

CONTENT

















AECD OVERVIEW



The Arab European Cities
Dialogue was conceived to
strengthen the bonds between
city leaders, communities, and
institutions through
constructive dialogue



H.H. Prince Dr. Faisal bin Abdulaziz bin Ayyaf

Mayor of Riyadh Region Municipality, President of the Arab Urban Development Institute (AUDI) & Chairman of AECD25 Steering Committee The Arab European Cities Dialogue 2025 (AECD25), held from 11–13 May in Riyadh, marked the launch of a decade-long initiative to strengthen partnerships between Arab and European cities. Hosted by the Riyadh Region Municipality under the patronage of *H.H. Prince Faisal Bin Abdulaziz Bin Ayyaf*, Mayor of Riyadh and President of the Arab Urban Development Institute (AUDI).

Organized under the theme "Bridging Cities, Building Futures" AECD25 brought together over 120 city leaders, municipal associations, international organizations, and financial institutions. It provided a strategic platform for interregional cooperation focused on four core themes: city-to-city cooperation and learning, livable cities and climate action, technology and digital transformation in urban governance, and municipal financial sustainability.

Through high-level plenaries, local action workshops, a Cities Leadership Forum, and an Urban Financing Forum, AECD25 facilitated knowledge exchange across a dynamic three-day program.



STAKEHOLDERS

THE FIRST HOSTING CITY OF AECD

RIYADH

Saudi Arabia

Will host the first edition of the Arab European Cities Dialogue

HOSTED BY



ORGANIZERS



Arab Urban Development Institute (AUDI)

A Pan-Arab, non-governmental organization, specialized in research and capacity development in the fields of urban development and municipal affairs.



Platforma

A pan-European coalition of towns and regions – and their national, EU and global associations – active in city-to-city and region-to- region development cooperation, hosted by Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)



The Agency of International Cooperation of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNGI-CILG)

The regional MENA office of VNG International, with expertise in the technical and political level of local government enhancing decentralized cooperation and building strong bridges with European and Worldwide organizations.



DURING AECD25,

PARTICIPANTS * HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO



from both Arab and European regions including mayors, deputies and officials



In Riyadh, a city in transformation through urban visits and digital interactive platforms



To share experiences and best practices for cities



AECD25 IN NUMBERS



AECD25 in Numbers



900+ Attendees 39 Countries (across 3 continents) 28 Capital Cities

ties Cities (40 Arab + 40 European)

80

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Mayors (and 19 Deputy mayors)

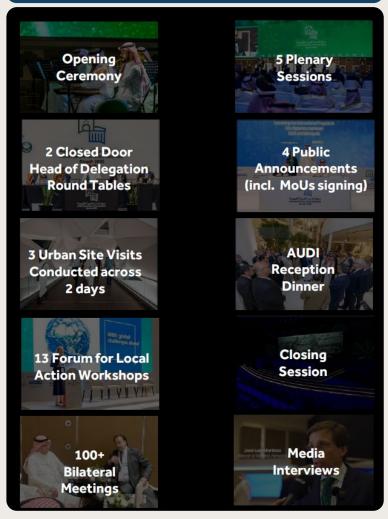
40+
International
Organizations
(incl. funds and LGAs)

250+
Visitors participated in 3 urban visits

21Total
Sessions

100+ Moderators & Speakers

Program Summary





AECD25 PROGRAM

THEMES



The AECD25 is designed around key themes that reflect the shared priorities and challenges of Arab and European cities. It emphasizes on city leadership to foster dialogue and strengthen collaboration among cities.



01	X.	CITIES COOPERATION
02	*	LIVEABLE CITIES AND CLIMATE CHANGE
03	**	TECHNOLOGY AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION
04	m	MUNICIPAL FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

ACTIVITIES



The Arab European Cities Dialogue 2025

was structured to have 6 major activities that reflect the objectives of the event over a 3-day program, as follow:

01
PLENARY AND
THEMATIC
SESSIONS

Discussions with mayors and experts highlighting good practices and common challenges to address urban challenges

O2
CITIES
NETWORKING

Meetings between cities to network and explore potential future collaborations

Exclusive to heads of delegations

03
CITIES
LEADERSHIP
FORUM

A meeting of Arab and European cities to discuss the governance of the AECD

Exclusive to heads of delegations

04 URBAN FINANCING FORUM

An activity
between cities
and funding
agencies to gain
insights from
experts on
project proposals

Together with **metropolis** •

05
FORUM FOR
LOCAL ACTION

Sessions
organized by
international
organizations,
oriented towards
dealing with
urban day-to-day
challenges
(workshops,
trainings, etc.)

06
URBAN AND
CULTURAL VISITS

A journey to Riyadh's most renowned urban projects and unique sightseeing highlights



Beyond Borders: Transforming Cities Through Global Cooperation

Sunday 11 May 2025



Moderator

Dr. Lorenzo Kihlgren Grandi Director of City Diplomacy Lab



H.E. Dr. Yousef Shawarbeh Mayor of Amman



H.E. Fathia El MoudniMayor of Rabat and President of Metropolis



Mr. José Luis Martínez-Almeida Navasqüés Mayor of Madrid



Ms. Emilia Saiz Secretary General of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)

Key Takeaways:

- Tailored Solutions through Dialogue –
 Shared urban challenges demand localized responses informed by global collaboration.
- Institutionalizing City Diplomacy –
 Lasting cooperation requires structured
 frameworks beyond protocol.
- North–South Partnerships in Action –
 Rabat–Lyon collaboration offers a
 blueprint for mobility and sustainability
- Cities as Engines of Innovation Urban leadership is essential to inclusive growth and global resilience.
- From Exchange to Strategy AECD 2025 calls for a collective, co-created agenda for future-ready cities.

Cities must build bridges—across cultures, continents and generations."

Mr. José Luis Martínez-Almeida,
 Mayor of Madrid



In Conversation: Perspectives On Riyadh's Urban Leap (CEOs Talk)

Sunday 11 May 2025



Moderator

Ms. Nedaa Al Mubarak Managing Director of SRMG Think



Mr. Jerry Inzerillo Group CEO of Diriyah Company



Mr. George Tanasijevich CEO of the King Salman Park Foundation



Ms. Jayne McGivern CEO of the Sports Boulevard Foundation

Key Takeaways:

- Heritage as Urban Anchor Diriyah shows how cultural preservation can drive identity, tourism, and diplomacy.
- Sustainability by Design Flagship projects integrate ESG standards, water reuse, and climate-sensitive materials.
- Urban Health and Inclusion Urban form is being reoriented around wellbeing, accessibility, and social cohesion.
- Connected, Scalable Planning Megaprojects align through shared infrastructure and enforceable design
- City Diplomacy in Action The session embodied AECD's purpose: knowledge exchange to build resilient, peoplecentered cities

Vision 2030 is not the end—it's just the beginning."

Mr. George Tanasijevich

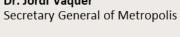


Towards Resilience: Climate Adaptation & Mitigation In Arab And European Cities

Monday 12 May 2025



Moderator Dr. Jordi Vaquer

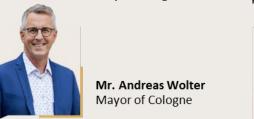




H.E. Eng. Ammar Musa Kazem Mayor of Baghdad



Mr. Mounir Limouri Mayor of Tangier





Ms. Minna Arve Mayor of Turku

Key Takeaways:

- Waste and Water as Assets Baghdad water systems to create circular, climate-
- **People Drive Policy** Citizen-led initiatives in Cologne are reshaping urban
- **Private Sector Partnerships Work** businesses show the power of co-
- **Resilience Must Be Cross-Cutting**

Climate change is not the future. It is the present. It's happening. Its effects are already with us. And therefore, there is no alternative to doing both adapting and mitigating the effects of climate change."

– Dr. Jordi Vaquer, Secretary General of Metropolis



Digital Transformation In Urban Governance: Insights From European And Arab Cities

Monday 12 May 2025



Moderator

Mr. Patrick Penninckx Former Head of Information Society Department, DGI, Council of Europe



H.E. Mr. Mohammed Saad Al-Sahli Director General of Manama Municipality



Mr. Issa Kassis Mayor of Ramallah



Mr. Stefano Lo Russo Mayor of Turin



Mr. Predrag Puharić Mayor of Sarajevo

Key Takeaways:

- **Digital inclusion is foundational** Cities
- **Data must drive policy** From AI and GIS to pollution tracking, cities are linking data to service quality and trust.
- **Resilience requires innovation** Ramallah digital tools to overcome deep constraints.
- Cybersecurity and privacy are non**negotiable** – Trust in digital systems
- Partnerships unlock scale Cooperation with academia and the private sector

Digital transformation is not about technology—it's about people, trust, and smarter cities."

— Mr. Stefano Lo Russo, Mayor of Torino



Local Economic Development And Investment: Strategies For Sustainable Urban Growth

Tuesday 13 May 2025



Moderator

Ms. Maria Vassilakou Former Vice Mayor and Vice Governor of Vienna



H.E. Major General Moheb Habashi Khalil Governor of Port Said



Ms. Anouch Toranian Councilor of Paris, Metropolitan Councilor and Deputy Mayor of Paris



H.E. Mr. Ahmed Al Humaidi Mayor of Muscat

Key Takeaways:

- **Partnerships as Policy** Muscat's use of
- **Events as Catalysts** Paris turned the regeneration, and green infrastructure.
- Cities as Investment Hubs Port Said
- **Knowledge Exchange in Action** accelerating inclusive and sustainable
- **Inclusive Growth by Design** Each city but for the people who power it.

We are no longer service providers—we are enablers of opportunity."

> — H.E. Mr. Ahmed Al Humaidi, Mayor of Muscat

CITIES NETWORKING



Sunday 11 May 2025



Moderator

Ms. Maria VassilakouFormer Vice Mayor and Vice
Governor of Vienna

This high-energy networking session brought together 65 city delegates under the theme "One City, One Image, One Story," offering a dynamic format for rapid exchange. The goal: to spark collaboration, strengthen ties, and showcase replicable urban solutions.



CITIES LEADERSHIP FORUM



Monday 12 May 2025



Moderator

Dr. Lorenzo Kihlgren Grandi Director of City Diplomacy Lab

The Cities Leadership Forum at AECD25 brought together mayors and senior city delegates from across the Arab and European regions to co-design the next chapter of AECD. The closed roundtable served as a strategic pivot - shifting AECD from a successful debut event to a long-term platform for practical, city-led cooperation. The session focused on how AECD can evolve into a lasting mechanism for Arab European cooperation rooted in shared priorities, flexible governance, and city-led ownership.



CITIES LEADERSHIP FORUM



Monday 12 May 2025

Through two voting questions, delegates endorsed five thematic pillars to guide AECD's agenda; The second considered the types of engagement that the AECD should prioritize.

VOTING RESULTS

Thematic Priorities **AECD Activities Sustainable Cities** 34% 40% **Joint Projects** & Quality of Life Technology & Digital Knowledge 22% 29% Transformation Sharing **Local Economic** Capacity **21**% 19% Development Development Urban Resilience & **AECD Events &** 14% 10% **Crisis Management** Advocacy Culture and Awards & 9% 2% Recognition Creativity

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- City leaders emphasized the IMPORTANCE OF COLLABORATION AND MUTUAL LEARNING to address diverse urban challenges, while recognizing the unique contextual and cultural characteristics of cities across both regions, INVITING FOR LOCALIZED URBAN SOLUTIONS.
- Leaders opted for the AGILE APPROACH (RECURRING BIANNUAL EVENT) due to its flexibility and scalability.
- Leaders agreed to establish a SECRETARIAT UNDER AUDI to take the lead in developing and managing the AECD as a recurring event.

URBAN FINANCING FORUM



Tuesday 13 May 2025

Together with

metropolis •



Moderator

Dr. Kyle FarrellSenior Urban & Regional
Economist, UN-Habitat KSA



Moderator

Ms. Karen Maguire Head of Local Employment and Economic Development Program, OECD



Eng. Bandar bin Abdullah Al-Obaid

Director General of MENA Operations, Saudi Fund for Development (SFD)



Ms. Nneka Henry

Head, UN Road Safety Fund Secretariat and Office of the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy for Road Safety



Mr. Stefan Atchia Manager, Urban Development, African

Development Bank (AfDB)



Eng. Neji Larbi

Urban Mobility Specialist, African Development Bank (AfDB)



Mr. Wola Asase

Deputy Director, Head of Syndications, Africa Finance Corporation (AFC)



Mr. Nasiru Braimah,

Associate Vice President of Capital Mobilization and Partnerships, Africa Finance Corporation, African Finance Corporation (AFC) The first Urban Financing Forum, jointly organized by the Arab Urban Development Institute (AUDI) and Metropolis, was held during the AECD on May 13, 2025. The forum brought together Arab and European cities, development finance institutions, and public and private investors to explore opportunities and strategies for financing and investing in urban and municipal projects.

cities showcased their municipal projects to explore potential financing opportunities.

Nice, Djibouti, Ramallah, Chişinău, Madrid, Dammam, Erbil, and Nouakchott











FORUM FOR LOCAL ACTION



13 sessions organized by international partners, oriented towards dealing with urban day-to-day challenges



Sunday 11 May 2025	World Bank	MENA Cities – Powering Productivity And Jobs
	OECD	Global Sports, Cultural, And Business Events As Drivers Of Urban Development And Local Impact
	Platforma	Empowering Young Local Leaders Through Intergenerational Dialogue And Decentralized Development Cooperation
Monday 12 May 2025	UNESCWA	Building Resilient And Inclusive Smart Cities: Advancing Digital Transformation For Sustainability, Innovation, And Quality Of Life
	SALAR International	Resilient Communities And Cities Under Climate Stress
	Quality of Life Program	Shaping Sustainable, Livable Cities: Environmental Dialogues
	AMPCC & AUDI	Digitalization For Better Urban Governance
	UN-Habitat ROAS	From Data To Impact: How Voluntary Local Reviews & SDG Localization Drive Development In Cities
	Boston Consulting Group (BCG)	Future-ready Cities: Insights For Impact
Tuesday 13 May 2025	UNDP KSA	Successful Multilateral Governance And Co-creation Processes
	Center for Local Governance (CLG-KSA)	The Role Of Decentralization In Strengthening Local Governance: Insights From Global And Regional Practices
	MedCities	Building Metropolitan Governance To Enhance The Provision Of Services With A Focus On Sustainable Urban Mobility
	VNG International	Community Score Card: A Participatory Governance Tool For Enhanced Service Delivery And Citizen Engagement





READ THE FULL EVENT REPORT



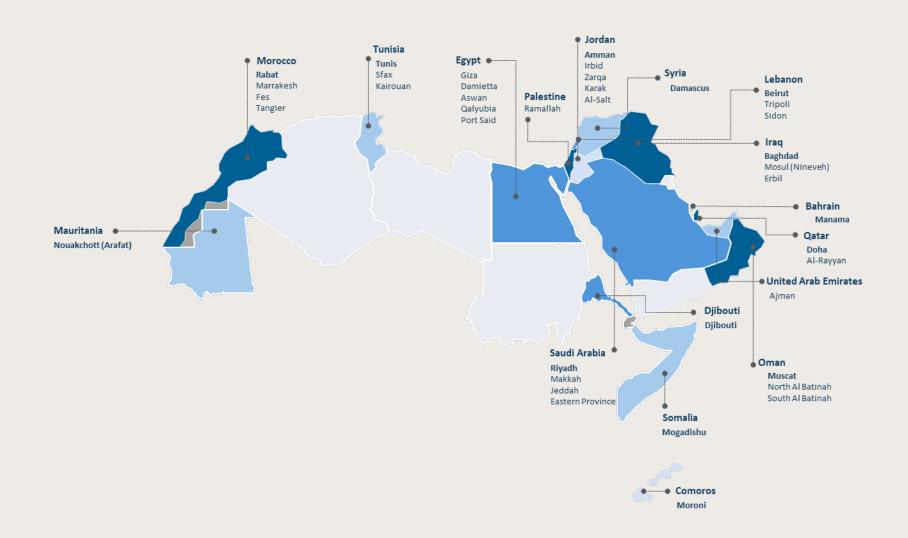




PARTICIPANTS

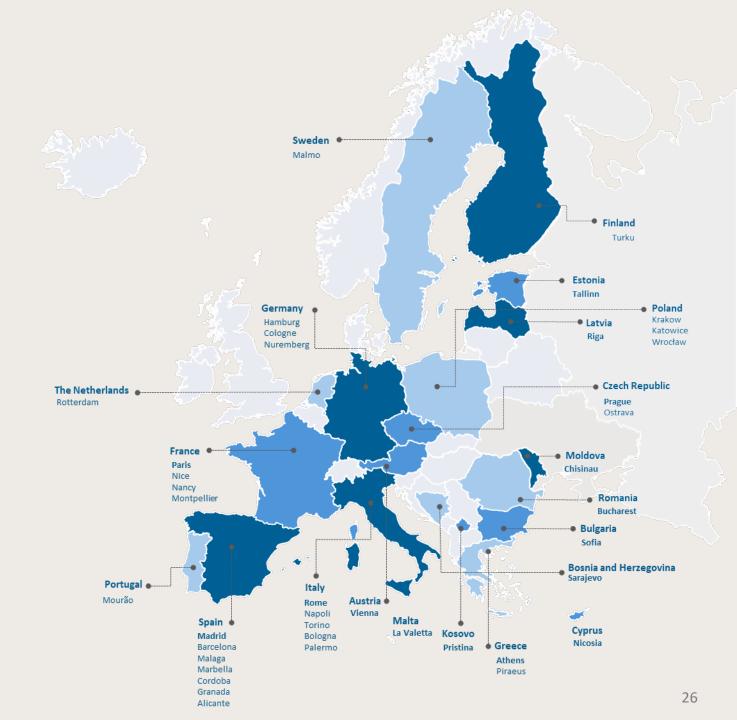
The AECD25 welcomed the participation of

40
ARAB
CITIES



The AECD25 welcomed the participation of

40
EUROPEAN
CITIES





The AECD25 welcomed the participation of



DEVELOPMENT FUNDS

































































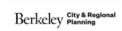




























EXPLORE RIYADH



RIYADH

A Hub for Cooperation and the First Host of the AECD

Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia, stretches across 1,554 km2 and has established itself as a hub for pioneering urban, cultural, and entertainment projects. Including the recently launched **King Abdulaziz Project for Riyadh Public Transport**, aimed at enhancing the quality of life for its residents. In addition, Riyadh is emerging as a global destination for hosting prestigious international events, including **Riyadh Expo 2030** and the **FIFA World Cup 2034**.

In this context, Riyadh emerges as a dynamic hub for dialogue and collaboration to tackle pressing urban challenges. Undergoing a remarkable transformative journey, the Saudi capital presents unique opportunities and navigates complex challenges, cementing its pivotal role on both regional and global stages. By building bridges, forging partnerships, and fostering cooperation, Riyadh continues to shape the future of urban connectivity and collaboration.

As the first host of this prestigious forum, the Riyadh Municipality is committed to creating a platform for sharing experiences across urban, municipal, and economic domains. This event will serve as a valuable opportunity for cities and municipalities to explore Riyadh's major urban transformative projects and immerse themselves in the rich historical and cultural journey of the Kingdom's capital.



URBAN & CULTURAL VISITS

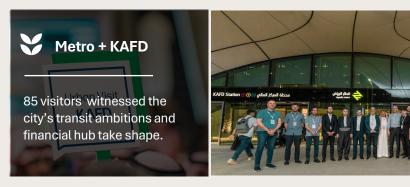


On days one and two, a highlight of the program was guided visits to some of Riyadh's most significant urban development sites, offering delegates a first-hand look at the city's ongoing transformation.



One of Riyadh's major projects, *Sports Boulevard* is aimed at creating a dynamic sports and wellness environment that inspires residents and visitors. It promotes active lifestyles and enhances the city's quality of life. Over the course of the two days, **86 attendees** were able to visit this iconic project.





King Abdullah Financial District: An iconic destination blending world-class offices, retail, modern residences, and unique entertainment, KAFD offers smart city living and a vibrant community that redefines urban life in Riyadh. Over the course of two days, **85 participants** had the opportunity to visit the District, travelling via urban mobility systems including the Riyadh Metro.





URBAN & CULTURAL VISITS



On days one and two, a highlight of the program was guided visits to some of Riyadh's most significant urban development sites, offering delegates a first-hand look at the city's ongoing transformation.



A dinner was hosted for the Heads of Delegation, at AUDI in the Diplomatic Quarter.



Old City Cultural Visit: The old city area features key landmarks such as Al Masmak Palace, Qasr Al Hokm, and the Grand Mosque, connected by traditional Najdi-style plazas. Redeveloped between 1988 and 2001, the Imam Turki bin Abdullah Mosque won the Aga Khan Award. Architect Rasem Badran was appointed by King Salman to ensure the design reflected local heritage. A total of **100 attendees** were able to explore the heart of Old Riyadh during the two urban visits.





Attended by His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, the Deputy Governor of Riyadh Region and His Highness Prince Faisal bin Abdulaziz Bin Ayyaf, Mayor of Riyadh and President of AUDI, this event offered an opportunity to network and reflect on the discussions held during the Forum over the first two days. The event celebrated Saudi traditions and folklore, featuring Arabic calligraphy, palm leaves weaving, traditional dance and falconry.





Arab European Cities Dialogue | 2025 | Highlights



NEXT EDITION (AECD27)



AECD 2027

From Riyadh to Madrid and Beyond Where Ideas Travel, Cities Transform

Stay on the know and Join the dialogue











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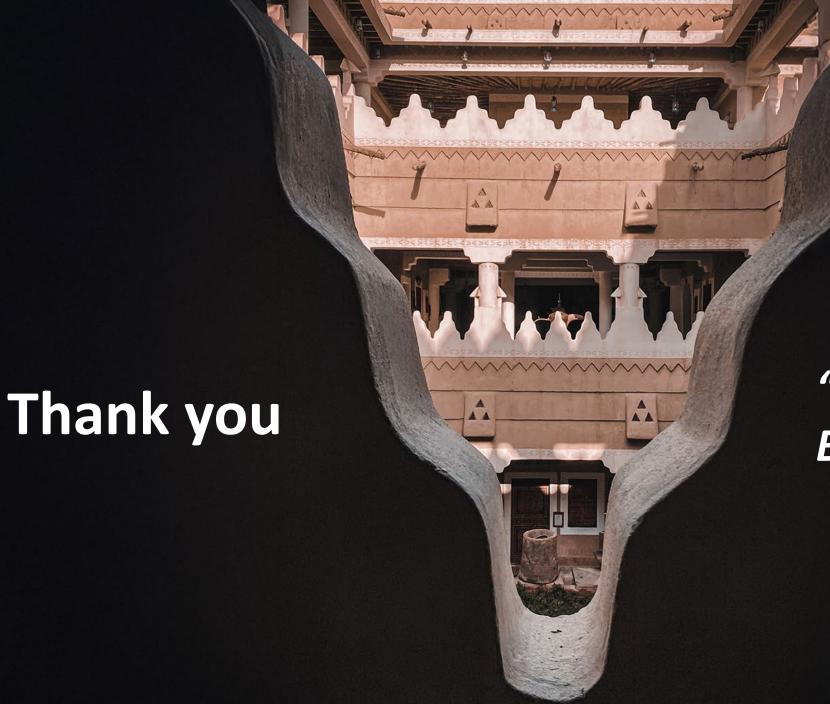
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"Bridging Cities, Building Futures"