food are underrepresented in the EU context (incl. in funding). It must also be considered that urban and rural areas are inseparable in smaller countries.

Transition Costs: Shifting to sustainable practices requires investments in research, infrastructure, and capacity building. Funding mechanisms must address these transition costs, as well as the need for innovation (below). Furthermore, they should be coordinated with other funding mechanisms to ensure harmony between the food-related objectives of the various existing mechanisms.

Innovation and Research: Funding mechanisms should support innovation, research, and technology adoption to enhance sustainability across the food value chain. Moreover, from an urban development perspective, new approaches to urban agriculture (e.g. aquaponic or hydroponic systems, recreating gardening belts and areas, etc.) and urban innovation should be considered.

Competitiveness vs. impact for resilient food systems: Funding and financing mechanisms and instruments should also consider the specific issue of competitiveness of local producers and suppliers, which can be lower compared to other economic sectors. In this context, specific instruments related to social innovation and impact investment can be explored. Shortening supply chains and powering regional / local supply chains would enhance the resilience of food systems, offering a sustainable alternative to importing food.

Equitable Access: Ensuring that funding reaches/ includes all actors in the food system, including small-scale farmers and local communities, is crucial for equitable access to resources.

Demand-supply balance: EU funding is mostly directed to the supply side and there is not enough focus on public policies and funds on the demand side. In accordance with the rules of the internal market, supporting and developing funding mechanisms for local supply chains, including through public procurement (e.g. schools and hospitals procurement for local products), and raising consumer awareness about sustainable choices and incentivizing demand for such products can tilt the scale.

Targeted funding: Prioritisation of specific topics/ issues that are relevant and contribute to an EU sustainable food system and EU targets, through funding/ financing: e.g. climate-smart practices and resilience-building measures, creating innovative agriculture independent of weather conditions and zero emission etc.

3.1.2 What is the relevance to the three pillars?

Better Regulation - the topic is **complementary** to better regulation, mirroring the efforts for a systemic approach to food and is part of the focus of section 3.3.1.

Better Funding - the topic **directly addresses** better funding, by proposing the establishment of a food funding agenda, with the contribution of local, regional and national authorities and umbrella organisations. Moreover, it looks at the mix of funding and financing instruments, and at combining public and private funds, to maximise results and to foster a sustainable approach.

Better Knowledge - the topic **supports/ enables** better knowledge, as it stresses the need to go beyond financial support, and to invest in capacity building, innovation etc.

3.1.3 Expected impacts and outputs

Table 5: List of expected impacts and outputs related to the "Innovative Funding" thematic area

Sub-topic 1 **Funding and financing sources and mechanisms mapping**	
Expected impacts	• The development of dedicated food funding framework, in cooperation with EU bodies, financial institutions and other relevant stakeholders, and with the participation of cities, regions and national authorities • Increased capacity for food funding and financing, through a better knowledge and mix of existing resources
Outputs	• Map of food funding and financing landscape in EU • Recommendations for an EU dedicated food funding framework for cities and regions

Sub-topic 2 Local and regional support for entrepreneurship and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)	
Expected impacts	• Increased capacity and involvement of local/ regional/ national authorities to support entrepreneurship and SME growth within the food sector • Increased awareness and agri-food entrepreneurship • Improved targeted funding for entrepreneurship and SME growth within the food sector
Outputs	• Local/ regional/ national policies/ strategies for supporting entrepreneurship and SME growth within the food sector

Sub-topic 3 Support and integration of research, innovation and transfer of innovation in food systems' development	
Expected impacts	• Increased capacity and involvement of local/ regional/ national authorities to support food innovation • Improved targeted funding for food innovation • Improved mapping of local/ regional value chains and corresponding funding
Outputs	• Local/ regional/ national policies/ strategies and guidelines for supporting food innovation ecosystems • Model/ pilot/ guidelines for agri-food research and innovation hubs

Sub-topic 4 Public-private partnership (PPP) and investment framework for sustainable regional and local food systems	
Expected impacts	• Increased public-private cooperation and use of combined funding
Outputs	• Guidelines on PPP framework for sustainable regional and local food system • Guidelines on investment framework for sustainable regional and local food system • Schemes for impact financing tools within the urban food system • Good practices/ case studies

3.1.4 Relevance for EU policy goals

Green Deal: To meet the EU Green deal ambitions, traditional funding sources alone cannot cover the extensive investment required. Innovative funding can therefore act as an additional boost to drive towards green investments in areas not covered by the green deal.

Food Security: Innovative funding methods can play a critical role in achieving EU policy goals related to food security by providing the necessary financial resources and incentives to promote sustainable agricultural practices, enhance food supply chains, and support research and development in the food sector.

Strategic autonomy: EU strategic autonomy (EU-SA) refers to the capacity of the EU to act autonomously – that is, without being dependent on other countries – in strategically important policy areas. Innovative funding can help bolster the EU's capabilities in production and sustaining local industries, thereby reducing critical dependencies on essential produce.

Promoting scientific and technological progress: As explored under sub-topic 3 of this paper innovation in the food industry is one of the goals that can be targeted under this Thematic Partnership.

Promoting cultural diversity and food heritage: Innovative funding can play a role in promoting cultural diversity and food heritage by providing resources and support for initiatives that celebrate and preserve traditional food practices, culinary arts, and cultural identities. This could be achieved for example by direct support for traditional food producers, cultural projects, research, education, and more.

3.2 Topic n.2 – City-Region framework

Adopting a city-region framework helps recognizing food systems' territorial specificity, cities' role in shaping food systems within and beyond their administrative boundaries, and the need for multi-level, multi-actor and cross-sectoral collaborations. It situates rural-urban interdependencies at the heart of diagnosis and intervention design for just and sustainable food systems. Due to its comprehensive nature, members of the Food Partnership identified four subtopics for specific focus.

Table 6: List of sub-topics related to the "City-Region framework" thematic area

	Sub-Topics
1.	**GOVERNANCE - City region food governance and planning:** This subtopic focuses on developing more integrated food policies and governance spaces across administrative levels, actors, sectors and territories. To avoid overlap with Topic 3, work will concentrate on a specific scale of governance issues: rural-urban linkages, city-region liaisons, and the nexus of food and non-food sectors. Specific attention will be paid to sustainable food planning, particularly concerning improving food environments, access to urban, peri-urban and rural resources, land use and public farmland management. To achieve better food governance a specific focus of this subtopic are also the food-related local public services. Food justice will serve as a transversal lens across all work.
2.	**PROCUREMENT - Sustainable food procurement criteria**: This subtopic highlights public authorities' potential crucial role in procuring food and services that deliver positive socio-economic and environmental impacts to address issues such as food insecurity, progressively disappearing small-scale farmers, climate change, food waste, animal welfare, nutrition and health. A key focus will be Minimum mandatory standards (MMS) for sustainable food procurement to establish a fair playing field for all public authorities, phasing out unsustainable practices, and channelling resources to support more fair and sustainable agriculture while ensuring sustainable and nutritious diets to all.
3.	**MONITORING - Data and impact monitoring** addresses the current state of art on European data and indicators of urban and city-region food systems. This includes understanding what type of data is gathered and how to embed food systems monitoring in existing databases.
4.	**COMMUNITY - Building a local community about food** focuses on promoting the development of urban-rural networks to share knowledge and awareness on sustainable food systems. It also aims to develop practices that activate synergies among actors from different sectors.

3.2.1 What are the specific problems to be addressed?

City-region food governance and planning. In recent decades, cities have developed integrated urban food policies and strategies and more participative governance mechanisms. However, these new spaces bring about challenges concerning power asymmetries and policy incoherence across levels and sectors and have surfaced existing food system's **inequities**. More specifically, there is notably lack of city-region policy and governance frameworks with **wider territorial coherence and ambition** due to institutional and legislation gaps across administrative levels - clear objectives, achievable goals, and well-defined obligations to guide future actions are needed. Another problem is a clear comprehension of all the food-related public services delivered by the local authorities, managed by different city departments without concrete synergies and out of a unique strategy. As a result, challenges remain regarding developing **healthy and sustainable diets and food environments** for all, considering people's access to resources for this purpose**,** from using public spaces, housing or access to land**.**

Sustainable food procurement criteria. The current barriers include harmonizing the different legislative frameworks affecting food procurement and simplifying procurement procedures to ensure the inclusion of small-scale farmers and businesses. Additionally, there is a lack of awareness regarding the potential gains of public food procurement and insufficient support in terms of knowledge, expertise, and skills for local authorities and procurers in implementing sustainability criteria. Similarly, training for kitchen staffs is lacking. Moreover, there is a need for a solid monitoring system to ensure compliance with these criteria measure effectiveness of these actions.

Data and impact monitoring. Implementing robust monitoring frameworks is paramount to identifying the effectiveness of proposed and ongoing actions and the best implementation sectors and areas. Despite advancements in this regard, those proposed by the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact and City-Region Food System Indicator Framework, their operationalisation faces several challenges due to local authorities' limited capacity and data availability. Therefore, a shared methodology is needed to gather data, monitor impacts, and share results, including establishing systems for such activities and, matching policy needs with research and disseminating best practices.

Defining an approach to build local food communities. Promoting the creation of food communities/councils in a city-region perspective allows innovation in food systems that improve rural-urban linkages, including with neighbouring territories, which are difficult to activate today. Harmonizing the dialogue among the public, private, and third sectors with different objectives and interests is the main challenge. Strategic and policy frameworks lack a comprehensive perspective that encourages the creation of city-region networks.

3.2.2 What is the relevance to the three pillars?

Table 7: Relevance to the three pillars of each sub-topic

	Better regulation	Better knowledge	Better funding
City-region food governance and planning	Promote the integration of urban and regional food strategies at the local and European levels and consider food systems in all policies to guarantee longer impacts and effects. Facilitate the development of governance spaces, projects, strategies and institutional infrastructures to deal with city-region challenges and development of interventions Identify the policy tools that can support changes towards healthy and sustainable food environments within and beyond food-related instruments Identity the food-related local public services as driver of change of the food system.	Embed city-region approach in EU, national, regional and local policy-making processes. Mainstream approach. Facilitate dialogue and knowledge exchange between different stakeholders, including policymakers, farmers, producers, distributors, and consumers, through for instance food councils, to develop integrated approaches that address the complex challenges of food resilience at the local level. Establish better linkages between food-related knowledge and interventions and non-food sectors shaping city-region dynamics (understand nexus and transform interactions) Share good practices on development of city-region food partnerships and projects. Includes all the food-related public services in the broader knowledge of local authorities' efforts.	Ensure funding to develop and maintain long-term planning processes at a city-region scale, including projects, interventions and co-governance spaces. Fund interventions to reshape food environments towards more healthy and sustainable outcomes. Invest in public infrastructure that supports transformation of food environments and access to resources

	Better regulation	Better knowledge	Better funding
Sustainable food procurement criteria	Advocate for policies and criteria that promote healthier diets and food waste reduction in public canteens and prioritizing food ingredients sourced from sustainable agricultural practices that fairly remunerate farmers and respect workers' rights and animal welfare. Provide opportunities for local and small-scale farmers and food businesses.	Identify and document exemplary food procurement practices across the EU, and effectively communicate this information, including via EU networks, while sharing expertise on improving tender criteria to ensure fair, sustainable, and healthy diets. Provide guidance with useful and efficient sustainability criteria that can be used in a direct and easy way by public procurers.	Support the establishment of a learning network for public authorities, food procurers, and kitchen staff to share knowledge, best practices, and strategies for implementation.
Data and impact monitoring	Improve the transparency of the multilevel governance, from local to European, which has an impact on food systems. Support evidence-based policy-making decisions	Map and contribute to synthetise current efforts on monitoring and impact assessment of urban and city-region food interventions and identify gaps for further development Link to existing European, national, regional and local efforts to create platforms for data collection, analysis and knowledge sharing. For example, the Sustainable Food Systems Partnership proposal for an Observatory or the integration of new indicators in data sets.	Raise awareness and secure funding for data collection and impact monitoring that allows pooling knowledge across Europe and provided robust evidence.

	Better regulation	Better knowledge	Better funding
Defining an approach to build local food communities	Facilitate the dialogue between urban and rural stakeholders. Promote cooperative actions to build networks.	Mapping community that connects cities with their agricultural regions. Platforms and criteria for data collection and analysis of urban-rural initiatives Facilitate knowledge transfer and awareness raising on sustainable food behaviour. Promote sustainable food consumption/ behaviour.	Invest and fund initiatives that promotes an active rural-urban linkage

3.2.3 Expected impacts and outputs

Table 8: List of expected impacts and outputs related to the "City-Region framework" thematic area

Expected impacts	• Provide cities with a repertoire of tools to enhance collective capacity and urban-rural linkages • Enhance cities' capacity to monitoring and evaluating progress towards sustainable food systems using a city-region perspective and comprehension of all their food-related public services • Promotes food culture, a healthy eating style and conscious consumption, and supports local production through the promotion of local products and training about an innovative and sustainable approach
Expected outputs per sub-topic	
Sub-topic 1 City-region governance and planning	
Outputs	• Policy lever toolbox to build city-region synergies, with special attention to identifying local authorities' potential areas of action and public food services for healthy and sustainable food environments • Recommendations of key principles that Integrated City-Region Food Strategies should include • Guidance on how to include regional actors such as small farmers in urban food policymaking • List of food-related local public services potentially managed by local authorities

Sub-topic 2 Sustainable food procurement criteria	
Outputs	• Advocacy for harmonising the different legislative levels impacting public food procurement and the introduction of MMS for sustainable public food procurement across the EU • Policy briefs on the challenges for and opportunities/benefits of sustainable public food procurement and mandatory sustainability standards, coupled with guidance for food procurement strategies' improvement • Recommendations for better funding schemes to support knowledge sharing among public authorities and procurement layers both at the EU and national level • Guidance on the key role for the effective implementation of food literacy initiatives in schools
Sub-topic 3 **Data impact and monitoring**	
Outputs	• Advocacy for integrating the topic of Food (through specific core indicators) in ongoing urban data initiatives at the EU level (i.e. Eurostat, etc...) • Monitoring tools and indicator repertoire (i.e. MUFPP-FAO Monitoring Framework, CRFS Framework, Cool Food Pledge, etc...), including guidance on indicator and tool selection considering place-based characteristics, and existing commitments for measuring impact • Gather potential data standards and methodologies, and new data sources, available to support the creation of inter-operable and comparable datasets for analysing city-region food systems
Sub-topic 4 **Defining an approach to build local food communities**	
Outputs	• Events, courses, communication campaigns and initiatives based on the Whole School Food Approach • Use of public participation platforms to improve citizens' involvement and to minimize the barrier between citizens and institutions • Support, when relevant, the creation of local food policy councils, composed of representatives from a wide range of stakeholders competent on food issues, able to orient local policies and to dialogue with partners and national and international bodies

3.2.4 Relevance for EU policy goals

This topic is relevant for different EU policy goals. First, The **Farm to Fork Strategy**, hereafter F2F strategy, is at the heart of the European Green Deal aiming to make food systems fair, healthy and environmentally friendly. It addresses comprehensively the challenges of sustainable food systems and recognises the inextricable links between healthy people, healthy societies and a healthy planet. The strategy is also central to the Commission's agenda to achieve the **United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs). To improve the availability and price of sustainable food and to promote healthy and sustainable diets in institutional catering, the Commission will determine the best way of setting minimum mandatory criteria for sustainable food procurement. This will help cities, regions and public authorities to play their part by sourcing sustainable food for schools, hospitals and public institutions and it will also boost sustainable farming systems, such as organic farming.

The Farm to Fork strategy and the Biodiversity strategy include the target of 25% of EU agricultural land under organic farming by 2030 and a significant increase in organic aquaculture. To support the achievement of that target, the Commission adopted in 2021 the **EU Action Plan for the Development of Organic Production.**

The first axis of that Action Plan aims to increase the demand for organic products. Within that context, the Action Plan aims to promote the procurement of organic products for public canteens and to increase the share of organic products and educational activities on organics in the EU school scheme.
Secondly, cohesion policy continues to support integrated territorial and local development strategies through territorial tools and empower urban authorities and territorial bodies in the management of the funds, while requiring strong local partnerships with relevant stakeholders. 2021–2027 ERDF investments for integrated territorial and local development strategies will be supported either under policy objective 5 or under other policy objectives through one of the EU territorial instruments (ITI, CLLD) or another territorial tool designed by EU Member States[3]. These tools align well with the content of the topic proposed.
Food TP will continue exploring other linkages with EU policies and opportunities as the work progresses.

[3] Article 28 of the Regulation (EU) 2021/1060

3.3 Topic n.3 – EU/National Regulation

The EU/national regulation topic focuses on the need for a systemic approach and overarching legislation ensuring coherence and synergies at all levels.

Table 9: List of sub-topics related to the "EU/National Regulation" thematic area

Sub-Topics	
1.	**EU FOOD POLICY - An integrated EU Food Policy** The partnership will advocate for EU commitment to an integrated EU Food Policy that ensures multi-level and cross-sectoral policy coherence from the EU to the local level and enables local authorities' action. The EU has recognised the need to take an integrated food policy approach with the Farm to Fork Strategy but has so far not made a proposal for an EU Food policy or a legislative framework for sustainable food systems. Cities are committing to work towards fairer and sustainable food systems through the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (MUFPP), including by adopting and implementing local food policies. Nonetheless, a lack of multi-level policy coherence as well as incoherences of EU food policies with the EU research framework on food systems present barriers to fully unlocking the potential for sustainable food systems that cities are committing to through the Milan Urban Food Policy.
2.	**POLICY BARRIERS - National & regional key policy barriers and enablers for the integration of sustainable food in urban agendas** The partnership will aim at addressing multi-level policy barriers and levers, as well as cross-sectorial policy incoherences conditioning local action on food systems in a selection of key policies. It will consider the lack of competencies at local level (i.e. in agriculture) and how some cities are dealing with it. Building on existing analyses on key policies, the goal is to identify obstacles and drivers derived from national and regional levels that strongly influence the promotion of sustainable food production, distribution, consumption, food waste management and circularity at the municipal level and in Urban Agendas. The partnership will identify examples of national/regional food strategies that work as enabling frameworks for urban/local level food policy action to facilitate ways of sharing these best practices and understand how to replicate and adapt them to new contexts. Attention will be paid to the role of the private sector and different stakeholders in key areas of intervention.
3.	**FOOD IN 3S - Enhance the role of urban authorities within Smart Specialisation Strategies targeting food related topics** The partnership will aim at providing suggestions on how to enhance local authorities' action in Smart Specialisation Strategies, focusing particularly on local food systems. Operationalising the EU Cohesion Policy for the 2021-2027 period, Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3) are region-wide strategies, developing strengths and assets of the concerned regions through a place-based approach. We argue that cities also play an important role in innovation processes as they are engines of new ideas and solutions, dynamic places where changes happen on a larger scale and at a fast pace. Thus, this subtopic focuses on urban authorities and the possibility to use local food systems as an action field to strengthen the role of cities in S3.

3.3.1 What are the specific problems to be addressed?

Besides accounting for a food system and multilevel governance perspective, the proposed areas of intervention are targeted towards the promotion of an integrated food policy approach.

The food system is complex and interconnected, and policies in one area can have unintended consequences in another (SAPEA 2020). Coordinating and aligning policies across different sectors and levels of governance is necessary to achieve coherent and sustainable food system outcomes. An **integrated food policy approach** is necessary as it takes a holistic view of the food system and recognizes the need for coordinated and coherent policies at multiple levels of governance. The purpose is to maximise their positive impacts on food resilience, while minimising negative impacts on other areas. This can take a range of different forms, such as **cross sectoral coordination, participatory governance, and policy coherence assessments.**

Addressing gaps in the policy environment requires advocating for more inclusive and integrated approaches and involves promoting policies that recognize the importance of urban and peri-urban agriculture, supporting small-scale operators, revising education curricula to incorporate alternative food consumption models, encouraging circularity and other strategies that prevent, recover and reuse food waste while supporting local economies, promoting production models that restore soil health and agro-ecosystem biodiversity.

Adapting EU and national **legislation to empower cities** to lead local food system transformations is crucial. It requires multilevel coherence, where EU policies are designed in a way that allows cities to implement and tailor them according to their specific circumstances. This approach recognizes the diversity of urban environments across the EU and allows for localized solutions that address the unique challenges faced by each city.

There are several gaps in the current legislative framework related to sustainability in the food system: the CAP, fisheries policy, food legislation, and environmental legislation have been developed in a disconnected manner and do not capture the complexity of the food system, resulting in unsustainable food and farming models, policy incoherence, conflicting objectives and loopholes (SAPEA 2020). In 2020, as part of its flagship Farm to Fork Strategy, the European Commission committed to proposing a legislative framework on sustainable food systems, reflecting the approach described in the IPES-Food report "Towards a Common Food Policy" [4] which provided a relevant roadmap for transforming the EU's food systems, however this proposal still has to be published.

3.3.2 What is the relevance to the three pillars?

Better regulation: This goal is at the core of the topic, which will result in a clearer picture of multi-level incoherences and barriers hampering the implementation of sustainable food systems within urban agendas. Furthermore, in connection with the Working Group on "City-region food systems", this topic is expected to clarify the specific competences and complementary capacities that municipalities and city-regions exercise

[4] TOWARDS A COMMON FOOD POLICY FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION, IPES Food Report, 2019

with respect to higher levels of governance, in helping to shape a sustainable food system for the EU. It is also expected to provide recommendations about how to adapt EU legislation to empower cities and municipalities to lead local food system transformations and how can local governments benefit or use higher level policies and plans as triggers to implement urban agendas.

Better funding: Mapping incoherences between policies addressing the food system will result in the identification of areas for potential improvement in terms of subsidies efficacy (strong Interaction with the Topic "Innovative funding"). Consequently, identifying areas of improvement means enabling a more effective and targeted use of existing funding, which prevents unproductive use of resources. This will help to avoid the tendency towards short-termism and project-based resources without thinking to more structural forms of support which address key priorities and problems in food systems. It is expected that working on the role of EU and National regulatory structures in supporting urban agendas will result in a better understanding of what are the key priorities to be addressed in terms of funding. Furthermore, proposing pathways for more integrated food policies also means identifying opportunities for co-support and co-funding across EU DGs and policy sectors.

Better knowledge: Developing better knowledge is also key to this Working Group. Currently, specific barriers and lock-ins faced by cities in pursuing their action on food system change are clear to local authorities, but not that visible to EU or National stakeholders. Conversely, the complex picture of National and EU level policy and regulatory guidelines is only partially clear to local authorities, which are engaged in navigating their day-to-day governance. In synergy with the other topics, the working Group "EU and National regulation" takes concrete steps in starting to bridge these knowledge gaps. This is done by making clear what are the key barriers to be removed and opportunities to be tapped in key areas of the food system, to allow cities accomplishing their mission through integrated local food policies.

3.3.3 Expected impacts and outputs

The overarching approach adopted by this working group is advocate for changes in EU and National regulations by delving into the different sub-topics. This work will result in actions such as the elaboration of policy briefs, the sharing of good practices, and through raising awareness in stakeholder dialogues and in-person meetings with EU & national representatives. Specific feedback on existing regulations (e.g. with respect to local food production, public procurement, food environments) will be provided by dialoguing with the partnership's network and by collecting evidence from experts and stakeholders.

Table 10: List of expected impacts and outputs related to the "EU/National Regulation" thematic area

Sub-topic 1 **An integrated EU Food Policy**	
Expected impacts	• Awareness raising and influence on policy makers at the European level • Informed advocacy which provides further evidence on the relevance of fostering support for integrated food policies with a clear pillar related to supporting the local level
Outputs	• Policy briefing(s) with key recommendations for calling for an integrated EU food policy, possibly including pathways for integrating a food lens in various policy and legislative measures, and suggestions on enabling multi-level governance mechanisms to allow the adequate participation of local-regional authorities • Multilevel governance dialogues: i.e. connecting the Cleverfood[5] project dialogues to the Urban Agenda

Sub-topic 2 **National & regional key policy barriers and enablers**	
Expected impacts	• Improved communication and enhanced understanding of leverages and barriers faced by local authorities emanating from regional and national regulations • Better understanding of the role of Member States and of the impact and opportunity of national food policies • Better understanding of the specific domains in which cities have a complementary role with respect to the EU level in supporting the development of sustainable agri-food systems • Better awareness on the role of relevant actors, including the private sector
Outputs	• Identification of barriers and constraint factors faced by cities derived from EU, national or regional legal frameworks and policies, and ways of addressing those constraints • Recommendations for action to be taken at the national level, based on the good practices of national food strategies that support urban food systems change and replicability

[5] https://food2030.eu/projects/cleverfood/

Sub-topic 3 Enhance the role of urban authorities within Smart Specialisation Strategies	
Expected impacts	• Integrating different stakeholders, particularly urban authorities and Directorates-General of the European Commission in the food topic through a territorially based approach provided by the Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3) • Embedding awareness about an integrated food lens in the work of several Directorates-General (DGs) of the European Commission
Outputs	• Compilation of lessons learned on good practices. This will serve for urban policymaking and for boosting capacities of urban authorities to engage in S3 • A policy brief outlining the contribution of urban authorities to S3s, focusing on food. The policy brief will explore to what extent urban territories are present in S3, see how cities fit in smart specialization strategies and share best practices

3.3.4 Relevance for EU policy goals

Sub-topic 1 "An integrated EU Food Policy", recognises how concrete proposals for an EU food policy based on an integrated approach are currently missing in the EU agenda. Furthermore, there are uncertainties about how the new EU leadership will embrace the issue. Taken this into account, this sub-topic takes stock of existing policies on food systems, at the EU and National levels and helps to link those policies and legislative frameworks.
The following policies are of particular relevance:

- Common Agricultural and Fisheries Policies (CAP and CFP);
- Farm to Fork Strategy and Sustainable Food Systems Law, within the EU Green Deal;
- Biodiversity Strategy;
- The EU procurement directive;
- The Horizon Europe Mission on Adaptation to Climate Change (focusing on supporting EU regions, cities, and local authorities in their efforts to build resilience against the impacts of climate change);
- Food 2030: the EU's research and innovation (R&I) policy to support food system transformation.

We recognise how the EU has started working on a Sustainable Food Systems framework law (deriving from the Farm to Fork Strategy), intended to translate sustainability targets into concrete legislative measures; and we also acknowledge how policy work of several DGs (e.g. DG Agri, DG REGIO, DG SANTE, DG RTD and DG MARE) can be rethought by infusing attention to food system in different policies (see also Ex-Ante Assessment, see our sub-topics). As a working group and as Partnership, the aim is to build on this momentum and to invite EU stakeholders to pursue concrete legislative measures tackling key food system problems and enabling local action. As such, the Food Partnership pays attention to new missions established by the new EU leadership under the current mandate. Food Partnership aims at bringing a food perspective in EU policies that touch upon the urban level. Subtopic 3 on "Smart Specialisation Strategies" constitutes an example of that. In fact, innovation is key to a range of Commission priorities, particularly the European Green Deal, an economy that works for people, and making Europe fit for the digital age. The commitment for research and innovation through smart specialisation strategies is clearly embedded in the cohesion policy.

4. SYNERGIES WITH OTHER PARTNERSHIPS

The Food Thematic Area is inherently interconnected with many other TAs, as the food system impacts and is impacted by a wide range of environmental, social, and economic factors. To effectively address the challenges of the food system, it is important to understand the interrelated nature of these issues and promote solutions that address multiple challenges simultaneously, in integrated food policies.

The most challenging topics that must be considered in relation with the Food TA are:

Climate Change: the food system activities contribute to climate change, and the impacts of climate change on food production and security are significant.
Water: The food system is a major user of water, and the impacts of water scarcity and pollution on food production and security are important.

Biodiversity: The food system relies on biodiversity for its sustainability, and the loss of biodiversity due to habitat destruction, pollution, and climate change poses relevant challenges to the food system.

Health: the food system has a significant impact on public health, through the availability and affordability of healthy food, but also there are significant impacts of food production and processing on air and water quality.

Culture: food is part of the culture of a community and can be regarded as a component of its identity and heritage that must be preserved.

Energy transition: food implies consumption of resources among which important energy quantities to be produced but also to be manufactured, packaged and transported. To address food energy consumption, the possibilities to move towards more plant-based diets must be investigated together with the favouring of short production and consumption chains.

Many of these topics have already dedicated UAEU Thematic Partnerships, the outputs of which this new UAEU TP on Food should capitalise and further advance.

In particular, the following synergies with other Thematic Partnerships could be explored.

Table 11: Synergies between Food TP and other UAEU Thematic Partnerships

Other TPs	Food Thematic Partnerships – Possible synergies
1. Greening cities	Synergies with action: • N.3 Reaching meaningful urban greening targets • N.4 Strengthening structural funding for urban green infrastructure (*in particular, "rural-urban areas and ecosystem services" is a common topic of interest) • N.5 Enhancing the use of innovative funding to enhance urban authorities to green cities (*in particular, "rural-urban areas and ecosystem services" is a common topic of interest)
2. Public procurement	Public Procurement Partnership can contribute to capacity building issues of the Food Partnership, trough the e-learning platform on innovative and responsible public procurement
3. Sustainable Tourism	Synergies with action: • N.1 Guidelines for enabling climate-friendly and resilient urban destinations • N.6 Strategies on Protection of Local Retail as an Asset for Tourism -
4. Culture&Cultural Heritage	Synergies with action: • N.6 Urban Strategic Plan for culture and cultural heritage enhancement
5. Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees	Synergies with action: • N.1 Recommendations on the protection of unaccompanied minors • N.5 Establishment of an Academy in integration strategies
6. Cities of Equality	Synergies with the topic "Access to services"

5. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

5.1 How are the first ideas of the Orientation Paper taking in account the cross-cutting issues?

Cross-cutting issues are crucial to achieving sustainable and resilient food systems in urban areas.

Good urban governance is essential for ensuring that food policies and programs are integrated, coordinated, and effective. It is important to involve diverse stakeholders in decision-making processes and to ensure that food policies are aligned with broader urban development goals. Food is not a traditional competency of cities; therefore, it needs to be developed along with appropriate participatory mechanisms like Food councils.

Urban-rural, urban-urban, and cross-border cooperation are also critical for sustainable food systems. Collaboration between urban and rural areas can help to ensure a reliable and diverse supply of fresh and nutritious food. Meanwhile, cooperation between urban areas can help to promote knowledge sharing and best practices.

Sound and strategic urban planning is also necessary for promoting sustainable and resilient food systems. Urban planners should consider the potential for urban agriculture, green infrastructure, and sustainable food procurement policies in their plans.

An integrated approach is essential for addressing the complex challenges facing urban food systems. This includes considering social, economic, and environmental factors and promoting a systems approach to food policy and planning.

Innovative approaches, including the use of new technologies and business models, can help to promote sustainable and resilient food systems in urban areas. Moreover, the impact of food policies and programs on societal change, including behavioural change, should be considered.
Small- and medium-sized cities face unique challenges and opportunities in promoting sustainable and resilient food systems. Strategies should be tailored to their specific needs and opportunities.

Urban regeneration can provide opportunities for promoting sustainable and resilient food systems. Urban regeneration projects can incorporate urban agriculture, green infrastructure, and sustainable food procurement policies.

Adaptation to demographic change is also necessary for promoting sustainable and resilient food systems. This includes considering the needs and preferences of diverse populations and ensuring equitable access to food.

The availability and quality of public services of general interest, including food retail and distribution services, should be considered in promoting sustainable and resilient food systems.

The **international dimension of sustainable and resilient food systems**, as highlighted in Habitat III and the Sustainable Development Goals, should be considered. This includes promoting international cooperation and knowledge sharing on sustainable food policies and programs.

The table below shows the relevance of cross-cutting issues (established under the Gijón Agreement on 14 November 2023), to the selected thematic areas of the Food Partnership.

Table 12: Relevance of cross-cutting issues to the selected thematic areas of the Food Partnership

Food Partnership – Thematic areas			
	Innovative Funding	**City-region framework**	**EU/National Regulation**
a. Promoting urban policy for the common good, inclusiveness, accessibility, security and equality.		Specific attention will be paid to sustainable food planning, particularly concerning improving food environments, access to urban, peri-urban and rural resources and land use. Food justice will serve as a transversal lens across all work.	
b. Enhancing integrated and innovative approaches, notably through financing and in correlation to the green, digital and just transitions.	The "Innovative Funding" working group will also work on the topic **"Support and integration of research, innovation and transfer of innovation in food systems' development";** from this point of view funding can act as an additional boost to drive towards green investments in areas not covered by the green deal.		

	Innovative Funding	City-region framework	EU/National Regulation
c. Supporting effective urban governance, participation, and co-creation.		The "City-region framework" working group has identified the **"City-region food governance and planning" as one of the key subtopics.** The focus will be on a specific scale of governance issues: rural-urban linkages, city-region liaisons, and the nexus of food and non-food sectors.	
d. Promoting multi-level governance and cooperation across administrative boundaries.	Ensuring alignment between various food-related policies at EU, national and regional/ local levels is one of the challenge the "Innovative Funding" working group will focus on.	Also, the city-region framework working group, trough data and impact monitoring, will improve multilevel governance and interventions' transparency.	The EU/National Regulation working group is focused on the promotion of an integrated EU Food Policy with the aim to ensure multi-level and cross-sectoral policy coherence and enable local authorities' action. The focus is on the need for a systemic approach and overarching legislation ensuring coherence and synergies at all levels.
e. Harmonising measures at different spatial levels and implementing place-based policies and strategies.			The promotion of an integrated EU Food Policy will also contribute to the harmonisation of measures at different spatial levels and the implementation of place-based policies.

	Innovative Funding	City-region framework	EU/National Regulation
f. Supporting sound and strategic sustainable urban planning, and balanced territorial development.		The adoption of a city-region framework helps recognizing food systems' territorial specificity, cities' role in shaping food systems within and beyond their administrative boundaries, and the need for multi-level, multi-actor and cross-sectoral collaborations. It situates rural-urban interdependencies at the heart of diagnosis and intervention design for just and sustainable food systems.	
g. Contributing to the acceleration of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda SDGs, the New Urban Agenda and Habitat III principles.		The Partnership can provide a vehicle to further policy aims of 2030 Agenda SDGs, the new Urban Agenda and Habitat III principles by connecting food with climate, biodiversity, waste reduction and progress towards social equality.	

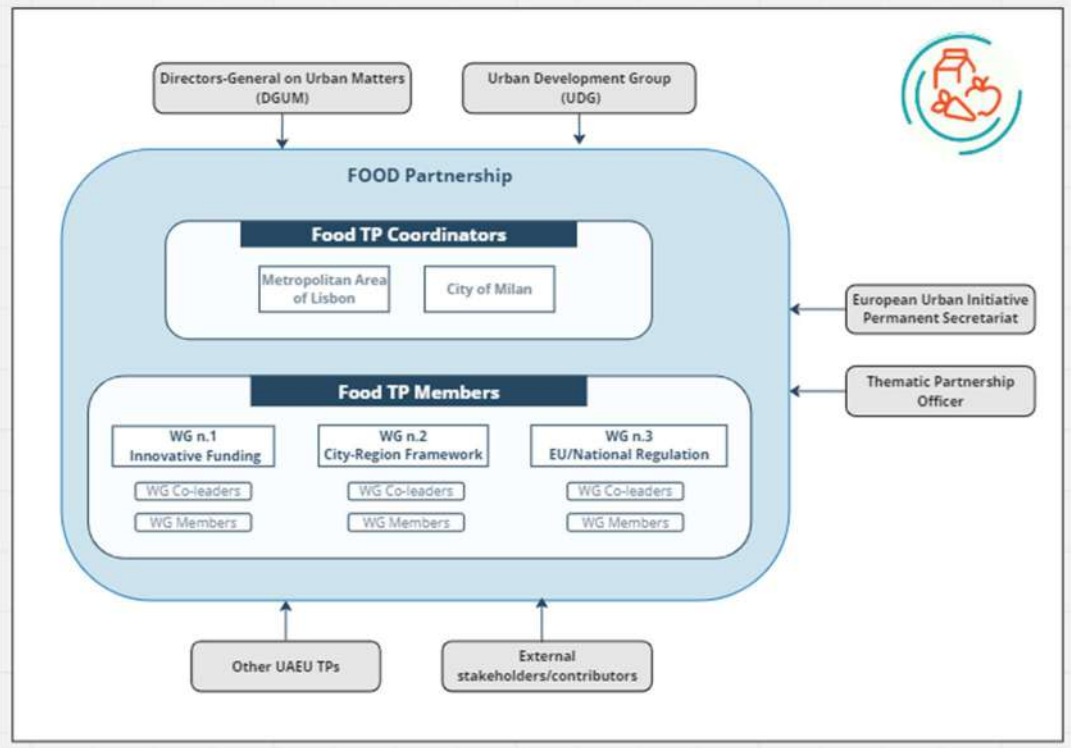
6. WORKING METHODS

6.1 Working groups

Food Partnership identified three overarching themes that encompass the most relevant and urgent topics partners want to address, also considering the available expertise, human/financial resources and the institutional mandate of each member of the Partnership. Each of the three themes (Innovative Funding, City-Region Framework, EU/National Regulation) represents a distinct area of focus for the working groups within the Food Thematic Partnership, allowing them to dive deep into specific issues and design targeted solutions.
Each working group will research, analyse, discuss and design solutions that can be transposed into draft actions for the Action Plan for the specific working area. Partners agreed to appoint two co-leaders for each working group so to enhance decision-making, provide diverse perspectives, and ensure continuity of work.

The figure below shows the structure of the Food Partnership.

Figure 2: Structure of the Food Thematic Partnership



6.2 Responsibilities of coordinators, working groups leaders and partners

The works of the Partnership are coordinated by the **City of Milan** and the **Metropolitan Area of Lisbon** which allows for sharing the organizational and thematic duties, as well as exchanging experience to provide a clear, cohesive and productive coordination of Partnership activities.

According with the Multiannual Working Programme, the **coordinators of the Partnership have the following responsibilities:**

- Chairing all Partnership meetings;
- Organising the work in-between Partnership meetings, including but not limited to written consultation, asking for contributions, preparing documents and drafting a concise annual report;
- Ensuring the link between the partnership and urban authorities, Member States and the Commission, including the UDG and DGUM meetings, as well as other stakeholders not directly involved in the Partnership;
- Cooperating with other Partnerships, when deemed to add value;
- Participating and contributing to other working groups/ networks;
- Coordinating and drafting the Action Plan;
- Monitoring and reporting on progress;
- Coordinating the work by ensuring the quality and timeliness of contributions, mediating different positions with the purpose of finding common ground and an agreeable position;
- Ensuring visibility by coordinating the communication on actions and results;
- Relaying results from the partnership to the DGUM meetings.

The responsibilities of the **Working Groups leaders** include:

- Organising, preparing and chairing working group meetings;
- Defining and allocating the work among working group members;
- Reporting on progress towards coordinator and the Secretariat to prepare upcoming partnership meetings;
- Report on progress on the specific working group in the Partnership meetings;
- Delivering work results according to the partnership's timetable;
- Delivering information for communication on the work of the Partnership;
- Communicating and exchanging information with other WGs leaders and Urban Agenda for the EU partnerships on relevant topics.

The results of the working groups will be shared and discussed with all partners at the Partnership's meetings.

The partners are the foundation of the Food Partnership and are fully engaged in the work on the agreed topics and subtopics, as well as in the process of developing content.

All partners are encouraged to:

- Contribute to the thematic working groups;
- Actively participate in Partnership meetings, engage experts and expertise from external networks, when available and relevant, and promote the activities of the Partnership;
- Share knowledge and experience and generate ideas for the partnership works;
- Make available the necessary resources needed to guarantee these commitments to the partnership.

The **partners have specific roles and responsibilities**:

- Participate in the technical work of the Partnership with their own resources**;**
- Contribute to the implementation of different actions of the action plan;
- Contribute to the Partnership through their own individual expertise, but also the wider knowledge of the organisation they represent;
- Assist in the debate about the Partnership within their territory;
- Contribute to the implementation/dissemination of the Partnership action plan at the national/regional level**.**

6.3 Responsibilities of TPO and EUI Permanent Secretariat

The **TPO – Thematic Partnership Officer** supports the operational functioning of the Thematic Partnership based on the: (1) thematic direction defined by the UAEU Thematic Partnership and (2) operational directions and principles defined by the EUI Permanent Secretariat in agreement with the European Commission.
The Thematic Partnership Officer is the main liaison and contact point between the EUI Permanent Secretariat and Thematic Partnership coordinators, working groups leaders and members of the UAEU Partnerships for any internal operational aspects.
The Thematic Partnership Officer provides advice and guidance about partnership planning, management and monitoring and technical support, such as:

- Specific day-to-day guidance and advice (planning, managing and monitoring) and support regarding data, tools and processes;
- Facilitation and organisation of meetings & workshops with the Thematic Partnership coordinators;
- Specific support and advice regarding communication and dissemination services, as well as reporting;
- Facilitation of internal communication between the partners (sharing of information and documents and ensuring smooth consultation on emerging priorities and actions)
- Facilitation of external communication to stakeholders not directly linked to the partnership about its work, composition, progress made and its emerging actions (strengthening the website and making the partnership more visible to the outside world);
- Guidance and advice about the: UAEU, Thematic Partnership process, urban policy knowledge, urban-related organisations, stakeholders and networks;
- Access to information about key policy documents.

The **EUI Permanent Secretariat** provides technical support, such as:

- Facilitation of internal communication between the partners (sharing of information and documents and ensuring smooth consultation on emerging priorities and actions);
- Facilitation of external communication to stakeholders not directly linked to the partnership about its work, composition, progress made and its emerging actions (strengthening the website and making the partnership more visible to the outside world);
- Helping collect and understand the progress made and deliverables produced (papers, reports, studies, presentations) by the partnership and its subgroups so that there is a compendium of information on the partnership all in one place;
- Attending partnership meetings throughout the year;
- Undertaking background research to inform the emerging actions found in the action plan to ensure they are robust, supported by clear evidence and articulated in the right way, if needed.

Communication strategy

The EUI Permanent Secretariat, together with the TPO and the Food Coordinators, will develop a communication strategy for the Partnership, which includes:

- Effective use of the European Urban Initiative website;
- Attending external events;
- Public relations, such as press releases, articles and information materials;
- Online file sharing through SharePoint.

6.4 Main activities

Phase 1: Orientation Paper (30th Jan – August 2024)
During the first phase, the Partnership defines the Orientation Paper. Priority thematic areas and sub-topics are chosen to limit the focus area of the Partnership. The document narrows down the thematic scope of the Partnership and defines its specific objectives, taking into account the political/institutional mandate of the Partnership members, their available knowledge on the selected topics and their willingness to commit resources.
Key deliverable: Orientation Paper

Phase 2 – Stocktaking (September – December 2024)
In the second phase, the members of the Partnership identify the existing work carried out on the priority themes (strategies, actions and working groups/networks covering these issues at EU level). As the aim is to avoid duplication but rather ensure coordination and reinforce what is already being done, this step is crucial to decide how to move forward in drafting the Action Plan (for example: adjust/limit the sub-topics and assessing the relevance of main cross-cutting aspects; organise active participation to existing strategies, actions and networks to ensure that the urban dimension of all Member States is taken into account; etc.). During this phase, partners define the "Scoping Fiches" which provide an in-depth analysis of the specific problems related to each topic (selected in the Orientation Paper) and maps the existing solutions and initiatives. In particular, the mapping activity include:

- Mapping of existing initiatives, practices and networks
- Mapping of relevant EU policies/legislation/funding instruments
- Mapping of relevant expertise (does the Partnership has the capacity and expertise to work on the selected topics?)
- Mapping of links/synergies with other Urban Agenda for the EU Partnerships

Scoping fiches can be used to draw conclusions on the need for specific actions, and to re-orient or reassess the topics and actions that the Partnership will address in the Action Plan.
Key deliverable: Scoping Fiches

Phase 3: Selection of Actions and Drafting the Action Plan (Jan – 15th April 2025)
In the third phase, the members of the Partnership agree on a set of actions in relation to the final list of priorities and topics defined in the Scoping fiches.
The key deliverable of this phase is the Draft Action Plan that identifies the key actions the Thematic Partnership intends to undertake and includes a roadmap for their implementation (steps, activities, timing, resources).
Key deliverable: Draft Action Plan

Phase 4: Collection of feedback (15th April – July 2025)
The public consultation is aimed to collect feedback, suggestions, recommendations on the overall goals and objectives of the Draft Action Plan, as well as on the specific details of each action. The public consultation is open to all stakeholders (e.g. institutions and authorities, academies and research centres, companies, NGOs, experts and citizens etc.) interested in sharing their knowledge and ideas for further development and improvement of the actions proposed by the Partnership.
Key deliverable: Public Consultation

Phase 5: Final Action Plan Development (August - October 2025)
The partnership integrates the collected feedback and suggestions received during the public consultation in the final version of the Action Plan.
Key deliverable: Final Action Plan

Phase 6: Implementation of Actions, Monitoring and Evaluation (November 2025 – Dec 2026)
Food coordinators, together with Action Leaders, coordinate and monitor the implementation of the actions. In this phase, it is important that Partnership develops links with the relevant authorities/ organisations/ enterprises/stakeholders and works in full transparency. The Monitoring Table of Actions offers a thorough overview of the initiatives carried out by the different Thematic Partnerships.
Key deliverable: Monitoring table of Actions

Table 13: Main Deliverables, timing and milestones of the Food Thematic Partnership

Deliverables	Timing	Milestones
• **Final Orientation Paper**	**August 2024**	❖ Presentation of the Orientation Paper (UDG meeting – 25th September, Budapest)
• **Scoping Fiches**	**13th December 2024**	
• **Draft Action Plan**	**March 2025**	❖ Delivery of the Draft Action Plan (UDG meeting – TBD)
• **Public Consultation**	**June/July 2025**	
• **Final Action Plan**	**October 2025**	❖ Delivery of the Final Action Plan (UDG meeting - TBD) ❖ Presentation of the Final Action Plan (DGUM ministerial meeting - TBD)
• **Monitoring table of Actions**	**December 2026**	

6.5 Process and timeline

Figure 3: Process timeline, 1st year (2024)

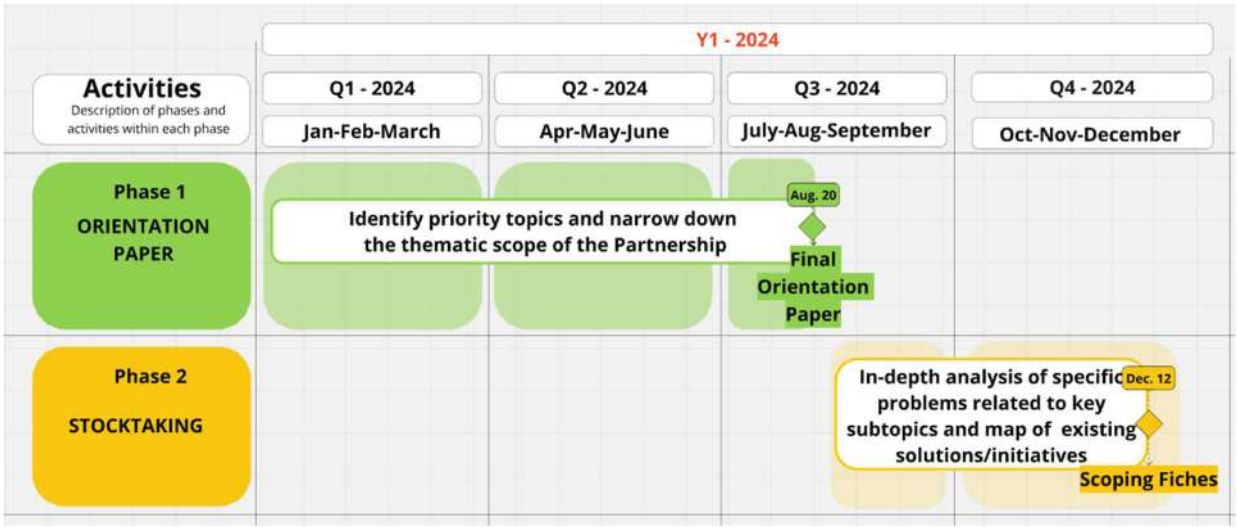
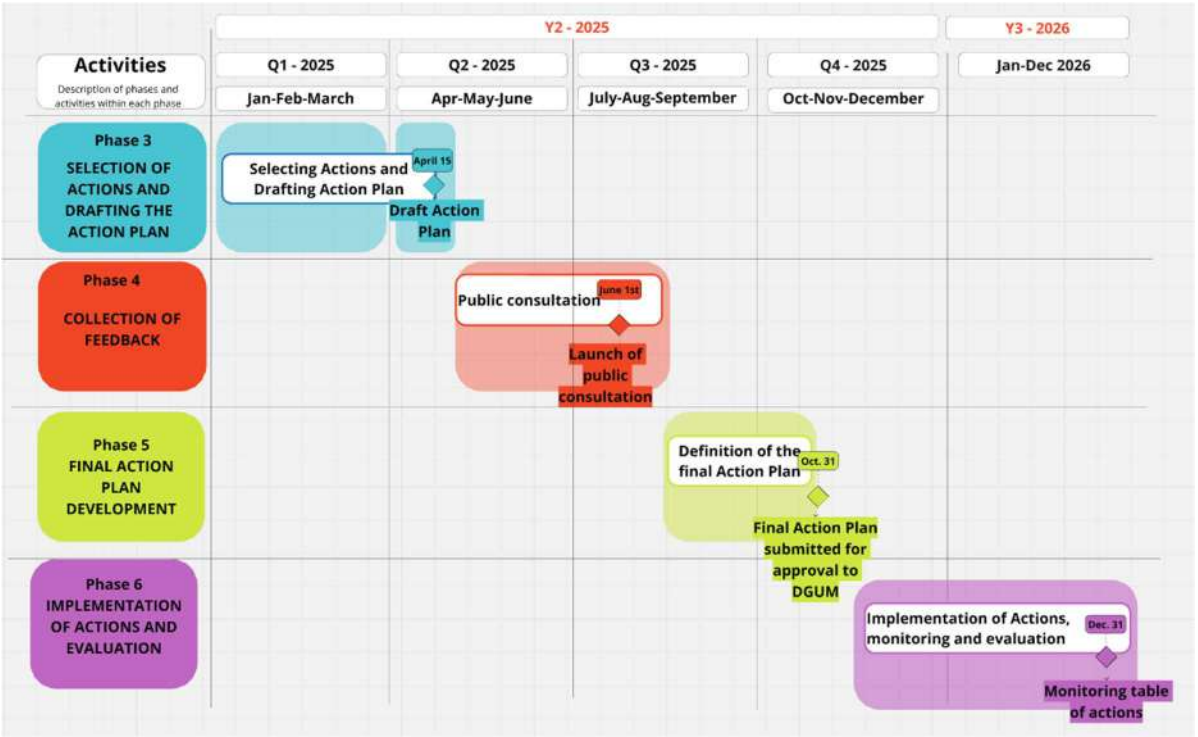


Figure 4: Process timeline, 2nd and 3rd year (2025-2026)



6.6 Rules for a good Partnership cooperation

Cooperation rules and mechanisms

Plenary Thematic Partnership Meetings
Plenary Thematic Partnership meetings (TPM) will be planned once per month to take decisions about key issues, ensure alignment with overall objectives, periodically review and adjust Partnership's goals and strategies as needed as well as share and comment on the progress of the working groups towards the definition of the Action Plan.
Plenary TPM are organized by the Food Coordinators, with the support of the TPO; an updated calendar of meetings will be defined and shared every six months. Plenary meetings can be organised online, in-presence or in hybrid mode. When possible, in-person meetings will be linked to other relevant conferences, workshops and food related events (i.e. Eu City Labs on Food, etc.).

A calendar for upcoming months includes the following TPMs:

- September – online meeting 12th September
- October – in-person meeting 22nd October + EU City Lab (23/24), Milan
- November – online meeting – 21st November

To ensure partnership cohesion and ownership of activity, a minimum attendance of plenary partnership meetings (at least half+1 of the partners), as well as engagement in the development of actions is encouraged. If a partner could not attend a meeting (both online and in-person), the organization will have 10 days, after receiving the minutes, to express its feedback/opinion.
During plenary meetings, keynote presentations from experts, external stakeholders as well as members of the Food Partnership, can be planned to delve deep into specific topics of interest to the Partnership. A calendar of presentations on key topics will be shared and agreed with the partners.

Stakeholders, experts and external partners may be invited to plenary meetings to enhance the quality of discussions and decisions, bringing different perspectives and expert knowledge on key issues/topics of interest to the Partnership.

Coordination meetings between Food Coordinators and WGs co-leaders
Periodic online meetings (at least one per month) will be organized between the Food Coordinators and the Working Groups co-leaders to monitor the progress of the work related to the specific thematic areas, discuss specific issues as well as problems and challenges in allocating the work among members.

Working groups meetings
Each thematic working group will meet periodically and define, together with the co-leaders, its work plan, working arrangements and meetings. The working groups will report back to the Partnership during plenary meetings. Each thematic working group will be coordinated by two co-leaders who will have the responsibilities to allocate, coordinate and monitor the work of the other members of the working group, as detailed in section 6.2 of the Orientation Paper.

Bilateral meetings
Bilateral meetings, between the Food TP Coordinators/TPO and one member of the Partnership, can be organized, when needed, to discuss specific issues and challenges, facilitate problem-solving, thus fostering a collaborative and productive partnership relationship.

Internal communication tools
Members of the Partnership will use SharePoint as main online file sharing system which is available/accessible to all the Food TP members. It will serve as the main repository for partnership documents, such as, key documents related to plenary partnership meetings, draft and final versions of key outputs/deliverables. Survey and questionnaires will be used as additional tools provided for collecting information on specific topics/issues.

External communication and visibility
The EUI Permanent Secretariat will offer communication and dissemination support, including information sessions and trainings, linked to the EUI Communication & Dissemination Strategy 2021-2027. The Food Thematic Partnership will have the possibility to promote and disseminate content linked to its activities through news articles on the UAEU website, via the EUI Knowledge and Exchange Sharing Platform Portico, EUI newsletters, events and UAEU social media accounts.
A Communication Package including templates and visual identity components is available on SharePoint. Support in drafting, editing, and proof-reading of contents e.g., for news articles, urban blog posts will be provided by the Thematic Partnership Officer.
During plenary meetings partners will agree on a general communication and dissemination strategy which will include:

- Key dissemination outputs and key targets
- Representation of the Partnership at external events (i.e. "EU Weeks of Regions and cities, etc.)
- Public relations (press releases, articles, information material, etc.)
- Use of social media.