AUDI STRATEGY 2025



المعهد العربي لإنماء المدن
Arab Urban Development Inst.

AUDI STRATEGY 2025

"Coming together to share, learn, innovate, and make a difference for Arab cities"

المعهد العربي لإنماء المدن
Arab Urban Development Inst.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

HH, The Mayor of Riyadh



Our Arab cities are experiencing significant economic, social, and urban transformations. To meet their development goals, the aspirations of residents, and leadership expectations, they strive to provide services, develop infrastructure, and improve quality of life. Furthermore, our cities have rich assets in the form of culture and heritage, as well as the means of developing these assets into reliable economic resources for the purpose of establishing prosperity. The diversity of opportunities and challenges presented to city managers offers them a chance to enhance the level of service they offer, and increase their economic competitiveness to attract talent and investment, from both local and international avenues.

In this context, the Arab Urban Development Institute (AUDI) works to support all member cities of the Arab Towns Organization in achieving their urban development objectives. This is accomplished by producing specialized and comprehensive publications on urban development practices in the Arab region, enhancing institutional capacities, and fostering partnerships between cities, universities, and regional and international organizations. AUDI acknowledges that the needs and ambitions of cities vary depending on their situation, and that addressing challenges in the face of limited resources and tools places greater demands on them.

To strengthen its work, AUDI has developed a new strategic approach , one that transforms its role, aligns its focus areas, and positions it as a responsive and supportive organization for Arab cities. This transformation is informed by AUDI's new leadership, regional and international experts, and the results of exhaustive surveys conducted across Arab cities and their respective municipalities on urban development challenges, opportunities, and municipal needs. In addition to creating the AUDI Strategy 2025, efforts have been made to revitalize the organization's identity and fast-track activities, the impact of which will become apparent during the course of this year and beyond.

Hence, I invite all our partners, including member cities and municipalities, international organizations, universities, and stakeholders, to communicate, engage, and participate in the institute's programs and activities. We pray that the coming years will be times of goodness, prosperity, and abundance in all our Arab cities, and that AUDI and its partners will make their mark through a positive impact on the field of urban development.

My sincere greetings and appreciation,

The President of AUDI, the Mayor of Riyadh Region Municipality

Prince Dr.Faisal bin Abdul Aziz bin Ayyaf

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR GENERAL



In light of the changes taking place in our cities, the Arab Urban Development Institute (AUDI) aims to solidify its role as a leading institution that supports cities in the Arab region to address their urban development challenges. We seek to accomplish this by contributing progressive ideas and innovative practices, spearheading capacity-development initiatives for institutions and municipalities, and acting as the primary platform for networking and knowledge sharing between cities, municipalities, universities, and regional and international organizations within the domain of urban development.

To realize our aspirations, we have taken several principal steps towards a holistic and systematic transformation, as outlined in our institutional strategic plan, the AUDI Strategy 2025. Built on inputs from an envisioning workshop, benchmarking exercise, and interviews held with key informants, this strategy is based on a comprehensive understanding of the various challenges and opportunities faced by Arab cities and municipalities today. It responds to their needs, as well as their aims of modernization and prosperity, through a set of programs and activities targeting our partners and the member cities of the Arab Towns Organization. Furthermore, the strategy stresses the need for strengthening AUDI's identity, amplifying the institute's digital presence through a revitalized website and social media channels, developing communication channels with partners, and building partnerships at the regional and international levels for effective program implementation.

At the organizational level, we have streamlined AUDI's operational structure with the aim of enhancing efficiency in the workplace, informed by key performance indicators that are regularly monitored and evaluated by the management. Moreover, the institute's human resources have been strengthened with qualified professionals in the field of urban development, who drive the implementation of AUDI's three programs and their respective activities. These changes have been accompanied by the modernization of our workspace within the existing AUDI premises. A vibrant setting, in a building enveloped by natural lighting and a variety of flora, fosters collaboration and creativity within the team.

The AUDI Strategy 2025 is conceived of as an encapsulated presentation of the institute's roadmap for the next two years. It elaborates on the nature of our programs and activities, and presents the mechanisms through which we aim to implement them. Further, it not only discusses the context within which AUDI operates but also outlines AUDI's significance as a key player in urban development in the Arab region.

I wish you an informative experience as you navigate the AUDI Strategy 2025, and we look forward to your support and participation in the work we aim to accomplish.

Thank you,

Dr. Anas Almughairy

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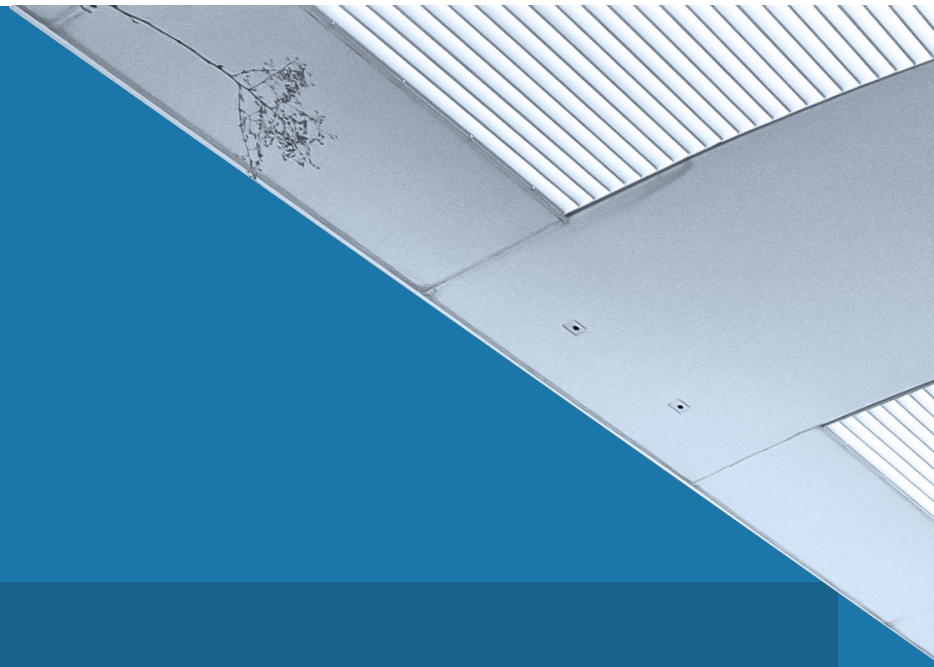

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01 INTRODUCTION



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Overview of AUDI

AUDI was founded in 1980 by the Arab Towns Organization. As a regional organization, it works across 22 Arab countries, with headquarters in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. It operates as a non-governmental, non-profit organization. Specializing in research and training in urban development and municipal affairs, AUDI focuses on the economic, environmental, and social development of Arab cities.

AUDI is the first large-scale pan-Arab institute dedicated to urban development and municipal cooperation, and it remains unsurpassed in this role.

Across its 43 years of existence, it has brought together municipalities, urban researchers, donors, and international organizations. Its network of 650+ municipalities, affiliated with the Arab Towns Organization, represents the largest in the Arab region.



Provide cities with needed **TECHNICAL SUPPORT** through dedicated training and advisory programs



Strengthen **RELATIONS BETWEEN CITIES** through specialized conferences and meetings



Contribute to **BETTER URBAN DEVELOPMENT** through qualitative research



Capture **ARAB URBAN DEVELOPMENT REALITIES AND HORIZONS** through various written and audiovisual formats



Preserve the **MEMORY** of cities and urban development in the Arab region

AUDI STRATEGY 2025

In previous years, the scope and impact of AUDI's work remained relatively limited in the face of multiple internal and external challenges. To address this situation, AUDI's President and Director General have determined that an important transformation is needed.

The AUDI Strategy 2025 is a cornerstone of this transformation effort. It charts a path for AUDI, as an influential actor, to support cities in the Arab region in their efforts to deal with multi-faceted urban challenges.

The strategy, along with proposed programs and activities, was created from information gathered from an envisioning workshop with the advisory board, benchmarking exercise, and interviews held with key informants throughout the process.

IN THIS DOCUMENT

This document is conceived of as an encapsulated presentation of the AUDI Strategy 2025. It is structured in three sections.

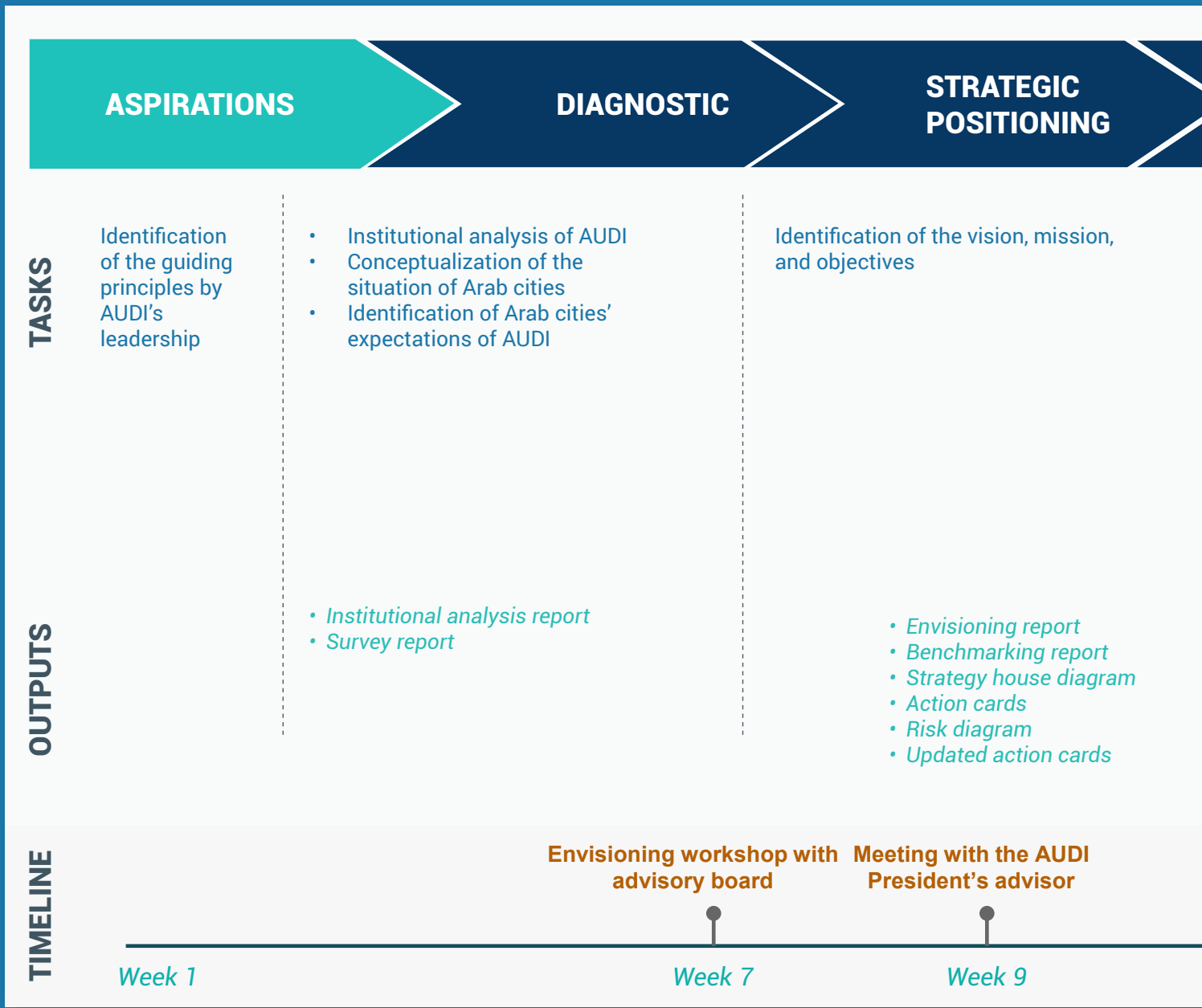
The first section discusses the present context of Arab cities and the urban development landscape in the region. Building on this, it elaborates on AUDI's unique position in the region through the institute's new vision, mission, and objectives. It also discusses AUDI's focus areas, which speak directly to the issues affecting cities today and were derived from a comprehensive diagnostic evaluation of cities and stakeholders in the region.

The second section presents AUDI's three main programs and the activities that support them. The activities align with the focus areas and respond to the concerns of our stakeholders.

In the third section, the document focuses on the processes required for effective implementation of the strategy. After presenting the revised governance and institutional structure of AUDI, it reviews the projected timeline of the strategy as well as outreach efforts to introduce the institute internationally and build partnerships.

THE STRATEGY

AUDI engaged in a four-month strategy development process, starting in January 2023.



DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Informed by its aspirations, different elements of the strategy were addressed through five phases.

ACTIONS DEVELOPMENT

- Identification of focus areas
- Identification of action lines
- Description of activities (including alignment with objectives, process, role of AUDI, funding, and impact)
- Prioritization of actions in terms of their impact, required resources, and risks
- Identification of targets

BUSINESS MODEL & STRUCTURE

- Identification of appropriate institutional structure
- Description of AUDI positions
- Identification of a business model

- *Organogram*
- *AUDI positions descriptions*
- *Business model chart*

IMPLEMENTATION & COMMUNICATION

- Establishment of the implementation timeline
- Identification of monitoring system including key performance indicators
- Development of communication plan
- Design of final strategy kit

- *Updated action cards*
- *Timeline chart*
- *Communication plan*
- *Strategy kit*

First meeting with AUDI President

Second meeting with AUDI President

Week 12

Week 14

Week 16

02 CONTEXT



Alexandria ©AUDI 2023

A pivotal moment for cities in the Arab Region

The notion of Arab cities has a long history in urban studies. Historically, it has been the object of much discourse, aimed at capturing the characteristics and drivers of urbanization in this part of the world. However, the Arab city is often conflated with the Muslim/Islamic city or Middle Eastern city.

The label “Arab city” has been heavily criticized. Some critics see it as outdated and orientalist, promoting essentialist and simplistic cultural representations. Others stress the diversity of cities and contexts in this region, as well as the specific challenges they face, questioning the relevance of the concept of Arab cities.

Nevertheless we adopt the term ‘Arab cities’ as we believe that cities in the Arab region share fundamental common challenges, that could be addressed through a collective framework, under the umbrella of a common urban agenda.



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URBAN DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES

Although each city's population, economic status, and geography present a unique set of challenges, some issues are common to most cities in the Arab region.

Urban growth

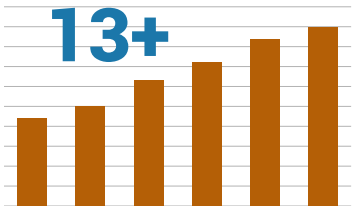
Cities in the Arab region have some of the highest growth rates in the world, with 185 million new urbanites expected by 2050 (UNDP 2022). This urbanization is fueled by demographic growth, with youth 10 to 24 years old representing more than a quarter of the overall population.

These changes present considerable opportunities for development in cities; however, if not planned for, they can also have serious negative impacts on residents' quality of life. Today, public green spaces constitute only 2% of urban space, in contrast to 17% in Europe (UNDP 2017). More importantly, rising socioeconomic inequalities mean the Arab region has some of the highest disparities in the world (UNESCWA 2022). In fact, high rates of unemployment and rent-based urban economies controlled by a few powerful actors are marginalizing large sections of the population and increasing their vulnerabilities, especially in urban areas.

High vulnerability to climate change

The Arab region is one of the areas in the world most vulnerable to climate change. As per the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, temperatures will have increased an estimated 5°C by 2100 relative to the pre-industrial era. In the last decade, the Arab region experienced one of its longest droughts, stretching for more than a thousand days. Furthermore, 17 out of 22 Arab countries face worsening desertification (UNHabitat 2022).

185M+
Urban population in 2050
(UNDP 2022)



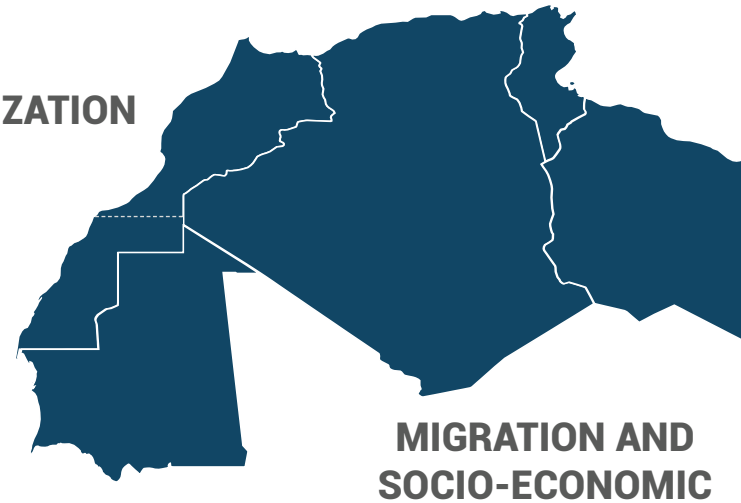
new cities added in 2030 to the current 32 1M+ cities
(UNDESA 2015)

7%
Annual growth for Mogadishu in Somalia, one of the fastest growing cities in the world
(UNDESA 2015)

90%
Informal settlements and slums in Sudan
(UNDP 2017)

2%
Public and green spaces in Arab cities compared to 17% in Europe
(UNDP 2017)

URBANIZATION



MIGRATION AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC INEQUALITIES

58%
World refugees are from the region
(UNDP 2017)

9%
Of the region's population is refugees
(UNDP 2017)

Precipitation is expected to decline on the Mediterranean coast but rise in the Arabian Peninsula in the form of periodic torrential rains, resulting in more droughts and floods. Rising sea levels will bring dramatic consequences not only to certain coastal areas but also to inland areas, as has been the case for the Nile delta in Egypt. All these environmental changes have direct impacts on cities, including falling food production, sharp increases in climate-displaced populations, and economic disruptions.

Weak or newly established municipal institutions

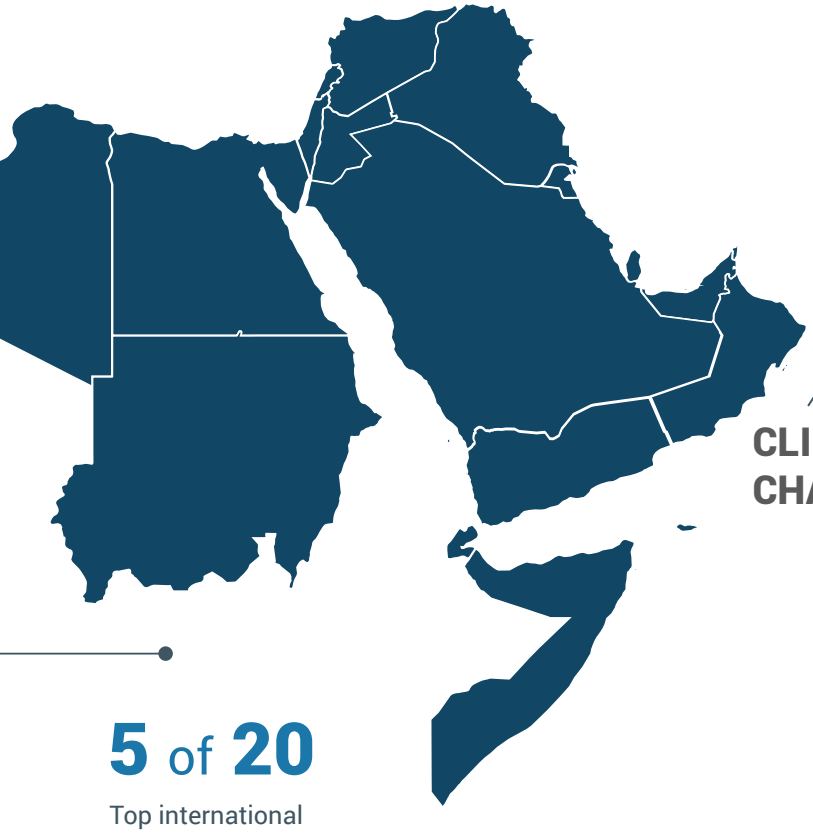
Arab municipalities are often overwhelmed by the breadth of challenges facing them. In fact, governance issues and lack of human and financial resources are common to many Arab municipalities.

Though the formation of municipalities in many Arab countries preceded the existence of the state, they remain dependent on state institutions for governance and funding. Even in countries where the law gives municipalities independent powers, administrative and financial limitations often undermine their capacity to act.

Moreover, rapid urban sprawl raises the question of interdependence, coordination, and subsidiarity between municipalities in older city centers and newly urbanizing municipalities in the suburbs, as well as between local and neighborhood municipalities and metropolitan ones. Some Arab countries have tried to answer these questions by giving greater control to municipalities, developing large metropolitan authorities, or establishing more sophisticated mechanisms for coordination between municipalities. However, most of these reforms are still recent and do not necessarily employ the human and financial resources that municipalities need to confront challenges.

Weak or recent urban institutions challenged by these issues

URBAN INSTITUTIONS



CLIMATE CHANGE

77%

Of water resources exploited, compared to 7.5% globally
(UN Habitat 2020)

17

Countries suffered from increase desertification
(UN Habitat 2020)

56°+

Expected for long weeks in many cities in the Arab region in no-action scenario

5 of 20

Top international migration corridors relate to the Arab region
(IOM 2017)

Understanding Arab Cities

Though cities in the Arab region share common fundamental challenges, they do not share the same priorities or the same capacity to address them. Two factors are critical here: the size of the city, on the one hand, and the income level and stability of its country, on the other.

INCOME LEVEL AND STABILITY

Various categories have been designed to better understand and group Arab countries that share similar traits. These primarily rely on geographic, economic, social, or demographic characteristics.

Gulf Cooperation Council countries	Bahrein Kuwait	Oman Qatar	Saudi Arabia United Arab Emirates
Maghreb	Algeria Libya	Morocco Tunisia	
Mashreq	Egypt Iraq	Jordan Lebanon	Palestine Syria
Southern Tier countries	Comoros Djibouti	Mauritania Somalia	Sudan Yemen

Some categorizations focus less on geography and more on economic performance, type of political regime, or sociopolitical stability. In this regard, authors point to a growing divide separating Arab cities in different countries. The categorization adopted for AUDI's diagnostic evaluation was inspired by this literature. It comprises three categories based on a city's level of income and sociopolitical stability.

High income countries

These countries, found in the GCC and reliant on oil- and gas-based economies, have the highest per capita income in the Arab region and, in some cases, the world. Their fast-growing populations are mainly concentrated in urban areas, which are home to a large number of foreign workers. These countries are governed by strong hereditary monarchies, and have been less affected than others by the sociopolitical instability that rocked the region in 2010. Large urban infrastructure and development projects are seen as a way to firmly inscribe GCC cities in the global movement of goods and capital as well as innovation and ideas.

Some of these cities have been elevated as models of urban development, such as Dubai, which has been imitated by many cities in the region and beyond. The same is the case today for Riyadh with its "city humanization" model. Pushed by strong government agendas, cities in the GCC tend to give particular attention to digital transition, quality of life, and, more recently, environmental issues, as indicated by the results of surveys conducted with city officials.

Stable middle income countries

This category includes Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and Tunisia. They face major challenges at the economic and sociopolitical levels and have been affected to varying degrees by the "Arab Spring" events that arose in 2010. However, compared to the countries in crisis, they have relatively higher levels of stability. Economic challenges at the national level impact the availability of resources for municipalities. Most municipalities can maintain functioning services but are unable to undertake essential large infrastructural and urban development projects that address issues of mobility, pollution, housing, urban renovation, and more.

In or post crisis low income countries

This category includes all Southern Tier countries as well as Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Palestine, and Syria, which have seen severe political and economic crises. Sociopolitical instability has deep impacts on their economic development and particularly on their ability to attract investment. Furthermore, these countries are marked by high levels of out-migration as people flee poverty and crises. Political instability impedes the functioning of institutions and provision of public service delivery. As a result, municipalities struggle to maintain minimal operational capacity, and many rely on international funding for development works.

Urban informality is strongly present in these countries, in the form of squatter settlements and large informal economic systems. More than in other countries in the Arab region, urban policies and projects tend to take into consideration – and sometimes be motivated by – sociopolitical tensions. However, the main challenge for urban institutions in these countries lies in ensuring continuity of or finding alternatives to deficient public service delivery modalities and infrastructure.



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CITY SIZE

Categorization of cities by national income level and stability is valuable in understanding their context and the challenges they face. However, this categorization may overlook the influence of the urban population. In fact, city size is a highly significant variable that impacts the kinds of issues cities may face.

Applying the World Bank definition of cities as human settlements with more than 50,000 inhabitants reveals there are 383 cities in the Arab region today.

90% are small and medium-sized cities, with less than 750,000 inhabitants

6% are large cities with populations from 750,000 to 1,500,000

4% are very large cities with a population of above 1,500,000

19.8 million inhabitants in Cairo make it the largest city in the Arab region



Djibouti, with a population of 562,000



Tunis, with a population of 1 million



Cairo, with a population of 19 million

1 city with a population above 19 million

16 cities with populations from 1.5 million to 19 million

22 cities with populations from 750,000 to 1.5 million

37 cities with populations from 500,000 to 750,000

307 cities with populations from 50,000 to 500,000

VERY LARGE CITIES

- Strong link to the global economy and high ambitions
- Rapid-urbanization issues (e.g., housing, energy)
- Usually stronger urban institutions

LARGE CITIES

- Economic development as a main challenge
- Rapid-urbanization issues (e.g., housing, mobility, pollution)
- Institutional capacity and financial resources sometimes limited

SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED CITIES

- Issues of infrastructure, economic development (especially investment), pollution, and housing

The landscape of Arab urban development stakeholders

In order to effectively respond to the unique needs of different Arab cities, it is important to gain insight into the concerns of stakeholders working within them. These include municipalities, national governments, research institutions, private sector firms, non-profit organizations, donors, international organizations, and more. Currently, this complex and heavily fragmented landscape of stakeholders undermines their capacity to address challenges.

In an AUDI survey of 90 municipal officials, more than 30% of respondents stressed that their municipalities lack basic institutional elements such as human and financial resources, capacity to engage in planning, and quality assurance. This percentage jumps to 50% for small and medium-sized cities, low-income cities, and cities in crisis or post-crisis situations. To compensate for these weaknesses, most municipalities are seeking stronger relationships with other stakeholders that could contribute resources, knowledge, and legitimacy to their activities.

MUNICIPALITIES

Municipalities are the institutions in charge of steering urban development in cities through strategic and land-use planning, as well infrastructure and amenities projects. They are usually the primary point of contact for residents with day-to-day concerns regarding municipal services. Although municipalities in the Arab region are taking on greater responsibilities, many experience structural limitations that undermine their capacity to deal with urban development challenges.

The results of the survey with municipal officials indicate that most large and very large cities are more robust institutionally than are smaller cities. They tend to have greater financial and human resources, and seek strong relations with stakeholders. Most of them have a service-privatization agenda. They are more engaged in international cooperation and are increasingly adopting practices of public participation.

40%

of local authorities do not identify themselves as having the capacity to ensure the needed financial and human resources to support urban development

RESOURCES & QUALITY CONTROL



40%
challenged in their HR and financial resources

11%
claim to not have competent staff

37%
feel that their institutions lack the capacity to control the quality of services and projects

PLANNING & STRATEGY



47%
do not have a strategy to exploit their assets

39%
do not have established decision-making processes

34%
do not have an urban development strategy

STAKEHOLDER & PUBLIC INTENACTION



66%
intend to privatize some services

84%
claim to have public engagement processes

63%
claim to be learning through international cooperation

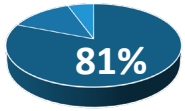
URBAN SPECIALISTS

Communities of urban specialists from different disciplines are growing in Arab cities. Some have established strong and recognized research centers, adding to the multiple local and international consultancy firms in the region. Specialized non-profit organizations are also springing up all over the Arab region. These organizations are usually established by urban activists seeking to develop projects that respond to the needs of the marginalized and underprivileged, or to advocate for more progressive or inclusive urban policies.

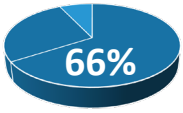
In an AUDI survey of 130 urban specialists in the Arab region representing academic, private sector, and non-profit organizations, respondents indicated that local institutions, such as universities, research centres, and non-government organizations, are contributing to the development of knowledge on specific urban development issues such as public space, quality of life, housing, social development, and digital transition.

66%

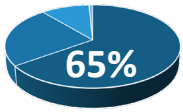
of 130 surveyed urban experts recognize a significant gap between research and urban policy in the Arab region



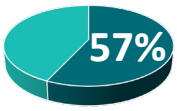
of respondents believe that local institutions focus on housing and social development



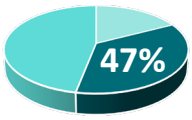
of respondents believe local institutions focus on digital transition and smart cities



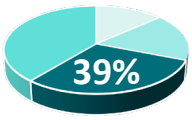
of respondents believe local institutions contribute to improving the quality of life in cities



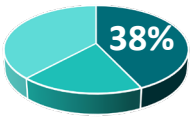
of respondents do not believe there are incentives encouraging local institutions to cooperate with municipalities



of respondents believe there is a lack of cooperation between local institutions, on the one side, and municipalities, on the other, to improve research and provide training

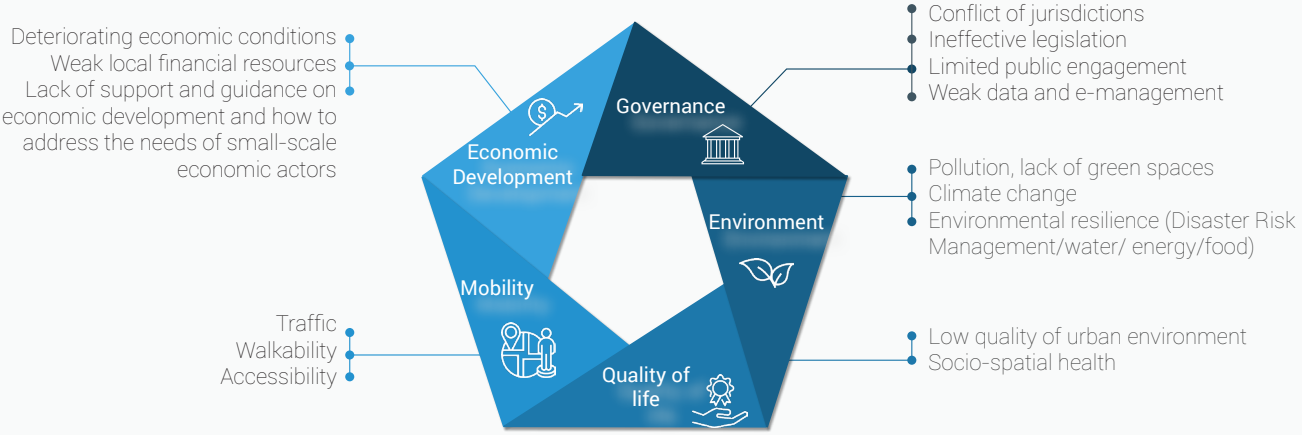


of respondents believe municipalities are not benefiting from the research outputs of local institutions in their urban development activities



of respondents have reservations regarding the contribution of local institutions in encouraging innovation and creativity in Arab cities

Urgent concerns for Arab Cities emerging from AUDI's surveys with municipal officials and urban specialists



CIVIL SOCIETY

Community support systems in the Arab region are traditionally strong and organized through formal and informal social institutions (village and neighborhood committees, trade guilds, tribal structures, waqfs, etc.). Over time, newer institutions, such as engineer syndicates, have emerged as dominant players in debates on urban development practices. Recent decades have seen a sharp climb in the number of specialized non-profit organizations that focus on specific aspects of urban development, such as mobility, heritage, waste, and housing. They usually include urban specialists, and engage in advocacy for more sustainable and equitable urban development agendas.

Overall, though, strongly established urban-focused non-profit organizations remain rare in the Arab region. Most urban development non-profits are still relatively small in size, without the necessary financial resources and knowledge base. As a result, some are seeking support through partnerships with universities and international organizations.

DONORS AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

An array of international organizations and donors operate in the Arab region, and some have historical ties with governments on certain development issues. They are increasingly interested in working with municipalities to ensure the highest targeted impact. Consequently, many municipalities are becoming more dependent on the technical and financial support of these international organizations in responding to urban challenges.

Furthermore, development and humanitarian funding is becoming increasingly specialized through the earmarking of funds and strict conditionalities. It is also more project based, with fewer long-term structural programs. This has led to a situation where, on the one hand, many municipalities are seeking international funding and support but are unable to manage the administrative complexity of applying for and managing grants. On the other, many international donors are looking for local municipal partners for their projects but are unable to identify them or adapt to their needs.



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AUDI in the context of international urban development organizations

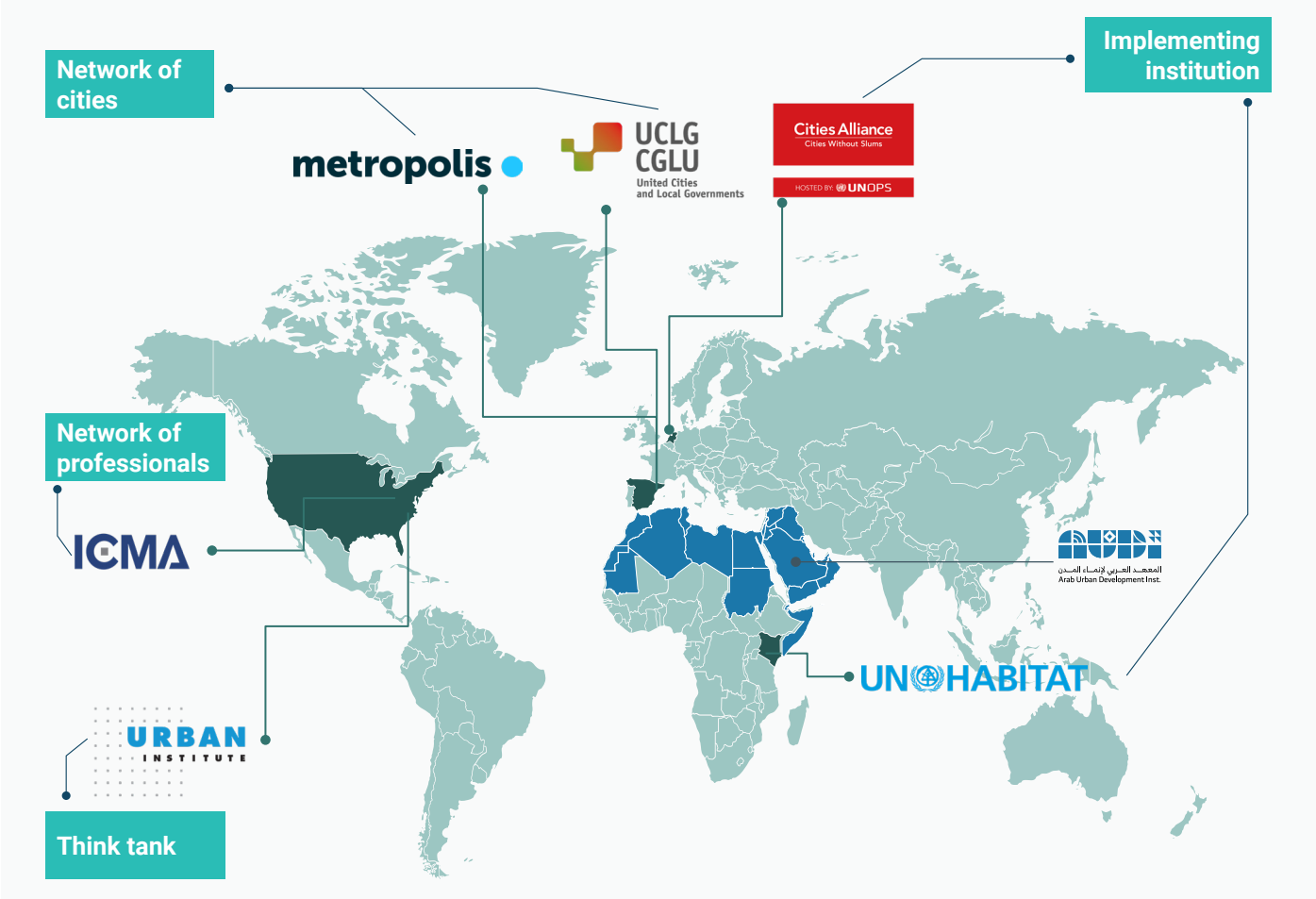
Although the scope of AUDI puts it at the forefront of urban development research and training in the Arab region, multiple international organizations operate with similar or more expansive mandates. In order to assess AUDI's operations and position in the international urban development landscape, it is essential to benchmark similar international institutions and their relationship with urban development stakeholders in their respective operating regions

Of six shortlisted institutions, AUDI aligns most closely with Metropolis, United Cities and Local Governments, and the Urban Institute, in that it is both a network of cities as well as a think tank. Additionally, it borrows to some extent from institutions that act as a network of professionals due to its role in training and capacity building of urban development professionals.

Study of the six benchmarked institutions reveals they share five common factors that enable successful operations and outreach in their respective domains:

1. **REGIONAL LEGITIMACY** through **STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP** with other global organisations
2. Alignment of values and goals with **GLOBAL AGENDAS**
3. Strong **DIGITAL PRESENCE** and **PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT** systems
4. **ROBUST** and **FLEXIBLE** organizational structures
5. **MULTIPLE REVENUE SOURCES**, primarily through grants, partnerships, or membership fees

In developing its strategy, AUDI applied best practices adopted by institutions across the world to ensure its relevancy and effectiveness in addressing urban development challenges in the Arab region.



03 STRATEGIC POSITIONING



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AUDI'S role

AUDI holds a central role as a connector and catalyst of cooperation and knowledge sharing within a complex and fragmented landscape of urban development stakeholders in the Arab region.

650+

municipalities are part of AUDI's network, which is affiliated with the Arab Towns Organization and represents the largest in the Arab region

- AUDI is **RESPONSIVE** to the needs of Arab cities through research and training
- AUDI produces **HIGH-IMPACT OUTPUTS** that contribute to urban development practices in Arab cities
- AUDI acts as a **CREDIBLE** and **RECOGNIZED** entity representing Arab cities at the **GLOBAL** level

FOR MUNICIPALITIES

In its more than four decades of work, AUDI has developed a wide portfolio of collaboration with Arab municipalities. Given its resources and modes of operation, answering municipalities' needs is the best way for the institute to influence urban development in the Arab region. AUDI's success in fostering relations with municipalities will boost its claim to be a main representative of Arab municipalities, further enhancing its standing when it deals with urban specialists, donors, civil society organizations, and the public at large.

AUDI is a regional institute in the Arab world, but it has GLOBAL aspirations and operates within the INTERNATIONAL urban development landscape

RESEARCHERS

AUDI has a significant role to play in bridging the gap between research and policy. This will be done by linking urban specialists in academia and the private sector with municipalities, and by making research outputs more accessible to the latter. Strong collaboration with urban specialists from the Arab region and beyond is also crucial for AUDI to be able to address the needs of municipalities.

OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

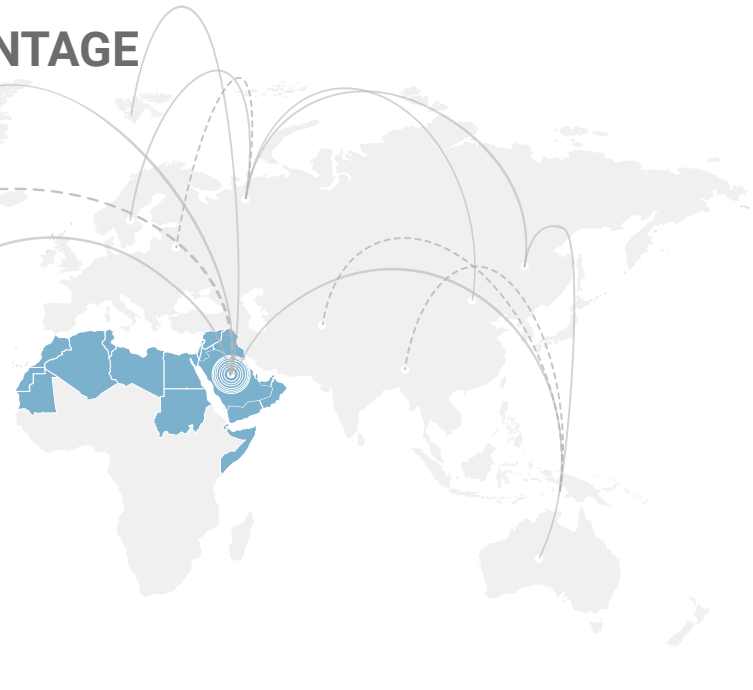
Many international organizations are struggling to access and work with municipalities in the Arab region. AUDI aims to engage with such entities, map their interests, and initiate discussion with them to identify possible alignments and partnerships.

Furthermore, in order to connect international organizations to civil society organizations, AUDI has a robust network through its partners in municipalities, academia, and donor organizations.

Through its programs, AUDI also seeks to provide easy-to-access, consolidated, and reliable information on Arab cities and their development, making it a key player in framing narratives on urban development in the Arab region.



AUDI'S COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE



- An **ESTABLISHED PLAYER** in urban development in the Arab region with more than 650 member cities
- A **REGIONAL HUB** that **BOOSTS** partnerships between cities and **GUIDES** urban development efforts in the Arab region
- An **AVENUE** for the Arab region to contribute to and **FRAME** the **GLOBAL** urban development agenda

New ambitions, new vision, mission and objectives

VISION

A leading institution that contributes to a better global urban future through innovative partnerships and collaborative learning

MISSION

Support municipalities and cities in the Arab region in addressing their urban development challenges, by providing credible and impactful policy research products and training programs and by instigating a culture of collaboration and collective learning

OBJECTIVES

01

Policy research

To engage in high- quality policy research on priority urban development issues faced by municipalities and cities in the Arab region

02

Responsive programming

To diversify activities and outputs, and align them with the needs and aspirations of stakeholders

03

Training platforms

To contribute to the capacity development of municipalities through quality training and leadership programs

04

Strengthened network

To build a strong network of Arab cities and municipalities and international urban development organizations



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AUDI Focus Areas

AUDI's focus areas reflect the main challenges faced by Arab cities today. The institute addresses these issues through program-based activities.

Focus Area 1: Municipal Institutional Development

Municipal and territorial governance

Municipalities stand out as institutions in great need of ongoing development for the governance of their institutional procedures. In recent years, there has been a restructuring of many local institutional systems and municipalities with the goal of boosting performance efficiency and enhancing municipal services. AUDI aims to analyze urban governance practices, and evaluate the methods and tools adopted by Arab municipalities in management and capacity development. This focus area encompasses topics such as the transition towards decentralization, the development of participatory approaches in municipal decision-making through councils and relevant committees, as well as collaboration between municipalities in delivering services to the population.

Municipal asset management and investment

As the demand for infrastructure and urban services continues to rise, municipalities are confronted with increasing challenges, particularly regarding financial resource shortages. Despite this, many municipalities have assets that can be utilized to enhance their financial situation. These assets include real estate and municipal facilities like parking lots, parks, and strategically positioned sites along main roads. AUDI places emphasis on best practices for evaluating and investing in municipal assets, aligning them with the city's strategic plan.

Public-private partnership modalities

Municipalities must embrace collaborative models of partnerships with the private sector to ease the burden of service delivery and enhance delivery methods. It is crucial for municipalities to understand the diverse partnership models and effectively apply them to identify the active role the private sector can play in supporting urban development efforts at the local level. Furthermore, the development of policies and regulations governing the relationship between municipal bodies and the private sector is of paramount importance. This ensures the highest level of transparency in operations and promotes competition in service provision to ensure high quality of work.

Municipal digital transition

The municipal digital transition demands a range of practices centered around utilizing information technology to improve municipal management and service delivery. This encompasses tasks like collecting, organizing, storing, and analyzing data, incorporating diverse technologies such as artificial intelligence. Beyond the technical aspects, adopting digital transformation practices requires a shift in the institutional practices of municipalities. AUDI pays special attention to aligning with the era of information and technology that has significantly enhanced various municipal services with less time and effort.



Focus Area 2: Urban Resilience

Urban greening

Pollution and limited green cover are some of the primary concerns of municipalities and people alike. Rapid, uncontrolled urbanization usually leads to a concrete landscape, causing air, water, and land pollution. Developing and maintaining green spaces and dealing with polluted sites is very costly for municipalities. However, in the last decades, municipalities across the world have developed low-cost efficient practices to expand green spaces in interstitial areas, involved local associations in green space management, and partnered with state agencies, universities, and non-profit organizations to better understand and address pollution sources. Sharing these experiences and encouraging cooperation between actors in Arab cities is important when it comes to handling these challenges.

Water, food, energy and waste

Sustainable management of water supplies, production of food and energy, and efficient mechanisms for waste disposal are crucial for cities. Cities are actively engaged in designing and overseeing infrastructure and urban services to ensure efficient and comprehensive resource management. With the integration of sustainability practices and a focus on energy efficiency, many Arab cities are working towards adopting practical approaches towards efficient energy usage and promote the utilization of renewable resources. In essence, city administrations and municipalities wield significant prerogatives to implement sustainable building practices and reduce the impact on energy and food consumption—a key focus area for AUDI in the domain of urban policies.

Climate change & Disaster risk management

Climate change poses an eminent threat to cities in the Arab region. The diversity and magnitude of issues stemming from the effects of climate change make it complex and challenging to address. Assisting municipalities in undertaking mitigation and adaptation efforts to deal with climate change is a main concern for AUDI.

Cities are growing increasingly vulnerable to environmental risks and recurrent anthropogenic and non- anthropogenic disasters. Disaster and risk management strategies and prevention plans are vital to raise the response capacity of institutions and, consequently, their resilience. Many municipalities in the Arab region require support to develop these plans and strategies.

Focus Area 3: Local Economic Development

Local economic development strategies

Municipalities are increasingly recognizing the role they can play in enhancing the economic performance of cities. Many are leading efforts to redefine their economic base and take advantage of regional and global dynamics in order to better position themselves for financial prosperity. Being able to understand a city's context and to set and follow up on local economic development strategies is essential for the successful involvement of municipalities in this area.

Social Justice

Whereas efforts are maximized to boost economic growth, the resultant systems often lead to exclusionary policies that broaden economic disparities in cities. The idea of social justice ensures that there is fair access to livelihoods that are generated as a result of economic growth in cities. Not only that, it also advocates for equitable distribution of other benefits of this growth such as education and health services. In many cities, the concentration of municipal efforts in providing services unevenly gives rise to neighborhoods with lower service levels. In this context, AUDI focuses on addressing issues of social justice through equitable mechanisms for distribution services and facilities.

Competitive Cities

One of the key instruments available to cities for achieving economic stability is the ability to attract both human and financial capital. While in some cases they may be achieved through drastic interventions through an overhaul of economic and infrastructural system, quite often it is achieved by cities focusing on their local strengths and advantages over other cities in the region. As a result, competitive cities offer their residents a higher quality of life, in turn attracting more capital and investment, enabling them to invest more into avenues that strengthen their national and international position.

Focus Area 4: Livable cities

Public spaces for people

Public spaces play a central role in enhancing the livability of cities. However, as is widely recognized today, for public spaces to contribute to the livability of cities, they need to be designed at a local scale. There is a worldwide movement to rethink and redesign urban spaces in order to take into account the needs and practices of a diverse set of users. AUDI aims to support municipalities in building practices that encourage the creation of vibrant public spaces.

Neighborhood development & Housing

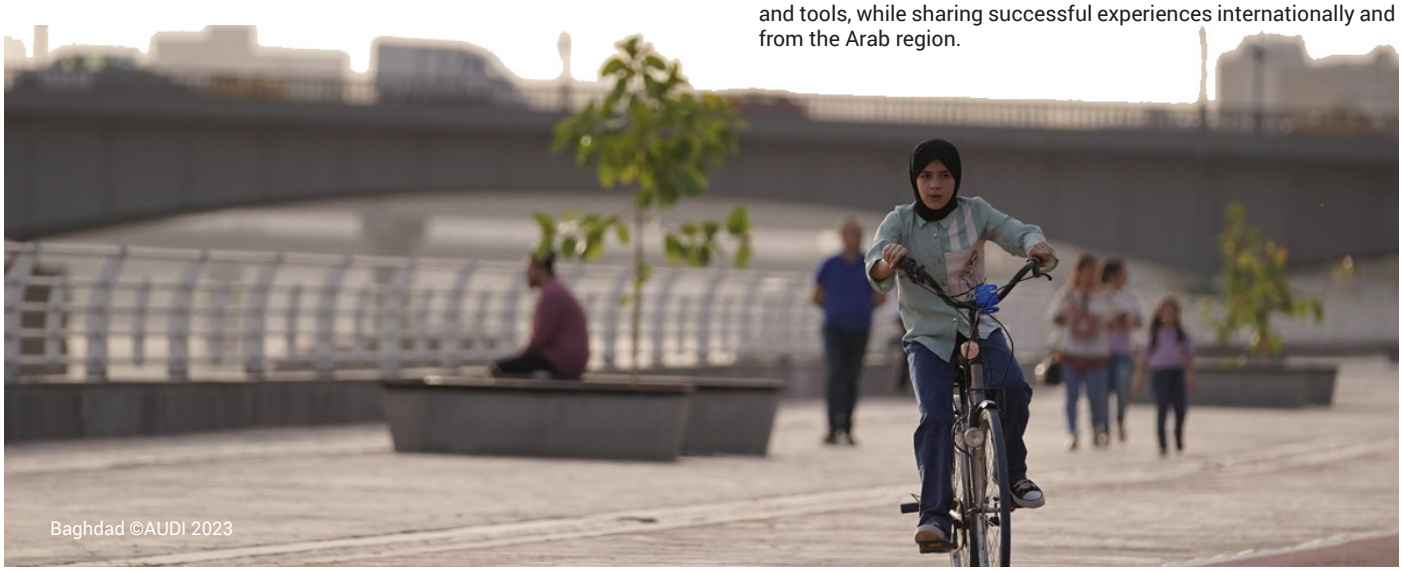
Several contemporary urban planning and design approaches insist on the importance of a diversified housing market, accessible to a variety of income and social classes, as a means of creating comprehensive neighborhoods. Successful neighborhoods also provide easy access to basic services and amenities and prioritize non-motorized modes of transportation for shorter distances. Municipalities need support to better understand these approaches and develop the often-needed partnerships with nonprofit organizations and the private sector to implement them.

Sustainable mobility

The dominant urban planning and development models in Arab cities favor car centric infrastructure, overlooking other more sustainable modes such as public transport and cycling. This planning approach, when adopted, results in negative consequences like traffic congestion and pollution. Modern practices in transportation planning aim to integrate land use planning with the urban transportation network by studying the distribution of activities and directing public transport to serve areas with high population density. Municipalities are embracing modern methods to study routes and enhance the efficiency of public transportation operations.

Public and stakeholder's engagement

Public engagement in urban development is widely recognized at the global level as a strategic goal for many cities and municipalities. However, the question persists about the mechanisms for involving the community and stakeholders in urban development and fostering trust among development partners. AUDI aims to help municipalities better understand different engagement approaches and tools, while sharing successful experiences internationally and from the Arab region.



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VISION

MISSION	Support municipalities and cities in the Arab region in policy research products and training programs and by	
VALUES	**Credibility | Impact**	
OBJECTIVES	*To engage in high- quality policy research on priority urban development issues faced by municipalities and cities in the Arab region*	*To diversify activities and outputs, and align them with the needs and aspirations of stakeholders*

FOCUS AREAS	**URBAN POLICY RESEARCH**					
Municipal Institutional Development	Arab Urban Development Portal	Arab Urban Development Barometer	Practice Reports and Policy Briefs	Arab Cities Urban Living Lab	Newsletter	Webinar
Urban Resilience						
Local Economic Development						
Livable Cities						

FOUNDATIONAL ACTIONS	Policy research advisory group	AUDI affiliates network
	Address book	Road show
INSTITUTIONAL ENABLERS	Reorganization of AUDI's structure and bylaws	Capacity development and performance management

A leading institution that contributes to a better global urban future through innovative partnerships and collaborative learning

addressing their urban development challenges, by providing credible and impactful instigating a culture of collaboration and collective learning

Collaboration | Innovation

03	04
To contribute to the capacity development of municipalities through quality training and leadership programs	*To build a strong network of Arab cities and municipalities and international urban development organizations*

ACTION LINES

TRAINING AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT			NETWORKING			
Training Programs	Advisory and Knowledge Sharing	Executive Program	Arab European Cities Dialogue	Mayor Talks	Urban Development Awards in Arab Cities	Network Brokering

AUDI roster of experts	Meetings with relevant donors and international organizations
Communication plan	

Rebranding	Business model	Development of financial resources

04 PROGRAMS & ACTIVITIES



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Programs

In accordance with its focus areas, AUDI has developed a set of activities grouped under three main programs: Urban Policy Research, Networking, and Capacity Development.

URBAN POLICY RESEARCH

This program's activities are steered towards the production and dissemination of knowledge on Arab cities and urban development policies and practices. Research methods include document review, interviews, surveys, and roundtable discussions, resulting in the drafting of reports, summaries, and more. At the organizational level, a policy research advisory group will be created to identify priority themes and review outputs.

Arab Urban Development Portal

A digital repository on Arab cities and urban development integrates four complementary sets of information on the 650+ cities of the Arab Towns Organization; urban development policies, projects, and initiatives in the Arab region; the main institutions and organizations involved in urban development in the Arab region; and urban development publications produced by these institutions. This establishes AUDI as the go-to source of information for those interested in urban development in the Arab region.

The Arab Urban Development Barometer

The barometer is based on a standardized survey sent periodically to urban development stakeholders in the Arab region. The idea is to capture the main challenges faced by cities in the Arab region as well as shed light on improvements. The regularity of the survey allows AUDI to identify trends and their evolution through time. A short report outlining the results is published on AUDI's website.

Practice Reports and Briefs

This consists of a series of outputs targeted at producing quality publications on issues relevant to Arab cities. Production of this material is both in the form of research publications, as well as through high level roundtable discussions and concise policy briefs supported by public campaigns.

Primary publications are in the form 40 to 60-page practice reports, that provide evidence-based policy research on priority focus areas for cities in the Arab region. They present urban development approaches, policies, or practices that are recognized as valuable in addressing urban challenges. They are also dedicated to the analysis of case studies where these policies and practices have been implemented to assess the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches, and the needed adaptations for varying contexts. The key takeaways from the practice reports will form the basis of the discussion at the **URBAN DEVELOPMENT DIALOGUE ROUNDTABLES.**

The roundtables are held with strategic decision-makers and stakeholders in a number of countries, and focus on significant urban development issues addressed by AUDI in its practice reports. These events may be organized primarily by AUDI or with a local partner, and convened in-person or online. The main aim of these roundtables is to discuss policies and practices that have the potential to enhance municipal performance in the Arab region while taking into consideration the implications of local situations in regard to the impact of these policies and practices. The roundtables will culminate in a collection of recommendations that will provide the basis for **Urban Development Policy Briefs and campaigns**.

Policy briefs are 4- to 8-page documents that offer recommendations to decision-makers in the Arab region and help them address specific urban development challenges. Accompanying campaigns, which include online and in-person events, will feature presentation and discussion of these documents. Written in a concise, direct manner for institutional representatives and the public at large, the policy briefs are one of the ways AUDI effectively impacts city agendas.

Arab Cities Urban Living Lab

The lab is made up of thematic learning groups, formed and facilitated by AUDI, that include municipalities, researchers, practitioners, and non-profit organizations in the Arab region. The lab seeks to innovatively address urban development challenges through knowledge exchange, action-oriented research methods, and pilot projects.

Newsletter

The newsletter is an online publication produced by AUDI, in both Arabic and English, every two months. It focuses on urban development policies, projects, and initiatives in the Arab region, documenting them through reports and interviews. The newsletter provides an efficient tool of communication, particularly for outreach to AUDI's vast network of cities.

Webinar

In its webinar, AUDI engages in interviews with officials, researchers, practitioners, and thought leaders active on urban development in the Arab region and beyond. It fills a void in the Arab webinar landscape, where a limited number of productions dedicated to urban issues tend to focus only on national and local contexts.

2 TRAINING & CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

This program provides municipalities – and anyone else interested in urban development in the Arab region – different levels of training and technical support through varied training formats and methodologies. While some of these activities could be externalized to specialized partners, others, such as the Training Center, require significant effort on AUDI's part, including the involvement of AUDI fellows.

Training Programs

The aim of training programs is to disseminate knowledge and best practices from the field of urban development, primarily to municipal and urban practitioners. To that end, AUDI will develop and adapt training materials of high relevance to the Arab region context. These training programs are offered in various formats:

Training courses (in-person and online)

Specialized Workshops tailored to the nature of municipalities in Arab cities, enriched with practical examples from the municipal work environment.

Municipal Training Platform (MOOC), which are provided on a massive open online course (MOOC) platform. On the basis of a structure prepared by AUDI, expert academics develop and produce courses tailored to the needs of cities and municipalities in the Arab region. This fills an educational gap, for despite increased production of urban-related MOOCs, very few address Arab cities.

The institute will also partner with relevant organizations to provide high-value certifications.

Advisory and Knowledge Sharing

This component of the Training and Capacity Development program consists of multiple typologies of advisory and knowledge exchange activities. The first is the **Municipal Technical Advisory** which aims to increase Arab cities' capacities in numerous urban fields, as well as their ability to plan and carry out urban development studies and projects. Technical consultations involve preparing technical documentation and terms of reference for urban projects. Additionally, representing municipalities to examine advisory bodies responsible for the project's implementation in action.

The **Municipal Practices Exchange** takes place in the form of an interactive sessions that fosters municipals best practices in tackling the ongoing challenges they face. As a result of these sessions emerges a community that allows municipalities to uncover shared urban concerns, agree on a solution, and share experiences in improving municipal work.

Lastly, **Individual Knowledge Exchange** focuses on delegating municipal staff to other cities with best practices, to observe municipal experiences firsthand, take part in the practice of municipal works for a specific period of time, and implement it optimally. The prime purpose is allowing the trainee to transfer the knowledge and experiences gained and create work processes that can be implemented in their municipalities.

Executive training program

Uban development-focused executive learning programs are designed to enrich the knowledge and capabilities of municipal staff members, familiarize them with the latest theories and practices in municipal work, and provide them with opportunities to utilize emerging technology and innovations in tackling urban challenges. Implemented through collaboration between AUDI, municipalities and renowned worldwide academic institutions.

The Executive Program offers:

The Executive program in Municipal Development.

The International Professional Certificate in Urban Innovation & Management



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NETWORKING

This program aims to bring together Arab cities, and help develop cooperation and partnerships between municipalities and other stakeholders, within and beyond the Arab region. Networking is facilitated through direct contact between potential partners, organization of events, and collaborative learning. As some of these activities may take a project-based format and be funded through grants, dedicated teams will be established for their implementation. AUDI associates in different countries also play a role in ensuring sustained engagement of municipalities in these activities.

Arab-European Cities Dialogue

AUDI is aiming to create a common ground for both Arab and European cities with mutual interest, to work together with the focus on inter-regional cooperation and networking. The Arab-European Cities Dialogue is an event that brings together mayors and practitioners from both regions, on thematic events. It is held interchangeably between Arab and European cities.

Mayor Talks

These events feature a talk by an invited mayor from the Arab region. The idea is to give a platform for mayors to showcase their work and share their experiences with urban development challenges. The talks will be held in AUDI's offices in Riyadh and broadcast online.

Urban Development Awards in Arab Cities

The Urban Development Awards recognize innovative and outstanding urban development projects, policies, and initiatives, and the cities, firms, and non-profit organizations that stand behind them. The idea is to work with a select number of urban planning departments in renowned international and Arab universities and a sponsoring foundation to launch the awards. A designated curator defines the session's theme (e.g., climate adaptiveness, social justice, smart mobility, livable streets) and, with the universities, recruits an independent specialized jury. The awards will showcase good urban development practices and push for more progressive agendas in urban development.

Network Brokering

This is a key activity within the Networking program. The aim is to assist urban development stakeholders (municipalities, donors, international organizations, and urban specialists) in identifying potential partners for their activities. Through meetings with different stakeholders, AUDI identifies needs, brokers potential matches, and organizes introductory meetings between various urban development entities. By doing so, AUDI establishes itself as the go-to actor for urban development networking in the Arab region.



05 IMPLEMENTATION



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Prioritization of activities

In order to organize and prioritize the range of activities found in the strategy, AUDI has adopted two approaches:

01 **Prioritize activities based on their desirability, impacts, and funding requirements**

02 **Identify flagship activities for each program**

Employing the first approach, AUDI reviewed each activity for the following:

- **Whether it is more or less of a desired priority for Arab municipalities**
- **Its impact on AUDI's visibility and credibility**
- **Whether it brings greater or fewer risks, as it might force AUDI to rely on other actors or follow a path with limited room for adaptation**
- **Its impact on AUDI's human and financial resources**

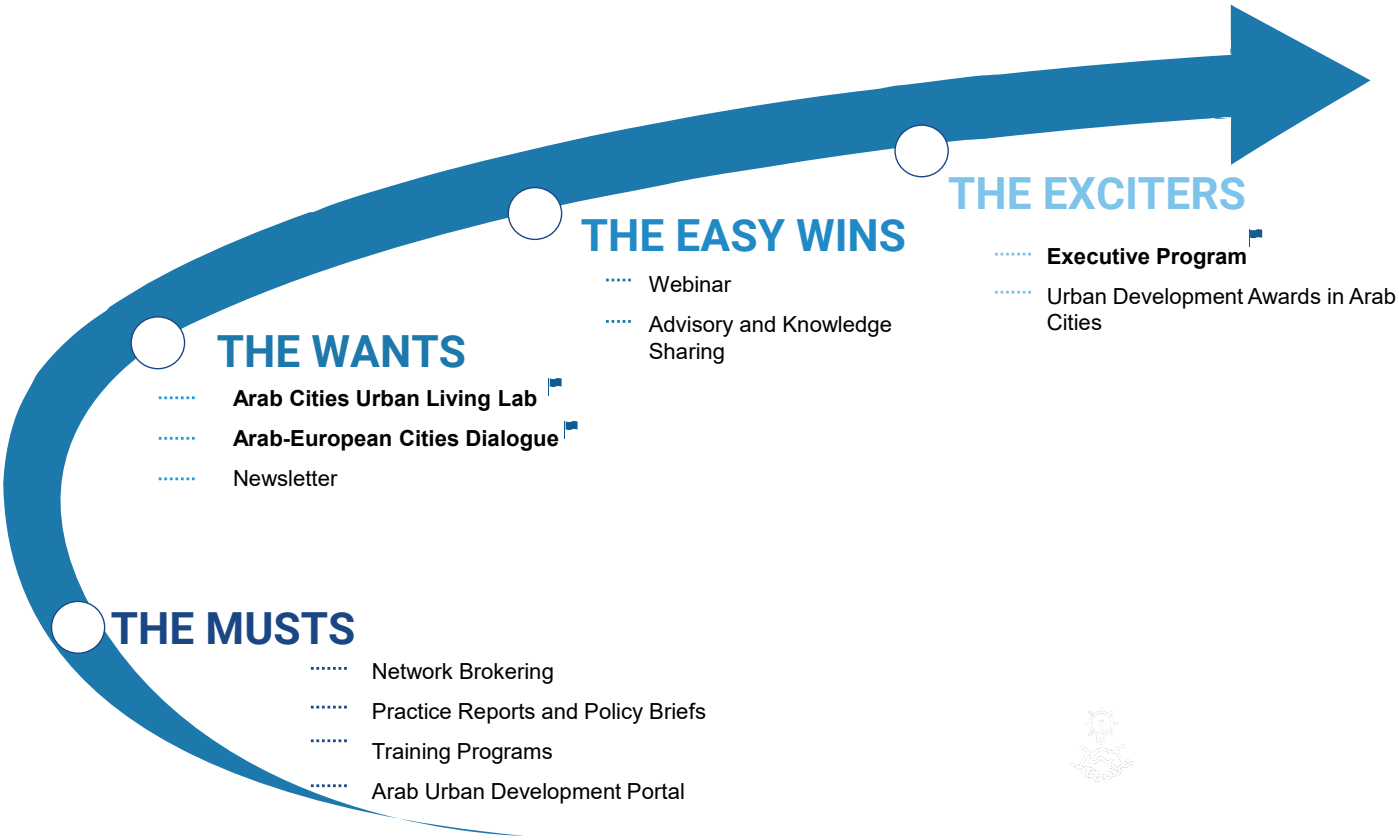
Employing the second approach, AUDI identified three activities as flagships due to their catalyst effect for the other activities in the program and the visibility they bring to the institute:

Flagships

- **Arab Cities Urban Living Lab**
  Urban Policy Research program
- **Executive Program**
  Training & Capacity Development Program
- **Arab European Cities Dialogue**
  Networking program

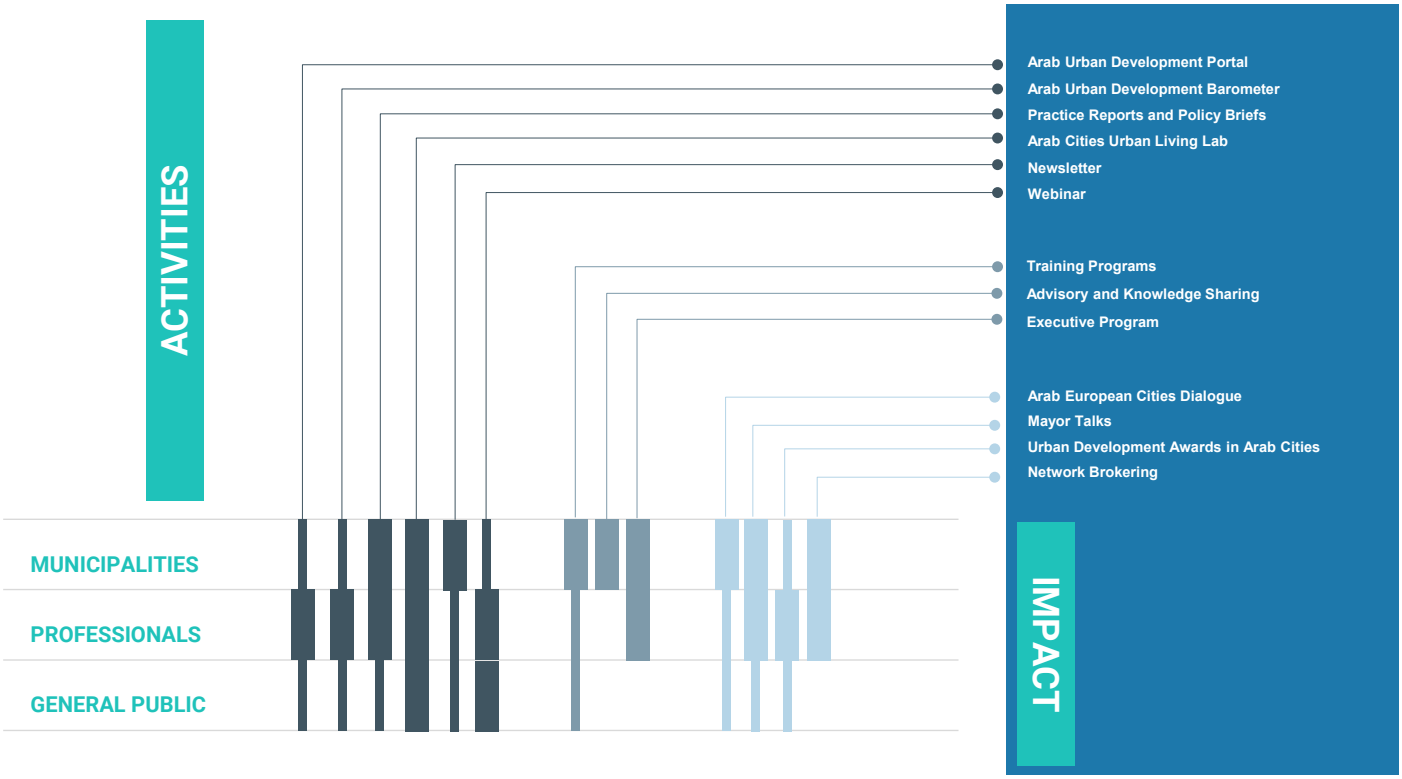
On this basis, AUDI classified activities in four categories

The **MUSTS**	those that represent the core business of AUDI, without which it would not be fulfilling its basic role
The **WANTS**	those that respond to Arab cities' priorities and needs in terms of policy research, networking, and capacity development
The **EASY WINS**	those that represent low-hanging fruit, not requiring many resources and bringing minimal risks
The **EXCITERS**	those that bring high visibility to AUDI



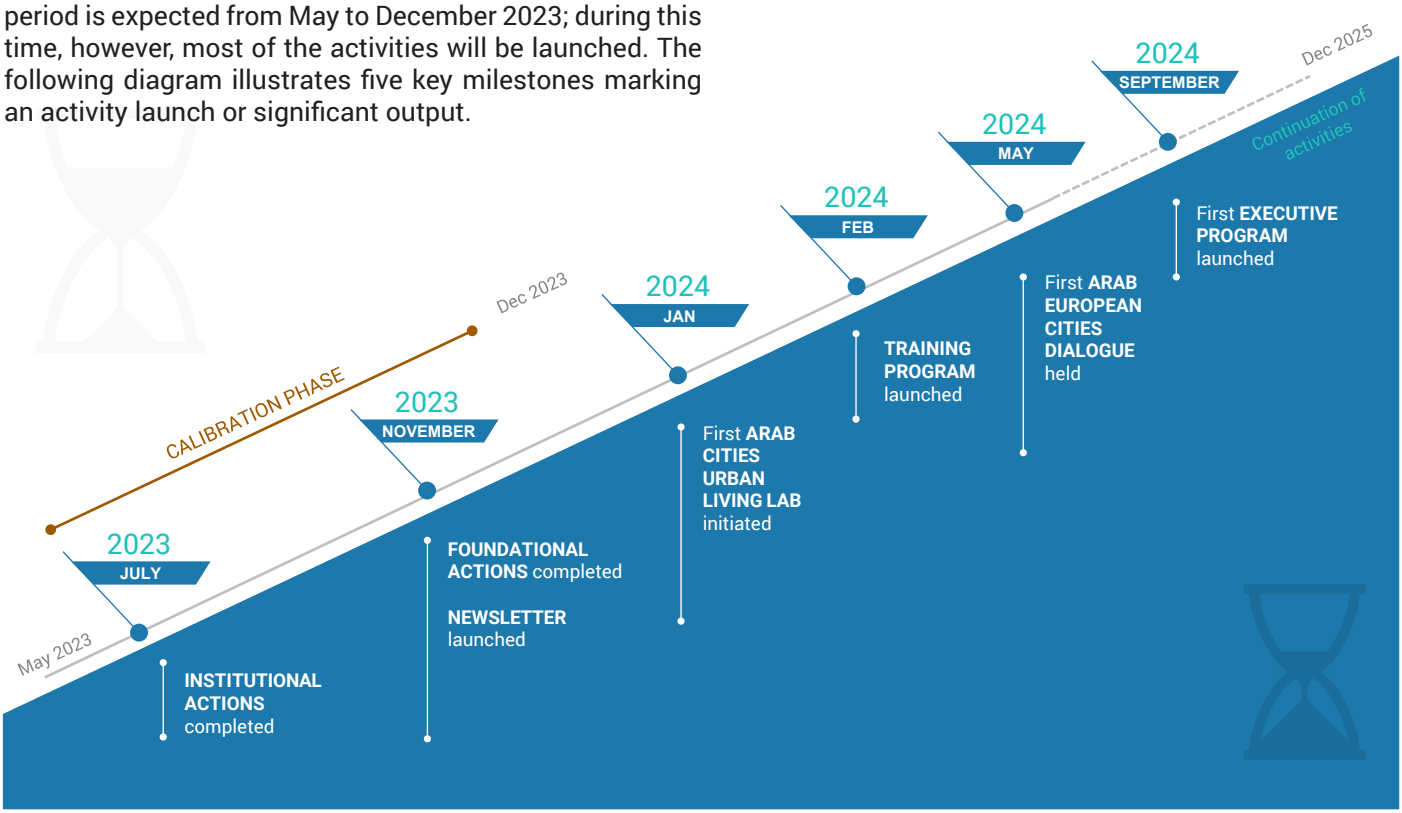
Beneficiaries

Each of the activities AUDI aims to conduct is targeted at one or more beneficiaries of the institute. These beneficiaries include municipalities, urban development professionals, and the general public.



Timeline

The strategy will be implemented over 2.5 years with all activities completed by December 2025. A calibration period is expected from May to December 2023; during this time, however, most of the activities will be launched. The following diagram illustrates five key milestones marking an activity launch or significant output.




Ammar © AUDI 2023

06 INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE



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Restructuring

In order to implement this strategy, AUDI needs to engage in a number of steps to strengthen its governance and operational systems.

Presently, many high-level decisions regarding external affiliations and internal budgets are dependent on the approval of the Executive Council of the Arab Towns Organization. However, the council, which comprises mayors of large cities in the Arab region, does not hold regular meetings. There is a need to give AUDI's management body (the President and Director General) greater autonomy with regards to decision-making and finances, to ensure the institute is effective in capturing opportunities in a timely manner.

One main imperative is to move from thematic departments to program-based ones.

This aligns operational processes with AUDI's organizational structure. It also facilitates goal setting for the different units and follow-up on their performance, raising AUDI's overall accountability.

NEW ROLES

In this new structure, each program is led by a Director who defines the activities and tracks their execution. A team of professionals in the field of urban development provide support to each Director, and these staff are responsible for designing and implementing AUDI's activities.

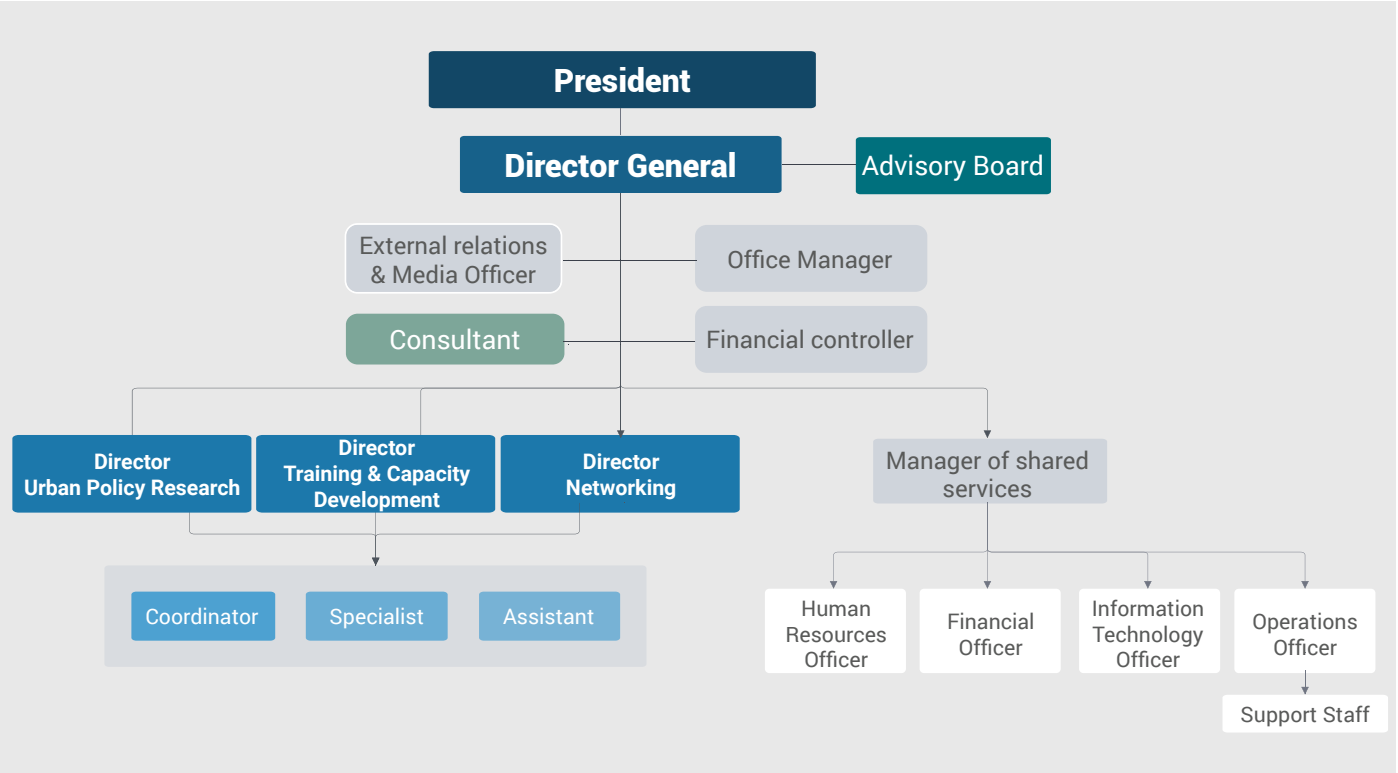
The Professional body

This involves the staff responsible for designing and implementing AUDI's activities

Coordinators take charge of the daily implementation of activities and support the directors in their tasks

Specialists are responsible for specific tasks and receive guidance from the coordinators and directors

Assistants carry out all support activities, including management of human and financial resources, procurement, information technology, etc.



In order to stay on track with the strategy, AUDI personnel will need to engage in a variety of activities and learn to deal with new issues and operational challenges. To support them, the institute aims to implement an internal capacity development program that facilitates quality training for its people. It has also set up a performance management system that monitors and rewards performance and identifies areas of improvement and the needed support to address them.

AFFILIATES

AUDI aims to recognize multiple types of affiliate bodies and give them specific status with the institute.

The Advisory Board

A consultative body made up of people with highly recognized international experience in issues of urban development. It is selected by AUDI's leadership and called upon to give advice and feedback on the institute's strategic choices and major decisions.

The Consultants

Individuals with specific knowledge and expertise that are called upon by AUDI's Director General to support him with specific tasks.

Correspondents

Contributors to AUDI's newsletter and Arab Urban Development Database.

Associates

Individuals who assist AUDI in building and maintaining its network by focusing on local actors and stakeholders in their respective city or country.

Researcher

A qualified professional with experience in fields related to urban development.

Trainer

A qualified professional experienced in capacity development and training in fields related to urban development.

Intern

A student or recent graduate of a program related to urban development.

Student ambassador

A student of an urban development related program.

MEMBERSHIP

AUDI has also developed a robust membership program to enhance its outreach and provide stakeholders with the opportunity to develop a formal relationship with the institute. The membership program targets students, professionals, and academics.

Professional membership

ELIGIBILITY
All individuals working in fields related to urban development

BENEFITS
Discounted rates on AUDI's professional training programs

Priority access to select activities and events organized by AUDI and its partners

Access to AUDI's professional networking activities

Academic membership

ELIGIBILITY
All academics working in fields related to urban development

BENEFITS
Discounted rates on AUDI's professional training programs

Priority access to select activities and events organized by AUDI and its partners

Access to AUDI's academic networking activities

Student membership

ELIGIBILITY
All students enrolled in programs related to urban development

BENEFITS
Discounted rates on AUDI's professional training programs

Priority access to AUDI's internship programs

Eligibility for AUDI's student ambassadorship program



07 COMMUNICATION PLAN



AUDI Communication plan

To support the strategy, AUDI has developed a communication plan for outreach to relevant institutions, cities, and the general public. The plan provides for presentation of the strategy and engagement of potential partners through three main steps.

ROAD SHOW

During 2023 and 2024, AUDI aims to visit a large number of major cities in the Arab region. During these visits, which will last three days in each city, the institute will hold meetings with relevant authorities and stakeholders to introduce the new strategy, develop agreements and partnerships, update contacts, and get media coverage at the local level.

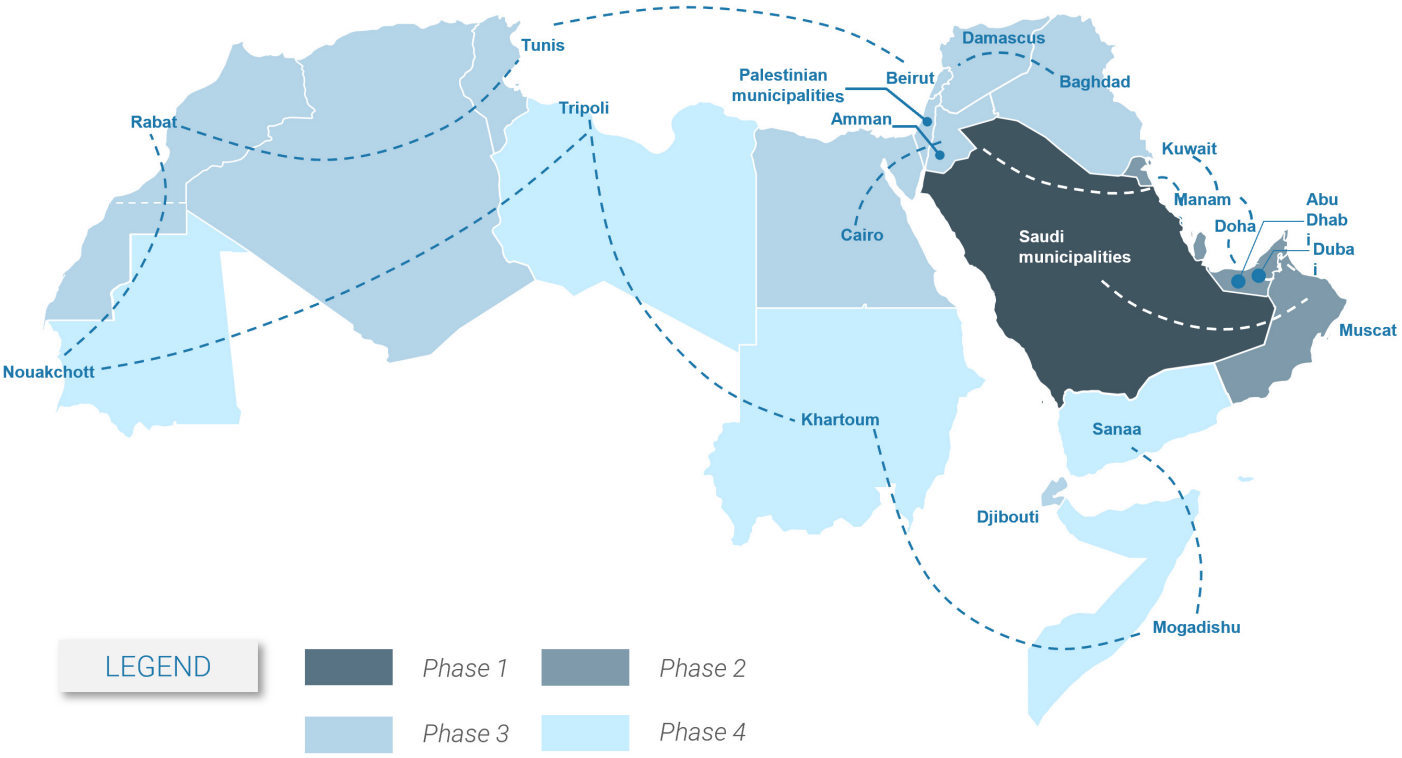
The road show will will be documented through images and videos to be shared via print and digital media, including AUDI's website and social media channels.

OFFICIAL LAUNCH

AUDI will organize an event to launch its strategy. This will include an exhibition, a presentation and overview of the institute's strategy, as well as of the activities it has initiated. The event will also include a tour of AUDI's renovated premises and be covered on multiple social media platforms.

DIGITAL DISSEMINATION

Digital dissemination of AUDI's activities and milestones is ongoing, with the aim of reaching a large target audience and ensuring high visibility for the institute. Various media forms will be leveraged to communicate the AUDI strategy. All content will be shared on AUDI's social media channels and website





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“Enabling Arab cities to take the stage in the century of cities”

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