

A smart outlook for European cities

By **Anna Lisa Boni**, Secretary General, EUROCIITIES

When it was launched a few years ago, the European Innovation Partnership on Smart Cities and Communities (EIP SCC) created a buzz at EU level and among the urban stakeholder community of cities, business and researchers.

With its clear mission to scale up the rollout of smart city solutions in the EU, the EIP SCC gathered stakeholders—cities, researchers, industry, business, banks and consultancies—in a high level group and a stakeholder platform. Together, they developed a strategic framework outlining the broader objectives and priority areas for smart cities in the EU, and pooling ideas, capacity and finance.

The EIP SCC represented a new way of working together across a wide range of sectors and involving a broad group of stakeholders, under the joint facilitation of three Commission directorates general. It was an opportunity for the Commission to bring stakeholders closer to the process of developing policies and programmes within a flexible and informal structure. For stakeholders, it was a chance to connect with each other and contribute to the Commission's considerations on the next steps for smart cities at the EU level.

These developments showed clear commitment from the Commission and stakeholders to the smart cities goal of scaling up the deployment of innovative solutions across the EU in order to dramatically reduce energy consumption and improve energy efficiency in cities. While the EIP SCC kicked off with a limited number of cities already directly involved, the Commission and other stakeholders soon worked to attract more, recognising that their involvement was essential to the relevance and potential take up of smart city solutions in the longer term.

The EU's Horizon 2020 programme was then launched last year offering support for research and innovation for smart cities, and reflecting some of



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the priorities identified by the EIP SCC. We are now seeing a move towards actions developing and testing smart city solutions in a broad range of projects at both local and European level.

Urban solutions

To support European cities in the process of becoming smarter, we recently launched two new EU-funded projects, CITYKEYS and GuiDanCe.

CITYKEYS will develop performance indicators and data collection procedures for smart city

solutions and projects. CITYKEYS will enable European cities to monitor their smart city progress and strategies. Cities will also be able to use a transparent and uniform methodology developed through the project to compare potential solutions and projects. By assessing which solutions and projects offer the best results for their city, they can decide which to implement, on issues ranging from energy, environment and economic development to innovation and the development of the human and social capital of the city.

CITYKEYS is addressing one of the specific challenges raised in the EIP SCC, namely 'metrics & indicators' and how to 'enable cities to demonstrate performance gains in a comparable manner'.

Within the project, we provide the link with European cities. The project consortium also consists of three major research institutes: The Technical Research Centre (VTT) of Finland, as project coordinator, the Austrian Institute of Technology, and the Dutch-Indonesian innovation consortium, TNO; and five large cities: Rotterdam, Tampere, Vienna, Zagreb and Zaragoza.

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Our second smart cities project, GuiDanCe, aims to coordinate cities' activities through our Green Digital Charter (GDC).

The Green Digital Charter commits cities to deliver on the EU's climate objectives through the development of urban digital strategies; the implementation of integrated, large scale, ICT-based solutions; the development of cities as open innovation platforms; and the creation of new partnerships under a green and urban digital agenda.

So far, 45 major cities from 20 European countries have signed our GDC. They are now working together successfully to realise the charter's objectives. The European Commission has been supporting the charter since its inception through our NiCE (Networking intelligent Cities for Energy Efficiency) project, which helped cities in delivering their commitments between 2011 and

2014. The new GuiDanCe project is the successor to NiCE and will run for the next three years.

Becoming 'smarter'

As the EIP continues its work through action clusters focused on delivering some of the strategic priorities identified in the initial phase, the new European Commission is considering its next steps. Continued political support from the Commission will be crucial to take smart cities to the next level in the EU. Moving ahead, we must bear in mind

cities. But there is no one size fits all solution. Becoming 'smarter' will mean different things to different cities. Above all, the success of smart cities will depend on their ability to involve and engage their citizens. After all, it is people that make our cities what they are: there can be no smart city without smart citizens.

Citizen engagement should go further than just the uptake of technology; it should extend to the co-creation of ideas and solutions. This can be stimulated through living labs, tools to integrate citizen input in urban planning, and spaces



Budapest is using ICT to gather precise data on the impact of refurbishing a building. In a pilot project, it collected detailed information on two identical buildings, one refurbished and one not, to compare and identify the advantages of refurbishment. This improves cost-effectiveness calculations and helps justify further investments

that becoming a smart city is not an end goal, but a continuous process to become more resource efficient while at the same time improving quality of life. Integrated solutions and good quality services for citizens and businesses can help make cities better places to live.

Creating smart cities doesn't just mean deploying the right technological solutions, it means connecting policies across a wide range of areas, like energy efficiency, urban mobility, and ICT. Initiatives that integrate these three sectors are often seen as the core of smart

and support for start-ups. The future of our cities depends on participation, co-creation and co-production.

Connecting cities

Issues such as public procurement, new business and financing models, interoperability, open data, and standards present both opportunities and challenges as our cities work to become 'smarter'.

Continuous learning, replication and transfer of ideas and knowledge between cities are essential. Smart city initiatives need to work in a range of



Photo: City of Amsterdam

Amsterdam is aiming to give citizens a better insight into the finances of its neighbourhoods using open data platforms and infographics—'Buurtbegroting' (neighbourhood budget). Citizens can visit the district website to find out what projects are being financed in their neighbourhood. They can visualise this information through simplified layers of data placed over Google maps. Buurtbegroting aims to communicate city finance and decision making clearly to citizens

cities, with their differing climates, levels of development, population sizes and governance structures. Cities with similar typologies will identify with one another and can benefit from learning and knowledge transfer.

Through EUROCITIES, we connect more than 130 cities across Europe, so knowledge exchange and mutual capacity building is at the heart of our work. We aim to multiply the benefits of good practices across our network. Transnational learning is a powerful tool to build capacity when it is properly resourced and based on systematic peer reviews, training and mentoring schemes. Continued EU level support is needed for European cities to join forces and become smarter together.

A new way of working

Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, has brought a new way of working to the EU's executive body, moving away from silos and towards better coordination. This could be a positive sign for the next steps on smart cities and communities. It would

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be helpful to see the smart cities initiative connected to others designed to address energy efficiency in cities, like the Covenant of Mayors and Mayors Adapt.

It should be clear to stakeholders, including cities, how the different initiatives are linked, what their added value is, and how their impact on the ground fits with the EU's broader strategic objectives.

This approach should be part of the growing debate on an EU urban agenda. We believe that the EU urban agenda should be about empowering cities to deliver the Europe 2020 objectives for a smart, sustainable and inclusive Europe. It should provide a framework to join up different policies with an urban dimension and engage cities directly and alongside member states in EU policy development. The smart cities EIP goes

some way in terms of showing how this might work in practice.

We remain committed to engaging in the further developments at EU level aimed at making cities smarter and better places to live, and at delivering the EU's energy objectives. With this in mind, it will be important to keep a broad group of stakeholders from all relevant sectors engaged together.

The direct involvement of cities in smart cities developments will be vital to their success. Only with cities on board can we ensure that smart city solutions meet the real demand on the ground in cities and the needs of citizens. This is vital for the uptake of new technologies, and to ensure that smart city initiatives generate markets, growth, sustainability and social inclusion. ■