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UrbanLab+ International Network of Urban Laboratories

Within the context of a world becoming increasingly more urban with a seemingly ever-growing number and magnitude of urban challenges, several higher education institutions across the world have in recent years established 'urban laboratories'. Their aim is to expand and strengthen their competencies in the realms of architecture, urban planning and other built environment disciplines in order to respond to the complex challenges associated with today's 'urban age'. While by no means uniform in regard to their approaches or objectives, urban laboratories often share that they are dedicated to a synthesis of education, research and a combined focus on theory and practice. They focus on connecting the intellectual and disciplinary resources of the academy with the practical spheres of architecture, urban design and planning as well as municipal institutions, and bring students into direct contact with the manifold challenges their cities and other urban environments face and providing opportunities – such as interdisciplinary design studios – in which they can make use of their skills.

Composed of a total of nine established urban laboratories, the proposed International Network of Urban Laboratories aims to take this approach a step further by creating a platform that will allow different urban laboratories in Europe as well as the major regions of the Global South (Africa, Asia, Latin America) to expand and intensify their cooperation and, in doing so, advance their common goal: to deliver high-quality education and research and develop creative ideas and potential solutions concerning today's many urban challenges. The program's main goals are:

- to help enhance the quality of teaching and research at urban laboratories through cooperation as well as knowledge development and transfer.
- to 'internationalise' the work of the participating urban laboratories and improve their professional competencies to facilitate the students global learning and prepare them for their future work in today's rapidly globalising world
- the joint development of research, educational ideas, and hands-on activities in a thematic area that is widely considered a key challenge for contemporary urban governance and development – the issue of urban inclusion and exclusion.

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