



**EURO
CITIES**



Economic Development Forum 2026

Making competitiveness work for people, cities and companies

28-30 October 2026

Background

Europe is entering a decisive phase in shaping its future economic model. Negotiations on the EU's next Multiannual Financial Framework (2028–2034) will define how Europe invests in competitiveness, innovation and territorial development for the next decade.

At the centre of this debate is the proposed **European Competitiveness Fund (ECF)**, designed to strengthen innovation capacity, industrial transformation and strategic autonomy. The 2026 Eurocities Economic Development Forum takes place just as the European Parliament is expected to adopt its position on the ECF, shaping the upcoming interinstitutional negotiations.

This makes the Forum a key moment for cities, EU institutions and economic development leaders to discuss how the future EU budget can strengthen competitiveness while ensuring tangible benefits for people, businesses and places.

Cities are central to Europe's competitiveness. They concentrate talent, research, businesses and investment, and provide the ecosystems where innovation develops. At the same time, they face the challenge of turning economic transformation into quality jobs, resilient local economies and inclusive growth.

The Forum will also present the first **Eurocities Monitor on Urban Competitiveness**, developed with Euricur, offering new evidence on the drivers of urban competitiveness and the role of place-based policies in sustainable growth.

In addition, the Forum will reflect on the European Commission's **Right to Stay – Your Region, Your Future** initiative (DG REGIO, 2026), which reframes cohesion policy by focusing on people's ability to choose where to live and work, based on real economic opportunities and services.

For cities, this raises key questions about how competitiveness can support quality jobs, skills, entrepreneurship, talent retention and strong local business ecosystems.

The Forum will bring together cities, EU institutions, businesses and researchers to explore how competitiveness can work for people, companies and places – shaped through local ecosystems and essential for Europe's long-term resilience and cohesion.

Programme overview

Wednesday 28 October	Morning	Session Eurocities x Copenhagen Institute for Future Studies: Foresight as a governance tool (<i>politicians only/optional</i>)		
	Afternoon	EDF Steering Committee Meeting		Newcomers session
		Keynote speech		
		Plenary session		Political Track (<i>politicians only</i>)
	Evening	Welcome reception		
Thursday 29 October	Morning	Keynote speech		
		Parallel session 1	Parallel session 2	Parallel session 3
	Afternoon	Site visits		
	Evening	Official dinner		
Friday 30 October	Morning	WG I&E	WG CBIER	WG PP
		Plenary session		
		Closing session		

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Agenda

DAY 1: Wednesday, 28 October 2026

Venue: Design Museum of Barcelona (DHUB)

Plaça de les Glòries Catalanes, 38, c, Sant Martí, 08018 Barcelona, Spain

11:30 – 13:00	Session Eurocities x Copenhagen Institute for Future Studies “Foresight as a governance tool” (politicians only) tbc <i>Executive Committee politicians and EDF political representatives onl</i>	
13:00 – 15:00	Registrations & Networking Lunch	
14:00 – 15:00	EDF Steering Committee Meeting	Newcomers' session
15:00 – 15:15	Forum Opening Ceremony and Mayor Address <i>Auditorium</i> • Jaume Collboni, Mayor of Barcelona and Vice President of Eurocities • EDF Political Chair (name tbc) • André Sobczak, Eurocities Secretary General	
15:15 – 15:30	Keynote Speech: The territorial dimension of European Competitiveness <i>Auditorium</i> • Teresa Ribera, Executive Vice-President for Clean, Just and Competitive Transition, European Commission (<i>invited</i>)	
15:30 – 16:30	Political Plenary Session: Cities as hubs for competitiveness <i>Auditorium</i> As the EU enters the next phase in shaping its next Multiannual Financial Framework (2028–2034), this session will explore the proposed European Competitiveness Fund (ECF) and its role in strengthening Europe’s innovation, industrial transformation and strategic autonomy. Taking place just after the European Parliament adopts its position on the ECF, the discussion will bring together city leaders and policymakers to reflect on how the Fund can support the full innovation cycle—from research to market deployment—while reinforcing the crucial role of cities and local ecosystems in driving Europe’s long-term competitiveness. • Jaume Collboni, Mayor of Barcelona and Vice President of Eurocities • Eurocities President and/or some ExCom Politicians (tbc) • EDF Politician (tbc) • Member of the European Parliament (tbc) • Teresa Ribera, Executive Vice-President for Clean, Just and Competitive Transition, European Commission (<i>invited</i>) Moderator: André Sobczak, Eurocities Secretary General	
16:30 – 17:15	Group Photo and Coffee break <i>Foyer (4th floor)</i>	

17:15 – 18:30	Plenary session – Official launch of the Eurocities Monitor on Urban Competitiveness (Director level) <i>Auditorium</i> • Prof. Dr. Willem van Winden, Professor of Urban Economic Innovation, Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, EURICUR	High Level Political meeting (invitation only) <i>Room: Aula M</i> <i>This session is for politicians only and will bring together both EDF politicians and ExCom politicians.</i>
19:00 – 22:00	Welcome Reception <i>Foyer 4th Floor</i>	

DAY 2: Thursday, 29 October 2026

Venue: Design Museum of Barcelona (DHUB)

Plaça de les Glòries Catalanes, 38, c, Sant Martí, 08018 Barcelona, Spain

9:00 – 9:30	Registrations		
9:30 – 9:45	Opening of Day 2 <i>Auditorium</i> - EDF Political Chair Nadia Quevedo, Commissioner for Economic Promotion, Commerce and Restoration, Barcelona		
9:45 – 10:15	High-level Keynote Speech “The Right to Stay: Making Competitiveness Work for People and Places” <i>Auditorium</i>		
10:15– 13:00	Parallel sessions		
	Parallel session 1: Fostering development via Proximity and Retail Economy <i>Room: aula K</i>	Parallel session 2: People, Human capital, Employment <i>Room: aula L</i>	Parallel session 3: Infrastructure, innovation and interconnection – Building ecosystems for competitiveness <i>Room: aula M</i>
13:00 – 14:30	Lunch <i>Foyer (4th floor)</i>		
14:30-17:30	Parallel site visits Meeting point: DHUB foyer (Plaça de les Glòries Catalanes, 38) Site visit A - Cities As Innovation Platforms 22@ Barcelona Innovation District Site Visit B – Proximity/Local Economy Local economy: Barcelona's retail fabric, linking tradition, community and innovation Site Visit C – Science And Talent Barcelona Supercomputing Centre & Digital Talent Hub Site Visit D – Advanced Manufacturing DFACTORY Barcelona		
19:30 – 20:00	Historical visit of Sant Pau Hospital		
20:00 – 22:30	Official Dinner featuring “People of Eurocities” Sant Pau Hospital venue		

DAY 3: Friday, 30 October 2026

Venue: Design Museum of Barcelona (DHUB)

Plaça de les Glòries Catalanes, 38, c, Sant Martí, 08018 Barcelona, Spain

09:00 – 09:30	Registrations		
09:30 – 11:30	EDF Working Group Meetings		
	WG Innovation and Entrepreneurship <i>Room: Aules K+L (80 pax) tbc</i>	WG City Branding and International Economic Relations <i>Room: Aules M (40 pax) tbc</i>	WG Public Procurement <i>Room: Taller R (25 pax) tbc</i>
11:30 – 12:00	Coffee break		
12:00 – 12:45	Economic Development Forum: 40 Years of Change: Lessons From the Past, Priorities for the Future <i>Auditorium (4th floor)</i> - Cities tbc - Cities tbc		
12:45 – 13:00	EDF Forum closing <i>Auditorium (4th floor)</i> Chiara Venturini, Head of Economic Development and Digitalisation, Eurocities - EDF Chair(s) Nadia Quevedo, Commissioner for Economic Promotion, Commerce and Restoration, Barcelona		
13:00 – 14:00	Farewell lunch <i>Foyer (4th floor)</i>		

Parallel site visits

Site visit A. Cities As Innovation Platforms: 22@ Barcelona Innovation District

Transport: On foot and private bus transfers

Poblenou neighbourhood was one of the most important textile hubs in Europe until the 1970s, when it started its decline because of the impact of successive globalisation waves in the manufacture sector. Since 2000, 22@Barcelona has transformed 200 hectares of post-industrial land of the neighbourhood into a fully functioning innovation district attracting a large critical mass of knowledge-based activities. This initiative has created a mixed urban tissue with the highest social mix in the city. The district features Barcelona Activa's HQs, new office buildings with corporate HQs, refurbished industrial heritage buildings turned into municipal facilities, social housing with ground floor retail, business incubation and co-working spaces, university campuses, research and tech transfer centres, museums, parks and lively green axis. hub for innovation and urban regeneration. Highlights of the visit include:

- **Social and emergency housing facilities** developed by the City Council, showcasing public initiatives to address Barcelona's housing needs.
- **The Mediatic Building**, home to key services such as Barcelona Activa's Business Support Office, the Cibernàrium digital skills training centre, and the Barcelona International Welcome Desk for international talent.
- **Headquarters and facilities of private companies**, many of which have established themselves in the district, contributing to its economic vitality and innovation ecosystem.
- **A university campus** located within 22@, built on the site of a former industrial complex and specialising in communication, language sciences, and information and communication technologies (ICT).
- **A refurbished industrial building** converted into the headquarters of a leading company in the lighting and smart home sector. The visit highlights both the transformation of a century-old building into a 21st-century workspace and the evolution of the company itself, recognised for its innovation in sustainability and design.
- **A leading public research centre** offering advanced scientific and technological infrastructure, as well as specialised expertise tailored to business needs. It plays a key role in driving innovation and competitiveness in Southern Europe.

Site visit B. Proximity/Local Economy

Transport: On foot and private bus transfers

This itinerary offers a contextual journey through Barcelona's local retail landscape, connecting tradition, community, and innovation within the framework of Barcelona as the 2026 Capital of Retail-Visionary Cities. The programme includes:

- An emblematic **municipal market**, highlighting the key role of Barcelona's markets in supporting the local economy. These markets foster small businesses, promote local production, and create employment within neighbourhoods.
- An iconic **retail shop**, showcasing both innovation in the retail sector and the generational renewal of local businesses.

Site visit C. Science and Talent: Barcelona Supercomputing Centre & Digital Talent Hub

Transport: Private bus transfers

This itinerary explores Barcelona's position as a leading hub for science, innovation, and digital talent, highlighting key infrastructures and initiatives that drive research excellence and skills development. The programme includes:

- **Barcelona Supercomputing Centre (BSC)**, Spain's national supercomputing facility, specialising in high-performance computing (HPC). It manages MareNostrum, one of Europe's most powerful supercomputers, supporting cutting-edge research across multiple scientific fields.

- **Barcelona Digital Talent Hub (BDTH)**, a city-led initiative coordinated by Barcelona Activa. Built through strong public–private collaboration, it brings together Barcelona’s digital training opportunities into a single, integrated, and inclusive ecosystem, aimed at developing and attracting digital talent.

Site visit D. Advanced Manufacturing: DEFACTORY Barcelona

Transport: Private bus transfers

This itinerary focuses on Barcelona’s leadership in advanced manufacturing and Industry 4.0, showcasing how digital technologies are transforming industrial processes and production systems. Advanced manufacturing, also known as Industry 4.0, refers to the integration of automation, data exchange, the Internet of Things (IoT), artificial intelligence, and cyber-physical systems to develop smart, interconnected factories. The programme includes:

- **DFactory Barcelona**, an international benchmark technological ecosystem for Industry 4.0, promoted by the Consorci de la Zona Franca de Barcelona. It brings together leading companies, startups, and innovation centres to foster collaboration, accelerate digital transformation, and drive the future of advanced industry.