



**JASPERS  
HELPING CITIES  
TACKLE URBAN  
CHALLENGES**





## WHAT IS JASPERS?

JASPERS is an advisory programme that helps good investment ideas see the light of day. We work alongside city officials to plan better projects and find funding to promote the **circular economy**, build **sustainable transport**, **reduce pollution**, cut fossil fuel use, expand innovation, offer better healthcare, prevent natural disasters, and develop society in a way that makes sure **everyone is treated fairly** during the **green transition**. JASPERS is one of the main ways the European Union helps cities improve urban investment. The assistance is a key part of the European Investment Bank's mission to create a smarter, greener, more inclusive and connected Europe.

JASPERS stands for Joint Assistance to Support Projects in European Regions. Created in 2005, the programme is financed by the European Commission and run by the European Investment Bank. For cities, which are a key beneficiary of JASPERS support, the assistance helps urban officials prepare investment projects that could be co-financed by EU grants and a wide range of other funding. The priority is to help cities meet the goals of the new European **Green Deal**. JASPERS transfers technical and financial knowledge to local authorities to make sure projects are carried out to the highest social and environmental standards. This helps cities develop projects more independently and attract funding more efficiently.

When projects are prepared correctly, clients have a higher chance of taking advantage of the billions in EU funds available to boost economies and improve societies. The advice JASPERS provides to cities is a pillar in the family of many EU initiatives supporting urban investment. JASPERS connects clients with financing from the European Structural and Investment Funds, the Just Transition Fund, the Connecting Europe Facility, and the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance. JASPERS is helping the European Union meet the aims of the Urban Agenda for the EU and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.



**Cities are hubs of employment and engines of economic growth, accounting for over 80% of global gross domestic product.**





## European Investment Advisory Hub

The Advisory Hub, which is managed by the European Investment Bank, acts as the entry point for many advisory and technical assistance initiatives, including JASPERS projects.

The Advisory Hub uses experts from inside and outside the European Investment Bank to help clients improve investment plans and get financing. The Hub is envisioned as the entry point for advisory support and technical assistance related to projects eligible for backing by the new InvestEU Fund. It also handles other urban advisory programmes, such as ELENA, which gives advice on energy efficiency, and URBIS, which gives targeted assistance for urban finance. ELENA stands for European Local Energy Assistance. URBIS is short for Urban Investment Support. The Hub even assists new instruments that help create "circular cities."

## **A NEW FOCUS ON URBAN INVESTMENT**

Cities are hubs of employment and engines of economic growth, accounting for over 80% of global gross domestic product. They are also home to some **56% of the world's population**, with over 4.3 billion inhabitants, and this figure is rising: Europe is expected to have an urban population rate of about 90% by mid-century.<sup>1</sup>

Faced with the challenges of becoming climate neutral by 2050 and improving digitalisation, while also recovering from the COVID-19 crisis and ensuring that no one is left behind, Europe has reset its priorities and refocused its attention on its cities and urban areas.

Cities consume more than two-thirds of global energy and account for over 70% of carbon dioxide emissions. They are also among the areas most at risk of severe climate impacts, which could affect more than 3.3 billion urban residents by mid-century.<sup>2</sup> Almost 40% of Europe's population lives in coastal areas, leaving them vulnerable to storm surges and rising sea levels.<sup>3</sup>

Cities play a unique role in combating epidemics. As simultaneously a health, social and economic crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic poses major challenges to cities' ability to deliver basic services and invest, as budgets are tight and revenues reduced.

Responsible for around 45% of all public investment, local authorities have a critical role in planning and implementing transformation and recovery. Investment in EU municipalities has started to pick up since the global financial crisis, especially for green investments like energy-efficient building refurbishment and sustainable transport systems, along with improvements in digitalisation.

The focus on social investment in health, education and affordable housing is also growing, given that over 92 million European people are at risk of poverty or social exclusion,<sup>4</sup> a situation compounded by COVID-19. However, because of investment barriers in terms of funding, regulatory challenges and the technical capacity to execute projects, significant investment gaps persist.<sup>5</sup>

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1 The story of your city (eib.org).

2 The State of Cities Climate Finance. Cities Climate Finance Leadership Alliance and World Bank, June 2021.

3 Europe's seas and coasts. European Environment Agency (europa.eu).

4 Living conditions in Europe - poverty and social exclusion. Statistics Explained (europa.eu).

5 The State of Local Infrastructure Investment in Europe – EIB Municipalities Survey 2020.





## Malta: Revitalisation of Valletta's poorer neighbourhoods

Valletta, a Unesco world heritage site, has to address conservation challenges as well as social, economic and environmental disparities.

JASPERS supported the creation of an integrated sustainable urban development strategy, backed by the European Regional Development Fund. In particular, JASPERS advised on policy-led, multi-criteria analyses to help decision-makers optimise the delivery of investments. This helped revitalise Valletta's poorer neighbourhoods, particularly Marsamxett in the Southern Harbour area.

## TYPES OF JASPERS SUPPORT FOR URBAN DEVELOPMENT

|                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <p><b>Project development</b></p>    | <p><b>Projects in urban mobility, the circular economy, energy efficiency, health, education, flood management, water and sewerage, solid waste, affordable housing, urban regeneration, cultural heritage and innovation districts:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall support in project development, including advice on preparing the terms of reference, concept studies, methodological approaches, feasibility studies, cost-benefit analyses, environmental impact assessments, bankability, and grant application documents (recommendations for improvements, compliance with guidelines and best practice).</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Strategic support</b></p>      | <p><b>Sustainable urban development and urban mobility plans, flood and disaster risk management, regional or urban climate adaptation, integrated territorial investment and smart city strategies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Input on and reviews of strategies, identification of project pipelines, investment prioritisation or action plans.</li> <li>• Support for funding and financing plans, including the use of innovative instruments and blending of financial sources.</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Horizontal tasks</b></p>       | <p><b>Economic and financial analyses, option analyses, procurement, environmental impact assessments and state aid:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analysis of/advice on issues related to a number of projects, a sector or a country, for instance through methodological papers and guidelines.</li> <li>• Identification and removal of barriers (regulatory, organisational, etc.) that would hinder project preparation or future implementation.</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Implementation support</b></p> | <p><b>Project implementation units, procurement planning and tendering:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeted support for project implementation.</li> </ul>  |

**Cities are home to some 56% of the world's population, with over 4.3 billion inhabitants, and this figure is rising.**





## Poland: Multi-sector support for Poznań

Since 2009, JASPERS has provided extensive support to Poznań for various aspects of the city's multi-year investment programmes.

JASPERS helped the city's transport authority carry out substantial improvements in the tramway system, the backbone of **sustainable mobility** in Poznań, by supporting the extensive modernisation and extension of infrastructure, the transition towards a modern, low-floor tram fleet, and the construction of a new tram depot. JASPERS also assisted the implementation of projects facilitating transport links with the city, such as the modernisation of the Poznań-Piła and Poznań-Rawicz railway lines and the development of the Poznań-Ławica Airport.

JASPERS has also been a long-standing partner of the city in the **water** sector, supporting the development and grant fund applications of several projects aiming to ensure compliance with core EU environmental legislation and the connection of new users to the sanitary sewerage system. In the **waste** sector, JASPERS assisted in the construction of a waste-to-energy facility in Poznań, with a capacity of 210 000 tonnes/year.

In the **health** sector, JASPERS backed the construction of the new Regional Centre of Children's Health, which will be equipped with an emergency care department for children, an orthopaedics and trauma unit, and a rehabilitation service.

JASPERS also collaborated with Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań in developing **research and development infrastructure** in the city, to facilitate multidisciplinary research in the fields of chemistry, physics, biology, biotechnology and materials science with a focus on new materials and biomaterials technologies.

Finally, JASPERS is contributing to the screening and identification of priority investments in several Polish cities, including Poznań, to improve their action plans for **climate** change adaptation, especially in the areas of water and biodiversity.



## A PARTNER IN SUSTAINABLE URBAN INVESTMENT

JASPERS support for urban investment has several key features:

- JASPERS offers integrated, area-based and targeted assistance to public authorities in preparing green, inclusive and sustainable urban investments that have the potential for EU financing.
- JASPERS provides support to municipal or regional administrations, municipal enterprises and associations, managing authorities or intermediate bodies responsible for urban investment at national or regional level.
- A connection with EU funding should be present: for example, strategic support is provided in areas which will help underpin or unlock EU investment, and project support is provided for assignments eligible under an operational programme or otherwise expected to be co-financed with EU funds.
- The advice should be linked directly or indirectly to investment: for example, generic urban planning support is not provided, but an urban mobility or climate plan serving as a basis for investment is eligible for assistance.
- Strategic support favours areas prioritised under the Green Deal, and the design or rollout of integrated local development strategies as described in the **Sustainable Urban Development Handbook**.<sup>6</sup>

## HOW CAN I REQUEST SUPPORT, AND HOW DOES IT WORK?

- Normally, a city or urban authority contacts JASPERS about a potential assignment request. JASPERS contacts are available **here**. The scope of collaboration is discussed between JASPERS and the beneficiary, and then agreed as part of the JASPERS work programme with the national authorities and the European Commission.
- Each national work programme lists the assignments (urban and other) that JASPERS can support in that country.
- The city or urban authority remains the owner of its project but needs to collaborate with the appropriate national managing authority, which acts as the central coordinator of requests for support from JASPERS. The list of managing authorities is available **here**.
- JASPERS support is free to beneficiaries and funded by the European Union and the EIB. It is provided through partnership and cooperation, so cities do not need to go through a tender process.
- JASPERS typically works alongside city managers, providing direct advice and helping them mobilise and manage the right additional expertise they need.
- Where JASPERS support is provided, the city is not obliged to borrow from the EIB for the investment project, nor is the EIB obliged to co-finance the investment. JASPERS support is intended to enhance project quality, and so improve the prospects for receiving financing from the European Union, EIB or other local or international financing sources.

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<sup>6</sup> Strategies should respect the minimum requirements of Article 29 of the new Common Provisions Regulation.



## Slovenia: Novo Mesto smart regional hub

Small cities can be key players in driving smart developments in regional areas. **The Slovenian city of Novo Mesto is a hub that provides services and jobs at local, regional and cross-border level.** However, its low population density hinders the efficient provision of services and infrastructure.

By developing an integrated territorial investment mechanism for the region which makes integrated, multi-sectoral investments possible, Novo Mesto wanted to benefit from European Structural and Investment Funds and address multiple policy goals: urban renewal, energy efficiency and sustainable mobility. It therefore asked for JASPERS support in becoming both a smart city and a hub for the region.

JASPERS proposed a multi-criteria analysis tool to combine different policy areas in a single Excel spreadsheet, thus facilitating an integrated approach to urban planning. The tool enabled urban planners to identify policy synergies across multiple projects and establish a framework for a common strategy that integrates key performance indicators across various sectors, the city and the region. It also helped with the efficient management of the budget and decision-making on whether to keep investing in a project or modify it to maximise the investment.

**The result was three schemes and 11 proposed actions, which are transforming the urban landscape and improving the lives of residents and visitors. More information on this project is provided here.**



## **STRATEGIC SUPPORT FOR CITIES: THE EXAMPLE OF SUSTAINABLE URBAN MOBILITY PLANS**

Urban investments — particularly integrated and area-based investments — need to be rooted in a sound urban planning framework that reflects justified funding priorities and optimises the benefits to society. Throughout Europe, there is a growing understanding of the importance of planning functional, “liveable” and smart cities that offer residents a good quality of life and favour a shift towards cleaner, resource-efficient services.

For example, **Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans** play a crucial role in determining which investments should be made in the area of urban mobility. **JASPERS has already supported these plans for over 50 cities and regions in 12 Member States.** It provides public authorities with **guidance and training** by running workshops and webinars to increase the uptake of the new tools and processes available for urban mobility planning.

**JASPERS assistance in developing these urban mobility plans provides a strategic basis for providing green mobility with further support. JASPERS encourages the development of greener mobility in cities,** for example by providing advice at local level on the transition to low/zero-emission urban transport, appropriate charging/fuelling infrastructure, and the necessary energy provision.

### **JASPERS support for e-mobility investment**

JASPERS has assisted many municipalities in the modernisation and/or extension of existing metro, tramway and trolleybus systems, as well as in the smooth and efficient transition towards low/zero-emission bus fleets.

**In Warsaw (Poland),** JASPERS worked with bus operator MZA to prepare the purchase of 130 electric buses and the associated fast-charging infrastructure. The newly purchased buses will operate on one of the city’s most central routes. MZA is also involved in a fleet renewal plan for gradually introducing low/zero-emission buses.

**In Coimbra (Portugal),** JASPERS supported the creation of a bus rapid transit system in the Coimbra region (Sistema de Mobilidade do Mondego), providing a fast suburban passenger service between the city and neighbouring towns in the south-western suburban area. The line will be a mainstay for public transport in the area, and will be operated by articulated buses with battery electric propulsion.

**In Athens (Greece),** JASPERS worked with the transport authority, transport operator and the Ministry of Transport to define a modernisation plan for the urban bus fleet. It coordinated a working group that mapped out a ten-year investment plan for replacing the old diesel fleet with zero-emission vehicles (battery electric vehicles, traditional trolleybuses and battery electric trolleybuses), as well as deploying transition technologies such as compressed natural gas in the short term, where appropriate. In parallel, JASPERS worked with the metro operator to implement an investment project for modernising the fleet on Metro Line 1 to improve passenger comfort and reliability while also incorporating energy recovery systems to improve energy efficiency.



## Romania: Support for the modernisation of Tulcea Hospital

Tulcea Hospital, the largest hospital in Tulcea County (Danube Delta), was built in 1974. It needs to be refurbished and modernised to comply with health regulations. The project concerns the refurbishment and construction of a group of buildings, and the acquisition of equipment to meet the objectives of the National Strategy for Public Health.

Building on its experience in the health sector and emergency health projects in Romania, JASPERS provided support in preparing the project, while ensuring it met the highest quality standards and the tight deadlines.

**JASPERS' fruitful support was essential in the successful implementation of this project, which is of great importance for the people of Tulcea County, as well as the municipality's residents."**

Nicu Mihai, executive director of Tulcea County Council.



In particular, JASPERS can help develop urban and metropolitan projects and investment plans focusing on operational planning, improving the quality of public transport, metropolitan connectivity, intelligent transportation systems and micromobility. JASPERS support for municipalities can include setting up publicly accessible charging infrastructure for private electric vehicles.

## **INNOVATIVE, SMART AND PRODUCTIVE CITIES**

As they face multiple challenges, cities need to strive for innovative approaches to become more productive and deliver better services for the public. Urban regeneration is increasingly focused on harnessing the benefits of digitalisation, smart materials and information communications technologies to improve services, enhance inclusion and promote a more circular and climate-smart future. Innovation hubs can help create sustainable pro-business districts, which can be instrumental in the urban economy's recovery from the COVID-19 crisis.

Where there is a link to EU funding, **JASPERS can help cities set objectives, identify solutions, prioritise investments and prepare projects which help them become more innovative and productive.**

## **HELPING CITIES IN THE TRANSITION TO THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY**

**Every European citizen produces, on average, half a tonne of household waste a year, of which less than half is recycled.** This waste has negative effects on our environment and health, and is costly to manage.

The main objectives of the circular economy are extending the life and use of resources, materials and products; rethinking and redesigning products and business processes; developing innovative solutions; and encouraging more sustainable consumption patterns.

**JASPERS supports the efforts of cities in transitioning to the circular economy**, where there is a link to EU funding. **Assistance can take various forms**, including advice on building circular-economy thinking into urban regeneration programmes, guidance for adapting waste management centres and regional waste management systems to circular economy targets, and assistance with identifying a pipeline of measures and potential projects.

## **SUPPORT FOR MUNICIPALITIES' HEALTH PROJECTS**

People's health and well-being is perhaps a city's most important asset. Health is also essential for fostering good urban livelihoods, building a productive workforce, enabling mobility, promoting social inclusion and protecting vulnerable communities.

JASPERS expert teams can work with municipalities and beneficiaries to help develop projects eligible for EU support in the urban healthcare sector.



## Ireland: Increasing the energy efficiency of social housing

Social housing makes up 10% of all housing in Ireland, and many social housing buildings have frequently delivered poor energy performance. Approximately €130 million was allocated to supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in the southern and eastern regions of Ireland in the 2014–2020 operational programme, with €90 million earmarked for social housing retrofits.

To ensure the funds were spent effectively, the managing authority (Southern Regional Assembly) considered using financial instruments (a form of repayable financial assistance provided by the European Union) instead of conventional EU grants, and requested JASPERS assistance to this end.

Assistance was aimed at redesigning the support scheme for the proposed investments. In particular, JASPERS advised on blending grants with financial instruments and optimising the scope of the renovation works. For example, municipalities might recover their investment by reducing the amount of fuel allowance granted to tenants in exchange for their houses being upgraded.



## **SOCIAL HOUSING IN THE SPOTLIGHT**

Due to decreasing investments since 2009, the affordable and social housing sector today faces two main problems: a decline in the stock and quality of housing units, including their energy efficiency, and a rising need for accommodation. **In 2019, 92.4 million people in the EU-27, over 21% of the population, were at risk of poverty or social exclusion.**

Where there is an EU funding link, **JASPERS can support local authorities in social housing projects or in preparing programmes covering various topics**, such as energy efficiency, state aid, income- and social criteria-based access, and redesigning the financial support scheme for proposed investments.

## **JUST TRANSITION MECHANISM**

**Assistance under the Just Transition Mechanism exemplifies a high-profile multi-sector activity benefiting from synergies and expertise in all JASPERS sectors.**

The Just Transition Mechanism supports EU regions affected by the transition from fossil fuel industries to the renewable energy economy, with a view to facilitating the economic and social transformation this entails.

Building on its experience in supporting regions under the Coal Regions in Transition initiative, JASPERS assists a number of countries in screening and developing suitable project pipelines within the scope of the Mechanism, notably projects eligible for public financing under the Just Transition Fund. Assistance can also entail capacity building or financial engineering as needed, in cooperation with other EIB services.

## **OTHER SOURCES OF URBAN INVESTMENT ADVICE**

JASPERS provides urban advisory support for assignments linked directly or indirectly to urban investments which benefit from, or are eligible for, EU funding, in particular the **European Structural and Investment Funds**, the Just Transition Fund and the Connecting Europe Facility. Advice on other urban investments might be available through other instruments under the European Investment Advisory Hub, such as URBIS (urban investment support), ELENA (energy-efficient buildings and transport systems), the Cleaner Transport Facility, fi-compass (financial instruments), and new facilities for supporting “circular cities” such as the Circular City Funding Guide.



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