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Dear reader,

In this edition we bring you news from the last three months and a review of our achievements of 2010.

As our partnership with the European Commission was approved until 2013, we are looking forward to building on this. Our partnership allows us to keep the EU institutions informed of cities priorities and views on the EU social agenda. It also helps us engage and have an open two-way dialogue as well as continuing the Observatory of cities for active inclusion.

[The EUROCITIES Social Affairs team](#)

A look back at 2010

The year 2010 was a busy and extraordinary one for the EUROCITIES social affairs forum. A successful European Year campaign, a film on how cities tackle poverty, the expansion of the Network of Local Authority Observatories, the new MIXITIES project and securing the continuation of PROGRESS funding for 2011-2013 are just a selection of the achievements this year.

An intensive meeting schedule was mirrored by intensive policy work. The recommendations developed during our European Year 2010 for combating poverty and social exclusion campaign argued that poverty and exclusion in cities must be addressed by long-term investments, a holistic approach and backed by a strong political commitment. These messages were repeated in our short film "Tackling Urban Poverty in Europe: City Solutions". The conclusions from our campaign were submitted to the Belgian Presidency and sent to stakeholders.

The research into how social policies and especially the EU Active Inclusion Strategy work on the ground continued with an expanded Network of Local Authority Observatories on Active Inclusion (NLAO). The Network now has ten partners across Europe and focuses on how cities implement active inclusion (see page 5 for more).

2010 also saw the Integrating Cities IV conference in London and the launch of the Integrating Cities Charter which outlines some basic principles for

the integration of migrants. This joint commitment of European cities now has 21 signatories. The MIXITIES project will continue this work by providing a space for cities to learn from one another and share the necessary tools to deliver on the Charters' commitments (more news on this on page 3).

Finally, EUROCITIES succeed in securing funding from the European Commission to continue with our social affairs programme until 2013. So far, this funding has helped expand our social affairs activities and deliver your messages to the EU.

You can find out more about our activities this year by visiting our website: www.inclusivecities.eu.

[Anna Drozd, programme officer social inclusion;](#)
anna.drozd@eurocities.eu



Vice mayor of The Hague, Henk Kool signing the Integrating Cities charter with former SAF chair Stockholm represented by Anna Mattsson.

European framework for monitoring the quality of social services launched

The Social Protection Committee (SPC) recently approved a voluntary framework for public authorities to assess the quality of their social services.

The SPC is made up of national representatives and the European Commission who discuss social inclusion, health care, long-term care and pensions.

This new voluntary framework proposes a set of overarching quality principles for social services, covering a wide range of issues. The main message is that social services should be available, accessible, affordable, person-centered and comprehensive.



The framework also lists quality standards for the:

- relationship between service providers and users;
- the relationship between service providers, public authorities and other stakeholders; and
- human and physical capital.

This quality framework is part of a comprehensive package of measures outlined by the European Commission in 2007 on services of general interest (SGI).

In 2008 EUROCITIES issued a statement on the European Commission Communication on

Services on General Interest (SGI) and Social Services of General Interest (SSGI). The statement underlines the need to ensure formal recognition at EU level of the key role played by local authorities in the provision of social services. It also recognises the need for a clear EU framework on SGI. Moreover EUROCITIES stressed that there is no need for detailed standards on service provision at a European level, but rather the debate should aim at developing broad principles and political commitments.

The European voluntary quality framework is available here.

[Michele Corbetta, EUROCITIES LAO network coordinator;](#)
michele.corbetta@eurocities.eu

Commission sets out new priorities for jobs and skills

Meeting the challenges faced by the labour markets in Europe needs urgent and resolute action according to a new European Commission Communication. The Communication outlines 13 actions to improve the flexibility and security of the labour market, develop a skilled workforce, improve the quality of employment and create more jobs.

These actions are being implemented to help achieve the target of increasing the employment rate for the 25-64 age group to 75% by 2020. This target is one of the five set out by the Europe 2020 strategy to create smarter, greener and more inclusive Europe by the year 2020.

The European Commission is not responsible for member states employment policies, but it can make proposals to guide national policies such as labour market reform, life long learning and working conditions. The Commission proposes to better anticipate the skills that will be required in the future through a European “Skills panorama” and to discuss labour market reforms with member states. Employment Commissioner Laszlo Andor stated that “Europe simply cannot afford an unemployment rate of close to 10%.”

The Communication recognises the role of local authorities in setting up partnerships between public authorities, training providers and employers in order to identify skills and training needs. Such partnerships and cooperation at local and regional level is also important in identifying those who need support in getting back to work.

[Anna Drozd, EUROCITIES programme officer Social inclusion – PROGRESS;](#)
anna.drozd@eurocities.eu



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MIXITIES project launched!

EUROCITIES new integration project MIXITIES (Making integration work in Europe's cities) was launched in December. It will run for 18 months and will engage 17 cities and a London-based community investment company - MigrationWork - in the implementation of the EUROCITIES Integrating Cities Charter.

The EUROCITIES Integrating Cities Charter is a commitment from some of Europe's cities and mayors to use their roles as policymakers, service providers, buyers of goods and services and employers to address migrant integration. The Charter was launched at London's City Hall on 22 February 2010 at the EUROCITIES Integrating Cities IV conference hosted by the European Commission and the Mayor of London.

MIXITIES will build on the work started under the INTI-CITIES and DIVE projects. This will be done through peer reviews, workshops and toolkits to support cities in delivering

the commitments of the Charter. As an innovative element, MIXITIES will focus on three key areas:

- anti-discrimination policy;
- diversity competences in public services; and
- introductory courses for newcomers to the city.

Peer Reviews will be held on each of these themes in Gent, Barcelona and Stockholm in 2011.

The project's final findings and recommendations will be presented at the Integrating Cities V conference in Amsterdam in 2012.

MIXITIES project partners include the cities of Amsterdam, Athens, Barcelona, Belfast, Berlin, Copenhagen, Dublin, Florence, Genoa, Gent, Helsinki, Malmö, Munich, Nuremberg, Oslo, Stockholm

and Tampere. Migrants will also be involved in the development and implementation of this initiative.

Meanwhile, a EUROCITIES delegation led by Daniel de Torres, Chair of Working Group Migration and Integration from the city of Barcelona, met the Commissioner for Home Affairs, Cecilia Malmström, to discuss how to further improve cooperation between big European cities and the Commission on migration and integration in the future.

MIXITIES: www.integratingcities.eu

Ana Feder, project officer – migration and integration;
ana.feder@eurocities.eu



EUROCITIES statement on the EU Platform against Poverty

The European Commission's Europe 2020 strategy contains a number of flagship initiatives to support the achievement of its objectives. One of these is a 'European Platform against Poverty' which aims to:

- ensure economic, social and territorial cohesion;
- raise awareness and recognise the fundamental rights of poor and excluded people; and
- enable people to live in dignity and take an active part in society.

EUROCITIES issued a statement on the Platform. We believe that the European Platform against Poverty is an opportunity to improve the social OMC and to deal with some of its weaknesses such as lack of visibility, insufficient vertical and horizontal coordination,

unsatisfactory stakeholder engagement, especially of local governments.

EUROCITIES believes that local governments should play a very active role in the Platform and that city experiences in tackling poverty should be reflected in its activities. Furthermore, we argue that the Platform should help to sustain the momentum of the European Year 2010 against poverty and support the social inclusion agenda in times of budget cuts and rising poverty.

The Commission issued a Communication on the Platform on the 16 December.

Caroline Greene, communication officer - inclusive cities;
caroline.greene@eurocities.eu



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Birmingham is EUROCITIES new social affairs lead

Councillor Paul Tilsley from Birmingham and Henk Kool, vice-mayor of The Hague, are the new respective chair and vice-chair of the EUROCITIES Social Affairs Forum.



Cllr Tilsley is already making arrangements to meet with László Andor, European Commissioner for employment and social affairs. Cllr Tilsley is keen to discuss the future of the European Social Fund post-2013, which is currently under review as part of a budget setting process.

On taking the helm, Cllr Tilsley said: "I am honoured to be given this opportunity to represent the interests of cities across Europe on such an important topic, underlining Birmingham's reputation as one of the key players on EU issues."

Cllr Tilsley added that "The issue of reduced public finances is something not exclusive to the UK so it is essential that the EUROCITIES Social Affairs Forum urgently looks at a number of issues such as adapting social services to meet new and emerging needs as well as tackling economic exclusion through innovative policies."

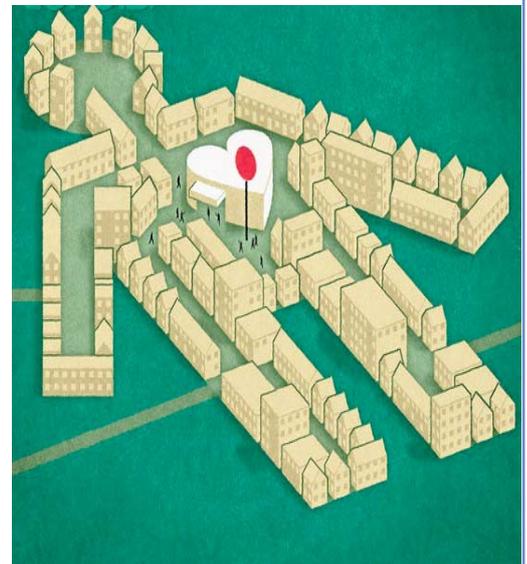
Caroline Greene, communications Officer - social affairs;
caroline.greene@eurocities.eu

World Health Organisation Global Forum on Urbanisation and Health

Vera Rontelap, chair of the working group on health represented EUROCITIES at the recent World Health Organisation (WHO) Global Forum on Urbanisation and Health. The meeting brought together people from over 90 countries in Kobe, Japan on 15-17 November.

The majority of the world's population now lives in urban areas. It is expected that in 2050, seven out of ten people in the world will live in cities. This rapid population growth has often outpaced the ability of local governments to provide basic public services and infrastructure. As a result, one in three urban dwellers lives in slums or informal settlements.

As well as sharing experiences on policy matters, participants emphasised the need to have health policy featured in all urban policies. Identifying health inequities in cities and involving communities in urban policy and planning were also considered important aspects of future policy delivery. In this respect, local leaders have a key role to play as it is they who set up and coordinate local partnerships, work across different policy sectors and are best placed to identify emerging problems.



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One of the major outcomes of the conference was a commitment from participants to better identify health inequities within cities, to achieve more integrated urban planning and better health promotion activities. A WHO and United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) report was launched, entitled 'Hidden Cities: unmasking and overcoming health inequities in urban settings'. The report reveals the inequalities in health in urban areas and links them to socioeconomic status, neighbourhood and population characteristics.

More information on the Forum, including the interviews, presentations and a photo gallery, can be found [here](#).

Anna Drozd, EUROCITIES programme officer social inclusion – PROGRESS;
anna.drozd@eurocities.eu



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NLAO report on survey findings: active inclusion in cities

The results of a survey and focus group on active inclusion in European cities are now available. Carried out by EUROCIITIES-NLAO with the help of 20 cities, this study provides an analysis on the level of awareness and knowledge amongst cities on the European Active Inclusion strategy.

The main findings of the study show that local practitioners view the European Active Inclusion strategy as a useful means for adding value to local level

social inclusion strategies. The study also found that local authorities see active inclusion initiatives as fundamental to ensuring social and territorial cohesion. Most importantly, it highlights how cities are playing a key role in developing and implementing active inclusion strategies.

The report will be given to the EU institutions and national stakeholders across Europe. It is also available on the EUROCIITIES-NLAO website. If you would like a copy or more information, please contact us.

Mirte Kortbeek, social policy researcher – NLAO;
mirte.kortbeek@eurocities.eu



LAO national workshops

Ten national workshops on active inclusion took place in November and December, in each of the NLAO member cities.

The meetings were an excellent opportunity for practitioners and stakeholders to learn about good practices and innovative solutions in the cities involved in EUROCIITIES-NLAO. The main findings from recent NLAO research on the quality of social services and the role of the social economy were presented. Over 300 practitioners and experts, as well as representatives of the European Commission and national ministries, participated.

More information on the LAO national workshops is available here.

Michele Corbetta, LAO network coordinator;
michele.corbetta@eurocities.eu

EUROCIITIES-NLAO Brussels meeting

The final meeting of the EUROCIITIES-NLAO partners for 2010 took place in Brussels on 9-10 December.

The meeting was an opportunity for the ten cities involved in EUROCIITIES-NLAO to exchange good practices and identify possible solutions to the common challenges they are facing when implementing active inclusion strategies on the ground. One session was devoted to a roundtable with representatives from the European institutions



and key European networks. During this session, the EUROCIITIES-NLAO partners shared with the EU representatives their main research findings, including various good practices identified in the past four months of activity.

In the second day of the meeting the EUROCIITIES-NLAO partners discussed the 2011 work programme of activities, as well as the remaining tasks of the 2010 work programme, to be finalised by the end of the year.

More information on the meeting will soon be available on the EUROCIITIES-NLAO website.

Michele Corbetta, LAO network coordinator;
Michele.corbetta@eurocities.eu



ZeiTraum - a unique concept of a barrier-free playground

During the working group meeting on “Barrier-Free Cities for all” which took place on the 28-29 November in Brussels, Amandine Varieras from Berlin presented a concept for a barrier-free playground. The working group gathered over 25 urban development experts who discussed urban spaces and buildings that are accessible for all. The terms ‘barrier-free’ and ‘accessible for all’ means city design that takes not only persons with disabilities into consideration, but also the elderly, people with babies and small children and travellers with heavy suitcases.

A number of experts who work on accessibility at EU-level presented their work. Participants were brought up to date on recent developments such as the European Disability Strategy for 2010-2020, asked questions and raised issues stemming from city level experience. Moreover, city representatives had the opportunity to showcase their approaches to accessibility, present city-wide policies and discuss

challenges that lie ahead. The ZeiTraum playground project is still only a proposal and is yet to become a reality. It was developed by an interdisciplinary team of two artists, an architect and designer, who used their knowledge and skills to develop a vision of a playground without barriers. The playground provides an imaginative and challenging play space for both children with or without disabilities, encouraging self-reliance, respect and exchange of experiences.

One central piece is a merry-go-round with wheelchair-accessible slots. A split-level irregularly-shaped sandbox allows for good access with a wheelchair, either for playing or for a parent in a wheelchair to attend a child. Two musical gates, a 3-D playground model at the entrance and sound-marks for each toy helps assist persons with

visual impairments to find their way around. In addition, children can also play with silent but visually rich toys such as a movable puppet or a time machine. Safety is ensured through features such as a synthetic fibre ground cover. Wheelchairs and walking sticks are available so that everybody can share in the experience of having to use these daily.

The project is based on the idea that if integration is achieved at a young age, people will be less likely to have prejudices later in life. It was developed last year and the working group meeting was a great opportunity to present it. Acceptance, humour and imagination are central to the concept, building awareness and empathy to disabilities.



Paulina Banas, social affairs trainee;
paulina.banas@euocities.eu



Images: © 2009 ZeiTraum Arbeitsgemeinschaft



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Information on some of the upcoming calls from the European Commission

Deadline	Description	Other information
02 March 2011	<p>Pilot project – All-inclusive cooperation between public authorities, companies and social enterprises in favour of social inclusion and integration into the labour market</p> <p>The main purpose of this pilot project is to promote new models for cooperation between public institutions, companies and social enterprises, in order to bring about a more effective and coordinated approach, via the creation of specific partnerships.</p>	<u>VP/2010/014</u>

Merry Christmas and
happy new year!



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Please send any contributions
or comments to:

caroline.greene@eurocities.eu

Editor
Caroline Greene

Writers
Paulina Banas
Michele Corbetta
Anna Drozd
Ana Feder
Silvia Ganzerla
Dirk Gebhardt
Ana Feder
Mirte Kortbeek

EUROCITIES

1 Square de Meeùs
B-1000 Brussels
Tel: +32 2 552 0888
Fax: +32 2 552 0889
e-mail: info@eurocities.eu

www.eurocities.eu



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