

CONTRIBUTION TO THE NEW EUROPEAN BAUHAUS CO-DESIGN PHASE

Implementing the NEB on the regional and local level

[ERRIN](#) (European Regions Research and Innovation Network) is a Brussels-based platform that gathers around 120 regional organisations in more than 20 European countries. ERRIN aims to strengthen the regional and local dimension in EU Research and Innovation policy and programmes. ERRIN supports members to enhance their regional and local research and innovation capacities and further develop their research and innovation ecosystems.

The ERRIN members primarily collaborate through 13 Working Groups, covering both thematic areas and overarching policy issues. The WGs are based on members' priorities and on current funding opportunities. The WG meetings are at the heart of ERRIN's activities, as this is where our members meet regularly to exchange information, present regional examples, build new partnerships, develop joint projects, network and much more.

ERRIN has set up a task force to support the development of the New European Bauhaus initiative, which brings together several ERRIN Working Groups (Design & Creativity, Tourism & Cultural Heritage, Energy & Climate, Smart Cities and ICT) as well as members co-leading activities in these thematic areas. This document is based on a conversation hosted by the Task Force on 29 June 2021.

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INTRODUCTION

The New European Bauhaus (NEB) is an interdisciplinary concept that aims to reimagine sustainable living in Europe. This comprehensive initiative provides a platform to foster collaboration and link the European Green Deal to our living spaces, building on Europe's recovery. Its scope goes beyond buildings as it looks at how people inhabit and use spaces and how to turn them into more sustainable, inclusive and aesthetic environments.

The ERRIN network with its members considers the New European Bauhaus a cross-cutting initiative that should create and strengthen the connection between European regions and local communities. It can do so by taking into account their diversity and the priorities of a wide range of stakeholders as well as different government levels. Based on a NEB conversation organised by ERRIN on 29 June 2021, this paper provides concrete examples and proposals that have emerged from the conversation organised with different European actors such as architects, researchers and public authorities.

Regional and local initiatives as inspiration for the NEB

Numerous initiatives related to the NEB are already taking place in several locations in Europe – both regionally and locally. During the event, examples were presented from Småland (SE), Navarra (ES), Thuringia (DE), Pays de la Loire (FR), Stuttgart (DE) and Aragon (ES) regions. The examples demonstrated that the NEB initiatives are carried out in various formats (ranging from dialogues, working sessions and exhibitions to community projects and developing methodologies) and aim to involve a broad range of stakeholders (researchers, architects, artists, public authorities and citizens).

In Pays de la Loire region, an experimental programme - [West Creative Industries](#) - is being carried out on a regional level based on a multidisciplinary approach, with the objective of building a regional excellence strategy about user experience, combining sciences, technology and design. The dialogue carried out in the region of Navarra, in the frame of the [#NavarraBauhaus](#), is another example of a regional initiative that works to involve different stakeholders through several working sessions. The discussions are part of the process of co-designing multidisciplinary strategies and actions that the region will focus on when implementing NEB objectives. The [Centre of Art and Nature](#) in Aragon focuses on the role of artists in the landscape (rural, peripheric and urban) and underlines the importance of the arts in the NEB.

While some of the initiatives focus on creating dialogues, in Stuttgart region an [International Building Exhibition](#) will take place in 2027 bringing together 100 projects to demonstrate what a sustainable future can bring to society and the environment. The [Smart Housing Småland](#) in Sweden, which started in 2013, brings together several regions and their ecosystems to reinvigorate the regional strengths based on the wood and glass industry. The objective is to develop an inclusive methodology to create conditions for a sustainable built environment and transforming sustainable housing. The topic of sustainability is also at the centre of the [Bauhaus University Weimar](#) (BUW) in Thuringia, and through its interdisciplinary approach with various partners, the campus wants to serve as a laboratory in the field of sustainability and climate-neutrality.

The NEB concept is developed for people and by people and there is no universal definition of it. Therefore, every entity that aims to create a more sustainable, inclusive and aesthetic environment should become part of the movement. There are numerous ways to look at its objectives and diversity is an important factor when defining the NEB:

- The NEB is a transformation towards a sustainable society and this innovative process should be carried out by involving citizens as well as all actors from the quadruple helix, as demonstrated by the #NavarraBauhaus initiative.
- As the NEB is about people, it should not look at the technical indicators and KPIs but rather take a human-centred approach. While tangibility is important, the NEB will also deal with non-tangible, abstract results.
- The approach to the NEB should be twofold: it should be about developing concepts and implementing solutions. These two levels should go hand in hand by bringing together stakeholders to gather innovative ideas but also implementing them together on the ground. For example, the aim of the Stuttgart's International Building Exhibition is to present projects in their real-life setting as proposals that can be further developed.
- The NEB should focus on climate-neutrality and, therefore, provide answers on how to achieve this very ambitious goal, as planned by the Bauhaus University Weimar. There is a significant need for solutions at local level, but this cannot be done without a wider exchange of research results, stimulation of studies and involving academia across Europe.
- The place-based perspective is important for the NEB, but it should tackle territories broadly, and not only focus on cities and urban areas. The objective should be to bring together urban, peripheric and rural areas to establish a bridge between different local strategies, as indicated by the Aragon Centre of Arts and Nature.
- The objectives of the NEB should also look at enhancing collaboration and engagement. The methodology and communication should be carefully adjusted to the targeted stakeholders by linking science with industry, architecture and art, eventually fostering a dialogue with the central element of the NEB – the citizens. In order to ensure comprehensive coverage of the initiative, it is essential to boost collaborations and build a network of partners across the regions. The multistakeholder engagement is also the focus point of many other local and regional initiatives, taking place e.g. in [Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes](#).

Collaboration within the NEB, key actors and the role of regions

The NEB lighthouse demonstrators will have a crucial role in the initiative and therefore it is important to showcase the essential role of collaboration among different actors and the place-based approach of this initiative. The changes will happen at the local level, where the key actors are located. Therefore, local engagement is key to success.

On the other hand, the NEB initiative's sustainability objectives should not only be limited to cities but also tackle the place-based dimension more broadly – covering the regional level. Regions have a significant role to play in identifying what kind of financing can be mobilised for the transformation and development of the local and regional ecosystem but also, for example, equipping the construction sector with digital and creative solutions. In fact, regional dimension can serve as an umbrella for the activities taking place at the local level, both in urban and rural areas.

As identified by ERRIN members, the key actors to be mobilised to achieve the NEB objectives are the local and regional authorities, who can act as catalysts of local initiatives and translate the European idea to the local language. They should also have the responsibility of identifying the key actors, develop the process of engagement and overlook the activities. The political level has the capacity to link the NEB to existing plans and strategies at local and regional levels and to set up priorities to implement the required changes, e.g. in the field of energy and climate.

Citizens and local communities, including artists and architects, are at the core of this initiative as well. Through dialogues on the ground, the goal of building capacities and creating a holistic approach can be achieved and feed into the plan with concrete actions. The engagement of citizens can also help in creating a ‘mindset’ that is more open towards environmental goals.

Challenges, opportunities and expectations

One of the challenges of the initiative identified during the conversation is the involvement of the local authorities in the multistakeholder collaboration, creation of networks of partners and building bridges between different government levels. There is a discrepancy of priorities at the regional and local levels that could become unified with a long-term dialogue and continuous EU-level communication. The different perspectives presented by the ERRIN members prove that regional priorities vary greatly. In order to bring together different points of view, it is crucial to find a common language and carry out exchanges on the possible benefits for all levels. Thanks to the European dimension of this initiative, the NEB has become a brand that makes it easier to further engage with the citizens. Therefore, the voice at the EU level must be comprehensive and universal, leaving enough space for interpretation and clearly stating the benefits for local communities. Establishing a holistic understanding of the new sustainable environment that goes beyond the sectoral approach will be key.

The expectations towards the implementation process of the NEB broadly focus on mobilising the right stakeholders as well as ensuring that the demonstrators are well equipped. The EU level should focus on giving global visibility to the NEB, providing space for an exchange of good practices and networking opportunities to local and regional stakeholders. There is also a need for a platform where different points of view can be discussed, enabling an exchange of possible solutions and the fostering of collaboration opportunities. This should be done through dialogues not only with networks who serve as a liaison between the different stakeholders and disseminate various opportunities, but also with the experts who can bring forward concrete solutions.

The lighthouse demonstrators should be equipped with the right tools and be well-connected with each other. There is also a clear demand for financial support to encourage the development and deployment of innovative solutions. As the NEB initiative will be financed by various sources, it should be made clear that EU funding will partially support the activities. A stronger link with the regional priorities from the outset would further secure the necessary support for the initiative.