

# EURESFO25

12<sup>th</sup> edition of the European Urban Resilience Forum

Concept Note

## 1. The European Urban Resilience Forum

Since its creation in 2013, the European Urban Resilience Forum (EURESFO) has established itself as a unique exchange platform for city representatives, experts, and stakeholders from local and regional institutions. It has been recognised as a valuable space to discuss challenges, solutions, initiatives and strategies in local and regional governments' efforts to adapt to a changing climate, manage disasters and multiple crises and build resilience.

The event is a European initiative driven by [ICLEI Local Governments for Sustainability](#) and the [European Environment Agency](#) (EEA), with the continuous support of former partners, such as the [Resilient Cities Network](#), the [United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction](#) and the [Nordic Urban Resilience Institute](#), in the development of the Forum's programme. Building on a growing number of engaged participants, partners and activities every year, the event is now recognised as the most important event on climate adaptation and urban resilience in Europe.

## 2. The legacy from previous editions

### **An enabling environment**

Over the past 11 editions, EURESFO has proven to be a unique environment in Europe for trusted and honest discussions on the broad concept of resilience. Every year, resilience-makers, innovators, providers and supporters gather at the forum to challenge and shape the European discussion on local and regional resilience. Local and regional authority representatives have the opportunity to share their successes and failures and brainstorm innovative approaches to regional adaptation and transformation.

In the past editions, the forum has shown a growing trend of interest from participants, passing from 300 to 350 and 450 attendees in the last 3 editions. If this numbers are not to be interpreted as a unique indicator of success, they definitely show an increased and increasing interest in the topic and willingness to step up local and regional commitment to resilience from a broad range of stakeholders.

### **Topical discussion**

The European Urban Resilience Forum understands resilience as a complex concept, that must take into consideration but go beyond climate change adaptation. Since its launch

in 2013, EURESFO has been the place for exchange on challenging – and often dramatic - moments for European societies. From the economic crises to the water scarcity, flooding and wildfires emergencies, the devastating earthquakes, the COVID19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, ... EURESFO has offered a platform for discussions on recovery and long-term resilience, providing a space for people to share concerns and fears, but also to inspire each other and innovate.

Local and regional governments have been the centre of all discussions, having the opportunity to structure dialogues on the above issues around key topics that are crucial to them in advancing resilience building. Along the journey, EURESFO has organised sessions focusing on some core themes, namely:

- Multilevel and cross-sectoral governance
- Finance and investments
- Data, knowledge and innovation
- Just resilience and inclusion
- Grey, green and blue solutions
- Resilience methods and processes

### **Geographical scope**

The Forum aims to strengthen discussions about resilience in the broad, multicultural and complexly organised European continent from the Mediterranean to the Arctic, from the outmost European regions in the Atlantic and beyond to the limits with Asia and the Arab world. Thus, conversations include but are not limited to the European Union's cities and regions.

Recognising the importance of international collaboration, peer-to-peer exchanges and external experiences and perspectives, the European Urban Resilience Forum has historically welcomed international parties from around the world. EURESFO23, for example, was the occasion to welcome a delegation from South Africa and organise focused discussions to guide and inspire the conceptualisation of a European Partnership on Resilience (more information below), while providing moments of co-learning and sharing of best practices at the local level.

### **Carrying on the EURESFO24 discussions**

The 11<sup>th</sup> edition of the European Urban Resilience Forum took place in Valencia in June 2024, in the framework of the Valencia Cities Climate Week, alongside the EU Cities Mission Forum on climate-neutrality and the Energy Cities Annual Forum. This edition marked a crucial moment in the history of EURESFO, having hosted the launch of the European Resilience Partnership, which will be presented in the following chapter.

## **The European Resilience Partnership**

The European Resilience Partnership is an independent and voluntary group of stakeholders aiming to create conditions to ensure that Europe's cities and regions are resilient and prepared for upcoming shocks and ongoing stresses. The Partnership wants to break silos so that those who need resilience support and those who provide support are connected in the most effective way.

These stakeholders work together in order to ensure:

- Mainstreaming of a place-based, demand-driven and bottom-up approach to the definition of resilience needs and priorities at all economic sectors and governance levels.
- Resilience measures to leave no one behind, with a key focus on prioritizing the support to the most vulnerable.
- A multilevel governance approach that breaks silos in governance, finance and justice matters, an approach that will bridge the resilience funding gap and will make sure that pilot projects will be scaled up and multiplied.

### **3. The 12<sup>th</sup> edition of EURESFO**

Building on the outcomes of its 2024 edition, EURESFO25 will look into the recent EU policy developments and in particular the new Commission priorities, as highlighted in the Mission letters sent by President Ursula von der Leyen to designated Commissioners. It will look at the latest achievements and challenges of the EU Mission for Adaptation to Climate Change, featuring some of its key initiatives (including key technical and technological green, blue, grey and hybrid solutions, as well as justice and inclusion, finance and governance innovations developed in that framework), building on their results and achievements as a way to inspire a broader discussion at the European continent level.

At an international level, building on the adaptation finance discussions at COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan, and in view of the upcoming conversations at COP30 in Belem, Brazil, EURESFO25 will serve to reflect on the role that Europe and particularly subnational authorities in the continent, can play to both lead the way towards a global resilient transformation and inspire a peaceful and trusted collaboration among peers. To do so, international partners will be integrated in multilevel discussions that put at the centre local and regional governments, while including perspectives from National and supranational authorities.

Happening slightly after the EU Adaptation Mission Forum (Wroclaw, May 2025) and the European Climate Change Adaptation Conference (ECCA, Rimini, June 2025), EURESFO

will integrate outcomes from both events, while also giving the opportunity to connect the dots and wider discussions beyond climate change adaptation.

### **EURESFO25's theme: accelerating resilience action**

During the closing plenary of the last edition of EURESFO, Global Chief Heat Officer at UN-Habitat, Eleni (Lenio) Myrivili, called for accelerated action to address three key risks identified by the World Economic Forum in the [Global Risks Report 2024](#): social polarisation, misinformation and disinformation, extreme weather events.

This year, we aim to respond to this call by centring the Forum around the theme “**accelerating resilience action**”.

The choice of this theme responds to the need, felt among the EURESFO community of practice, to make the most of the Forum's potential by highlighting the urgency for hands-on, honest, daring conversation and exchanges on resilience challenges and opportunities that can lead to real learning, implementation and building of new coalitions and partnerships for action.

The general theme will inform the quality and focus of all the sessions and the activities taking place at EURESFO25. It will be reflected in the content but also in the formats and on the level of engagement expected from participants.

Sessions at EURESFO25 will be:

- Focused on sharing the best available knowledge, approaches and solutions for simplification and implementation of resilience action, responding to cities and regions' most urgent needs and challenges
- Highly interactive, providing opportunities for honest exchange and ensuring participants' active engagement
- Prioritising brainstorming, finding common solutions and building coalitions and partnerships for new projects and actions above dissemination of past results

### **EURESFO25 topics**

At this year's Forum, the focus will be on how to accelerate resilience action on six key topics.

1. Justice, inclusion and societal resilience
2. New extremes and polycrises: from heatwaves to water resilience
3. Exploring nature-based solutions: from policy to action
4. Finance and investment strategies for resilience-building
5. Resilience governance in a polarised political landscape
6. Data, information and evidence-based resilience action

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Topic	Description
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Justice, inclusion and societal resilience

There is an increasing agreement in the adaptation community of practice that resilience building processes must be inclusive and leave no one behind. However, this often lacks pragmatic approaches that can be replicated and scaled-up.

Sessions under this topic will aim to advance knowledge for accelerating the concrete implementation of just resilience:

- How can cities address the underlying issues of poverty and inequalities, as well as the complex housing-resilience nexus?
- How can cities unlock finance for resilience interventions that focus on the justice dimensions?
- Which maladaptation practices may arise from adaptation interventions?
- How can just resilience processes be monitored, evaluated and replicated or scaled up?
- What does building long term just resilience look like when cities are confronted with an ongoing conflict situation?
- How can we best coordinate existing initiatives on just resilience to boost their impact?
- How can we create governance structures that empower community-led initiatives active on the territory to drive urban transformations?

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New extremes and polycrises: resilience

During the past year it has become even more clear how Europe urgently needs to adapt to new extreme events, overlapping heatwaves to water risks and crises. 2024 was in fact the warmest year on record for most regions in the world, including Europe, with numerous heatwaves breaking national or local temperatures records.

Several regions, including the Mediterranean and eastern Europe, saw a prolonged lack of precipitation coinciding with high temperature extremes, with dry conditions conducive to droughts and wildfires. At the same time, Europe was impacted throughout the year by a range of precipitation events which led to record-breaking rainfall and severe flooding to central and eastern regions ([Copernicus, Global Climate Highlights 2024](#)).

Sessions under this topic will aim to foster honest and meaningful exchange to step up Europe's resilience to new extremes and crises:

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- What can be learned from recent disasters in Europe, both in terms of failures and effective measures for disaster risk management?
  - How can societal preparedness to risks be increased?
  - How can multi-level coordination be successfully leveraged?
  - How can we accelerate a more holistic transformation of European regions so that they can not only resist but thrive in an extreme climatic context?
  - How can European policies and programmes better sustain the transformation of European cities and regions?

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Exploring nature-Nature-based solutions (NBS) have long been recognised as key based solutions: from measures to increase resilience to climate change. Despite policy to action increasing efforts in the realms of research, planning and implementation of NBS, some challenges remain.

Sessions under this topic will aim to address key challenges and opportunities related to NBS implementation:

- How to effectively leverage co-benefits of NBS to access funding and financial investments?
- How to successfully plan and implement multi-functional NBS that might be able to improve health and wellbeing?
- What does the Nature Restoration Law mean for cities and local ecosystem-based adaptation?
- How can cities advance interventions to improve soil quality and health?

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Finance and Sessions under this topic will aim to foster knowledge-exchange investment strategies and partnership-building to support cities and regions in for resilience-building leveraging financing for resilience-building:

- What is the role of insurance companies in climate resilience finance and how can it be leveraged?
  - How is Europe innovating in climate resilience finance for local and regional governments?
  - How can local and regional governments enable a transformative environment looking at innovative financing opportunities?
  - How can financial opportunities respect the local and regional democratic leadership in a long-term publicly-determined resilience agenda?
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Resilience governance in a polarised political landscape

Resilience is a matter of multi-stakeholder engagement and complex governance approaches to planning and implementation. Sessions under this topic will aim to foster dialogue between representatives from national, regional and local governments, looking into concrete multilevel and cross-sectoral strategies to implement resilience action on the ground:

- How can national governments best support complex transformational action on the ground (at local, regional level) and with a long-lasting commitment that goes beyond political mandates?
- How can subnational governments, and particularly small municipalities, navigate and leverage opportunities related to EU programmes and supranational structures?
- How can cities, regions and national governments cooperate to unpack the complexity of developing resilience action integrating further considerations such as climate neutrality, territorial and economic development, health, peace building and security, in an increasingly polarised political landscape?
- How can funding be effectively distributed across governance levels for faster climate adaptation?

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Data, information and evidence-based resilience action

As misinformation and disinformation spread across society, making an argument for resilience building becomes challenging. Knowledge, data and concrete evidence must be leveraged to sustain technical and political decisions and action on resilience.

Sessions under this topic will explore how new technologies, climate services and the monitoring of resilience action can inform upscaling and up-taking of solutions:

- What are we currently doing wrong when collecting and disseminating information on (climate) resilience action?
  - How can we step up (multilevel) partnerships and investments for sounder and more impactful data?
  - How successful are the actions we are taking; of the projects and programmes we are funding?
  - How can we make more visible the linkages between adaptation and mitigation by measuring their co-benefits?
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- How can local and regional governments be supported to navigate and access existing tools and innovations?
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### **Embedding EURESFO25 in Rotterdam's local context and practice**

Taking place in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, the Forum will benefit from the experience of a recognised resilience champion city host with experience in managing water extremes, implementing green-grey-blue infrastructure and in cross-border collaboration.

We are excited to learn from Rotterdam and the Netherlands and aim at including projects and examples from the local context throughout the Forum. Site visits will offer participants the opportunity to visit local projects, meet local practitioners and get concrete insights. The Forum will also see the participation of representatives from Dutch local and regional administrations, in addition to a national government delegation.