

Innovate Cities & Infrastructure Programme

Programme overview

The Innovate Cities & Infrastructure programme supports project-based research between researchers and practice partners to develop innovative solutions for sustainable urban development and resilient infrastructure. It is a collaboration between the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) and ETH Zurich, with three objectives: (1) **developing research-informed** urban technologies, strategies and policies; (2) **empowering institutions** to deliver effective services; and (3) **facilitating bilateral knowledge transfer** between researchers and practitioners. Projects are conducted by **consortia of ETH-Domain researchers and practice partners in eligible countries**¹, fostering co-creation, practical application, scalability, and lasting local impact.

Practice partners: Key benefits and contributions

- Access to **world-class research capacity** in urban development, infrastructure, energy, mobility, AI and more.
- Innovative analytics, digital tools, methodologies, technical solutions or prototype designs.
- You co-define the research question, so the **outputs respond to a need you have**.
- **Partners contribute** local knowledge and context, data and information access, and time or in-kind support.

Research Grants: Competitive Call for Proposals

Research projects are selected through a **competitive Call for Proposal process**. Applications are made by the ETH domain researcher together with the practice partner(s). Consortia can apply for two different types of grants:

- (1) **Urban Research Grants** (Max. 24months, up to CHF 350,000): Supports collaborative project-based research between researchers at institutions in the ETH-Domain and practice partners from eligible countries to develop effective solutions to urban development and infrastructure challenges.
- (2) **Urban Pilot Grants** (Max. 12 months, up to CHF 30,000): Supports initial ideation to explore, prepare or design new collaborations and pilot a new applied research project with practice partners from eligible countries.

Eligible research themes	Eligible research country focus	Potential Outcomes (Illustrative & Non-Exhaustive)
• Climate & Environmental Protection, Energy, Finance & Urban Governance, Mobility/Transport, Solid Waste Management, Spatial Planning/Urban Design and Water. • Projects that integrate themes of digitalization, artificial intelligence, and gender are particularly encouraged.	• Croatia • Czech Republic (Czechia) • Hungary • Latvia • Poland • Romania • Slovakia • Slovenia	• Digital tools for urban planning • Innovative methodologies for urban transport and public infrastructure planning • Technology for decentralised energy production and management • Sustainable sanitation utilities solutions in fast-growing urban settlements • Policies to increase the use of solar energy • A mobile-phone application to improve governance of urban infrastructure

How to get involved: Next steps

- Find out more information on our website: [Innovative Cities and Infrastructure](#)
- Already have a partner at ETH Zurich or another ETH-Domain institution? Apply together by 15 Nov 2026
- No research partner yet? Please submit your project idea by [filling in this form](#)
- For additional queries reach out to ETH4D programme manager [Dr. Churchill Agutu](#)

¹ Eligible practice partners include public institutions, private sector companies, and civil society organizations in eligible countries. Local academic institutions may also participate in the consortium, but at least one practice partner must be non-academic