

Developing Europe's urban model



25 years of
EUROCITIES



Jon Bloomfield
author

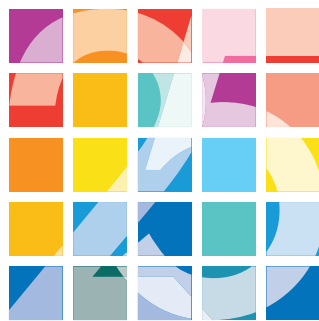
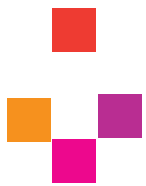
Jon Bloomfield was Birmingham's Head of Regional, European and International Division from 1996-2005. In this period he was the lead officer, responsible for Birmingham's role on the executive committee of EUROCITIES and as its secretary. Currently, he is an Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Birmingham. While the author accepts responsibility for the contents, he would like to acknowledge the help he received in preparing this document from present and former EUROCITIES colleagues and staff including Nicola Vathauer, Eva Baños, Jean-Pierre Ernotte, Sinead Mullins, Chris de Lange, Dave Carter, Hans Verdonk, Jill Robinson, Thierry Baert, Patrick Willcocks and Julia Ebert.


Developing Europe's urban model: 25 years of EUROCIITIES

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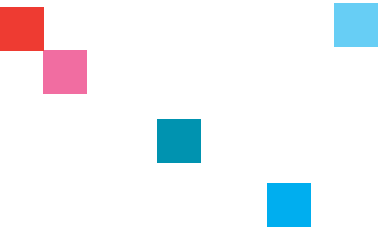




We would like to thank the following cities for their generous contributions towards our EURO CITIES 25 years special activities:

- GRAND LYON
- NANTES METROPOLE
- ROTTERDAM
- THE HAGUE
- WARSAW

Forewords



In these challenging times, successful cities know that they need to look beyond their horizons and continue learning from their neighbours if they are to remain thriving urban hubs. And it is this approach that defines **EUROCITIES**: a forward-thinking association which continues, now more than ever, to set ambitious goals, reach new audiences and develop innovative ideas.

It is a great honour for me to be president of **EUROCITIES** as it celebrates its 25th year. This booklet charts **EUROCITIES'** progress over the last two-and-a-half decades: how the association was set up back in 1986 and its evolution up to the present day.

The booklet is relevant to a wide readership, from fellow mayors and politicians, to journalists and policy-makers. Europe's cities are one of the European Union's major success stories, and this study underlines the central role of cities in achieving the EU's goals. With 25 years of history behind it, **EUROCITIES'** success proves that if we are to achieve a smart, sustainable and socially inclusive future for all our citizens, Europe's cities are an extremely valuable asset.

Since its inception 25 years ago, **EUROCITIES** has gained increasing recognition for the important role of cities. Cities are the driving force behind a prosperous and competitive Europe. **EUROCITIES** annual conferences, from 'the city, engine behind economic recovery', the network's first ever conference held in 1986 in Rotterdam, to Genoa 2011's 'planning for people' are proof that cities continue to be at the heart of policy development. Mayors and their staff are confronted daily with political and social challenges, and cities have to tackle problems and deliver solutions instantly.

25 years of cities' experiences on the ground and their involvement in EU policy are a tremendously valuable resource for further policy-shaping. We know where we're coming from and we must be clear where we're heading. European and national policies should be closely aligned in order to capitalise on the potential of cities and metropolitan areas. The EU and national governments must support us to develop policies for the benefit of all our citizens.



Frank Jensen
Lord Mayor of
Copenhagen
President of
EUROCITIES



Ahmed Aboutaleb
Mayor of
Rotterdam

1 Origins

The 1980s were a tough time. With the end of the era of mass manufacturing, western Europe's large cities and metropolitan areas experienced a period of sharp decline, high unemployment and social disruption. Big engineering factories, car and steel plants, shipyards and other heavy industrial processes had dominated the urban landscape for generations. They had shaped and defined urban culture. As they fell idle, cities lost their glamour and appeal. In many cases urban populations fell. The frequent media portrayal of cities and urban life more generally became overwhelmingly negative: a picture of dereliction and decay.

Yet, at the same time there were initial signs of revitalisation and renewal. Cities tried to adjust to the new economic conditions, clear old industrial premises and convert them to more modern purposes. On occasion, landmark public projects acted as flagships for urban transformation. Far-sighted city politicians and officials worked with business and community leaders to find new roles for cities within this changing urban landscape. Looking beyond national boundaries was a key element of this adjustment. The newly-expanded European Structural Funds programmes were quickly recognised as a crucial arena for city engagement. With the development of the European Single Market and emerging trends towards globalisation, Europe assumed a wider political relevance. It was in this crucible that **EUROCITIES** emerged.

The origins of **EUROCITIES** can be traced to a conference on 'the city, the engine behind economic recovery' held in Rotterdam in 1986, that brought together representatives of 11 big cities plus academics and industrialists to discuss their role in economic recovery. This was a gathering of urban heavyweights. The discussions were underpinned by a series of intellectual studies on the urban and regional dimensions of economic transformation that had been prepared by academics close to the Rotterdam political leadership¹. The meeting helped to crystallise thinking. It indicated that a combination of economic upheaval, a new intellectual focus on the role of cities and alert politicians looking for new openings was coming together. For example, Lyon's deputy mayor for urban planning, Jacques Moulinier, was soon making it clear that his city

“wished to establish and develop relationships with other major cities that are not capital cities but ‘European metropolises’.”²

In 1989 Barcelona's senior councillor, Jordi Borja, organised a major conference focused on 'the role of cities in European construction' as preparations for the single market and wider European integration gained momentum. Two European Commissioners and a vice-president of the European Parliament attended. By now, a central core of organising cities was emerging, namely the six 'second' cities of Barcelona, Birmingham, Frankfurt, Lyon, Milan and Rotterdam. Four of these already had long-established twinning relationships. The Barcelona conference agreed that a key task was to put the issue of cities and their economic, political and social development onto the European agenda. The conference gave the impetus to strengthen lobbying with the European Commission and on 24 October 1989 a delegation of European city politicians met with Commission President Jacques Delors and Commissioner for Regional Policy, Bruce Millan. The show was on the road.³

2 Early years

Many have aspirations to establish a new force in European politics but few achieve it. Three key factors combined to enable an association of European cities to emerge quickly onto the political stage. Firstly, its clear urban focus; secondly, the sharp political brain of its organising cities; and thirdly, the linkages to European Community institutions.

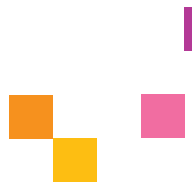
Developing Europe's urban model

The development of urban studies gave the new network a tremendous asset, namely intellectual coherence and clout. A body of new and evolving knowledge highlighting the urban and spatial dimensions of economic change and renewal gave shape and substance to the new association. It meant that the association had a story to tell, a narrative which it could share with those parts of the European Commission that were interested. Furthermore, as the association developed working groups on specific issues – from transport to urban regeneration; from economic growth to responding to migration – it could work with and draw on academic practitioners within these emerging disciplines. Thus institutes such as Euricur, based at the Erasmus University in Rotterdam, and the European Institute for Urban Affairs in Liverpool along with others, for example, in Lille and Barcelona, were able to help give the new association an overall framework and confidence within which to develop. From the outset **EUROCITIES** has always argued the case for an integrated urban policy. It drew on the strengths of the traditional European urban model of compact, integrated and organic cities and has updated it, in clear contrast to the extensive US model of urban sprawl. This integrated urban model has been a consistent thread of its activity over two and a half decades. Elements of the content have evolved, for example with a growing emphasis on sustainability and the importance of information technologies to all citizens, but throughout its existence, the core message of the centrality of cities to Europe's future has remained constant.

Political organisation

The informal network began to mushroom. Cities set up ad-hoc working groups on a range of economic and social topics. Lyon undertook to organise the third conference in 1990. Following its success the core organising group increasingly recognised that they would have to move beyond informal arrangements and set up a more formal structure. There were some initial concerns about the costs involved and the dangers of a bureaucratic structure but logic pointed to the establishment of the network with a central organisation able to run it efficiently and give the organisation visibility. As preparations began for the association's fourth conference in Birmingham scheduled for September 1991, its leading councillor for economic and European affairs, Albert Bore, seized the moment. Bore asked Jill Robinson, the Birmingham official responsible for the 1991 conference, to draw up the rules of association to submit to the conference organising group. At a meeting in Lyon on 13 February 1991, the six core cities formally agreed these rules and decided to present them to the annual conference. The rules set out the aims and objectives of the association in three simple statements:

- To collaborate as a network of cities to further the mutual interests of member cities in their role as centres of economic, technical, social and cultural development
- To influence the decision-making process of the European Community institutions
- To act as a partner in the European institutional debate in the interests of European cities.



The rules then set out the formal criteria of membership “open to major metropolitan cities of the member states of the European Community”, established membership fees, an executive committee and, crucially, agreed to establish a permanent secretariat to be based in Brussels. By this stage there was no real disagreement on these steps. At the Birmingham conference in September 1991, they were endorsed without contention. Birmingham was made the secretary, and for the next 13 years Bore was to play a key political and organisational role within the association.

There was more manoeuvring around the choice of the first director and the venue of the office. The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), which brought together major cities through national associations of local and regional government, was keen to host the new association and ‘nest’ it under its umbrella. CEMR had supported the initial conferences and its general secretary, the redoubtable Elisabeth Gateau, did not want to see the emergence of a potential rival. Thus CEMR offered to draw up a shortlist of candidates for the new director and to house the new office. However, there was unease about this offer among the organising cities. They were keen on their autonomy and did not want to begin life as an offshoot of CEMR.⁴ Thus the CEMR shortlist was significantly amended with Bore again playing a key role in backroom negotiations with the other cities. Among the names added was Kate Stephens, who was then chosen by the panel as the first director. Her appointment was confirmed at the Birmingham conference. A few months later a small office with two staff was established in Brussels and formally opened by Commissioner Millan on 6 March 1992.⁵

As the Birmingham official responsible for the 1991 conference, Jill Robinson had drawn up the rules of association and was centrally involved in the recruitment process. Her recollections are quite clear.

“Both politicians and officers knew that we had to move from the informal to formal arrangements. And by this stage everyone understood the need for an office in Brussels.”⁶

The swift and smooth way in which this transition was achieved was a further sign of the growing maturity and cohesiveness of the **EUROCITIES** association and the political capability of its leadership.

Links to the Commission

These developments came at a period of significant change within the European Community. The same socio-economic changes that were stimulating the emergence of **EUROCITIES** were simultaneously prompting the emergence of a European urban agenda. With the overall encouragement of European Commission President Jacques Delors, three different directorate generals took up the issue. DG V (social affairs) was especially concerned about cohesion; DG XI (environment) produced a green paper on the urban environment; while DG XVI (regional policy) devoted a section of its Europe 2000 strategy⁷ to urban affairs and commissioned a major study led by Michael Parkinson on ‘urbanisation and the functions of cities in the European Community’.⁸ Within the Commission the initiative lay with DG Regional Policy because it had a budget. The growing European recognition of the urban dimension of economic development resulted in a new instrument from the European Commission. Article 10 of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) was put into the regulations in 1989. It provided for the co-financing of pilot projects to test out new ideas in the delivery of urban policy and to promote the exchange of experience and cooperation amongst European cities

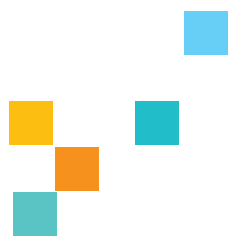
and regions. DG Regional Policy had to run this programme and in June 1989 it had appointed its first urban policy officer, Stephen Fox, within the Spatial Planning Unit.⁹ In 1990, 15 pilot networks were established with a further 20 set up the following year. **EUROCITIES** quickly recognised its potential. By 1991 the Commission was co-financing three **EUROCITIES** sub-projects under this programme involving 21 cities. Interestingly, some of these resources provided the co-funding for the establishment of the Brussels office. At the same time a number of the key **EUROCITIES** members such as Lyon, Rotterdam and Lisbon successfully applied for their own Article 10 projects. As Fox recalls,

“a powerful collection of mayors and senior councillors were seeing the potential of the European Commission and saw us as a way to get around their national governments.”

The organisation was growing rapidly with more than 40 large cities throughout Europe joining as members. The Birmingham conference agreed that the executive committee would be composed of the six founding partner cities combined with the chairs of the working groups. The secretariat quickly formalised the working methods of the association with three main strands: an annual conference as the main political event with a policy theme; six main working groups each with their own work programme where detailed policy work would be undertaken; and then specific working parties set up as necessary by the working groups.

These developments did not occur by chance. The launching of the **EUROCITIES** association tapped a vein across Europe. It gave voice and purpose to deep, underlying trends. As Europe's cities responded to the decline of mass manufacturing and the emergence of a more globalised world, their political, business and civic leaderships increasingly recognised that they needed to establish themselves beyond their national boundaries and also benchmark themselves against their European counterparts. As the European Union became a more significant source of finance and policy influence, it became proportionately more important for Europe's cities to be heard within the EU institutions. The leaderships that were most dynamic in pursuing new economic strategies within their own cities – Barcelona, Lyon, Birmingham, Rotterdam, Frankfurt – were also amongst those most eager to re-shape the European political landscape. They were at the core of the creation and development of **EUROCITIES**. By the mid-1990s they had established a proper voice for Europe's large cities. In the words of the former mayor of Barcelona, Jordi Hereu:

“I am proud that Barcelona was one of the founding cities of **EUROCITIES. I believe that it is fundamental that we, as cities, should work together to defend our priorities and that our voice is taken into account in the international arena.”**



3 Consolidation and maturity

This momentum was sustained over the next few years. By the time Rotterdam, under the charismatic leadership of its mayor Bram Peper, was elected president in 1996, **EUROCITIES** had grown to over 70 members. The ‘urban momentum’ was still evident. Peper and the two **EUROCITIES** vice-presidents met with Commission President Jacques Santer and Commissioners Monika Wulf-Mathies and Hans van den Broeck. Another heavy-hitter and co-architect of **EUROCITIES**, Pasqual Maragall i Mira, a former mayor of Barcelona, was now President of the Committee of the Regions. Under its auspices he organised a large cities summit in Amsterdam to coincide with the Dutch EU Presidency, while the Commission followed with its first major urban conference in Vienna in late autumn 1998. Under Peper’s leadership and with a new chief executive, Maria Assimakopoulou, the association sustained its political momentum as the Commission produced its communication ‘towards an urban agenda in the European Union’. Sustaining the policy impetus the association prepared a detailed report, ‘**EUROCITIES** for an urban policy’ which proposed a framework for urban policy and contained detailed proposals in seven key areas. The **EUROCITIES** working groups continued to develop their detailed policy work while the bi-annual **EUROCITIES** magazine gave intellectual credibility to the organisation with major interviews with figures such as Peter Hall and Manuel Castells and key players within the Commission and the European Parliament.

Peper and the **EUROCITIES** executive kept the political focus on urban policy. He knew the main danger “...a number of member states seem to be dragging their feet”.¹⁰ And he clearly saw the answer lay in winning allies.

“Together with the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions we have succeeded in putting urban policy on the European agenda.”¹¹

And further that while “large cities are in the front line...as urban policy takes shape small and medium-sized cities also stand to benefit.” Yet, as Peper feared, member states resisted, while the wider crisis over the European Commission and its resignation led to a stalling of this momentum. The long time gap that followed and the inability of the Prodi Commission to regain the initiative meant that this urban policy interest subsided.

This also coincided with internal upheavals within the association so that **EUROCITIES**’ capacity to retrieve the political situation was hampered. With the appointment of a new chief executive, Catherine Parmentier, in autumn 2000, **EUROCITIES** regained organisational momentum. Fifteen more cities joined the network at the Barcelona AGM in 2002 where Leipzig’s mayor, Wolfgang Tiefensee, was elected president. His election symbolised the capacity of **EUROCITIES** to open to the east. Tiefensee, a telecommunications engineer by training, had been involved in the Leipzig Round Table, which helped to negotiate the peaceful transfer of power in autumn 1989 in East Germany. Eloquent and persuasive, he ensured that the issues of enlargement and the issues facing cities in the former communist states were given clear expression within the network and in discussions with EU institutions. Another political heavyweight, later to become a minister within the German federal government, Tiefensee helped **EUROCITIES** to integrate new member cities from the enlargement countries easily into the association.

At the same time, the new chief executive oversaw the consolidation of **EUROCITIES**. In the words of one member of staff, “Catherine professionalised the network.” Membership grew steadily; more staff were recruited. Recognising the symbolic importance of a powerful urban focus within the heart of the EU institutions, she was instrumental in organising the association’s move into new premises in Brussels, bringing many cities and urban and municipal organisations together in a European ‘House of Cities’.

When Parmentier left after an eight-year stint, membership had risen more than 50% to over 130 cities. (see table below for membership growth.) When Paul Bevan took over as secretary general in November 2008 he found an organisation with nearly 30 staff, six forums and more than 40 working groups. As he said, “we are keeping a massive machine going.”



Evolution of **EUROCITIES**' membership (full & associate members) from Jan 1993 to Jan 2011

4 Main achievements

Today, **EUROCITIES** has an office in Brussels with a permanent staff of 33. The network is run by an executive committee whose members are elected for three years. The committee has 12 members, including a president, a vice-president, secretary and treasurer. The network operates through three bodies: the annual conference and annual general meeting (AGM); six forums, which hold two to three seminars per year (a member city is given responsibility for organising each forum, on a theme such as culture, economy, environment, knowledge society, mobility and social affairs); and the numerous working groups, subdivisions of the forums, which look at specific political issues. These groups are the principal spaces for the exchange of good practice and developing new policy ideas.

Looking back over the last 25 years, how does **EUROCITIES** today match up to the aims it set for itself in those first rules of association?

Circulation of knowledge amongst cities themselves

EUROCITIES has always been a collaborative network. One of its three core objectives set out in 1991 has been ‘to further the mutual interests of member cities in their role as centres of economic, technical, social and cultural development.’ Thus it has always focused on sharing new thinking and best practices between cities. From the outset it has sought to avoid being just a top-down hierarchical network.

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This has been achieved by the detailed ongoing work undertaken by the policy forums and working groups where professional officers and technicians have consistently sought to address the range of major and emerging policy issues facing Europe’s cities. It is where the association has also shown its flexibility by permitting medium-sized cities not quite meeting the membership threshold to participate and contribute as associated partners, while it also works closely with a number of sectoral networks, especially on social affairs. This activity has formed the staple diet of the association’s work throughout its history. Its thematic groups and their sub-committees have met regularly and been well-attended. Over the two and a half decades there has been a remarkable continuity in the key themes addressed. The formal names of the groups and their official titles have altered but the core focus on economic, social, environmental, cultural, mobility, knowledge society and governance issues has remained broadly constant.

These thematic groups have been the core of the network. Their role is aptly summarised by Thierry Baert from Lille, who has been involved in the economic development forum since 1996, chairing it from 1999-2001.¹² He identifies three benefits for his city from consistent engagement with the forum. Firstly, it helped to create specific networks for Lille – “you have an address book.” Secondly, it has given some direct routes into parts of the European Commission, avoiding national government and managing authorities. “We have been involved in meetings with heads of units and senior officials within DG Regional Policy.”

Thirdly, and in Baert's view most significantly, it changed the outlook and mindset of officials within the city itself.

“Involvement with EUROCITIES opened up people's minds locally. It took us beyond the usual routines. By learning of what others were doing, it helped us to be realistic about our own levels of achievement.”

This informal benchmarking helped city officials to think of different ways to look at what they were doing. “It helped to develop an innovative spirit amongst us and also gave recognition to the fact that we were more of a European and not just a French city.”

From the outset these forums and working groups have been the bedrock of EUROCITIES. It is here that problems have been discussed, new approaches articulated and experiences shared. A small number of politicians have regularly participated in the forums and the forum chairs, executive committee members and Brussels officers have then been able to take from these experiences and translate them into policy demands to present to EU institutions. This is how the association continues to refine and develop the European urban model. Here is where the specific urban focus gives EUROCITIES an edge. As Paul Bevan expresses it, “we have the advantage of representing a specific interest compared to CEMR and CoR which are very broad.”¹³

The association has specialist expertise and undertakes in-depth work in core, selected areas. It is recognised and respected for this. For example, that is why the association received an official request from the newly-formed DG Climate Change to sit on the steering group preparing new Commission policies on the subject. However, these sectoral strengths are woven within an overall urban perspective. Heidi Hesske, a long-standing Leipzig representative with the association, says:

“Many international networks are focused on just one theme. EUROCITIES' great strength is its capacity to join up these separate issues so we can see where EU policy can be more coherent, particularly in supporting an integrated approach to urban development.”

The powerful urban voice The other two core original aims of those establishing the association were to give Europe's big cities a vehicle through which it could express an urban voice. This it has clearly achieved. Currently, EUROCITIES has 136 members. The total population of these cities is 110 million.¹⁴ In most cases it is the city administration rather than the wider conurbation that is the member of EUROCITIES and therefore this total underestimates the overall metropolitan population which falls within the economic and social orbit of EUROCITIES. This is a huge figure, which even when non-member state cities are excluded approaches one-fifth of the total EU population.

The association has member cities in all EU member states bar Malta. In addition it has significant membership in cities in Ukraine and Turkey, the two largest applicant states, and a member in Croatia, the state closest to membership. In



all it has members in 34 countries. The current list of member cities is attached as annex 1. One indication of strength in depth is shown by the composition of the 2010 executive committee. The 12 members are drawn from cities in 11 member states.

Cities from five of the six largest EU countries are on the executive; five capital cities are represented; two cities from Mediterranean Europe; and two from the newer member states.

The current president, Frank Jensen, Lord Mayor of Copenhagen, is from the 11th city to have held the presidential post (the full list is given as annex 2).

Policy influencer The initial rules set the objective for **EUROCITIES** 'to influence the decision-making process of the European Community institutions.' Showing the impact of an organisation is no simple matter, particularly in the policy-making arena. This is even more true in the European Union, where there is such a multiplicity of players and 27 separate national governments. Associations and lobbying organisations frequently make over-blown, exaggerated claims about their policy-making influence. What **EUROCITIES** can reasonably say is that on a number of topics over the last two decades it has been one of a number of forces which made its voice heard and which collectively contributed to a change in policy. As it has grown in size and stature the association's impact and policy weight has increased.

There are a number of areas where the association can rightly claim that it has played a particularly distinctive role. As described earlier, **EUROCITIES** was centrally involved in the policy work in the 1990s to put urban issues onto the EU agenda. Furthermore, it was engaged from the outset with the drive to get the Commission to recognise that regional policy had to have a distinctive urban dimension. Thus it lobbied persistently for an initial urban programme to address the needs of deprived city areas. Then, from the mid-1990s onwards its lobbying efforts focused on including urban policy among the main objectives of structural funds, so the urban dimension would be mainstreamed. These efforts were partially rewarded as the 2000-2006 objective 2 programme introduced for the first time an explicit urban component.

Or look at the issue of the internet. Firstly, **Telecities** – nowadays the **EUROCITIES** Knowledge Society Forum - played a key role in the late 1990s in both persuading the Commission of the need for a common technical framework between the USA and Europe and of the enormous practical applications of internet technology in cities at a time when this was not commonly understood. Secondly, **EUROCITIES** members were amongst the most forceful in making the case that the internet should not be seen just as a business tool but rather that it had crucial social and skills dimensions. As **EUROCITIES** veteran Dave Carter explains,

“Telecities was absolutely crucial in taking EU policy on the internet beyond competitiveness. We spoke early on about eInclusion and the dangers of a division into ‘info-rich/info-poor.’ Without us, those issues would not have entered the policy arena so quickly.”¹⁵



In the words of Councillor Paul Tilsley, Deputy Leader of Birmingham City Council, another of **EUROCITIES'** founder members:

“Membership of **EUROCITIES provides us with a means of being part of a strong, influential voice of cities across Europe, which is well regarded by the EU institutions.”**

Stature within Brussels At the very outset of the network there were a set of high-profile connections and meetings with the European Commission and Parliament. However, once the association got established these subsided. From the late 1990s the network found it much harder, for instance, to get Commissioners or senior figures to attend its annual general meetings or conferences.

However, this position has changed considerably in the last two years. Much stronger links with both European Commissioners and senior figures within the Commission now exist. Thus, during the second half of 2010, **EUROCITIES** politicians and top staff met with Siim Kallas on transport, Janusz Potočník on the environment, Cecilia Malmström on internal affairs, Connie Hedegaard on climate change and Neelie Kroes on digital issues.

This followed on from having Johannes Hahn discuss regional policy at an executive meeting earlier in the year and prior to that meetings with Commissioner for Regional Policy Pawel Samecki in December 2009 and his predecessor in the post, Danuta Hübner, in February 2009.

These have not been diplomatic or formulaic meetings. Both in their preparation and follow-through there is growing engagement between the network and the Commission. Different directorates within the Commission are looking to the network for advice and guidance. Thus DG Transport and Energy asked **EUROCITIES** for its ideas on the Covenant of Mayors and then invited the association onto the committee advising on adaptation to climate change along with all the member states. Or take the fact that DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, through its PROGRESS programme, has supported **EUROCITIES** activities since 2008. This three-year partnership helps further develop and strengthen cities' activities in the development of social inclusion policies.

At the same time the association has extended its work with other parts of the EU policy-making circuit. Close links with the European Parliament have been a consistent feature of the association's work for several years. This has been maintained through the work of the Parliament's Urban Intergroup. In 2010 in Brussels they organised a 'Cities4Europe' event with 30 MEPs and more than 20 mayors attending. A significant recognition of the association's growing role came in June 2010 when **EUROCITIES** was given representation at the informal ministerial meeting on urban development held in Toledo during the Spanish EU presidency.

The association has signed a formal cooperation agreement with the Committee of the Regions, one of the half-dozen organisations that fall within that category. Recognising the growing influence of member state governments in EU negotiations, **EUROCITIES** has begun to open discussions with their permanent representations within Brussels. Thus, in February 2011 the association organised a working session with permanent representatives responsible for cohesion policy from as many as 10 member states.

These are all indications that, as an association, **EUROCITIES** has moved to a new stage: it is no longer just one of the hundreds of pressure groups within Brussels. It has now moved to being a stakeholder.

5 Hiccups on the way

The creation and growth of a new organisation is never easy. There are inevitably tensions and disagreements. Within a European association, one is bringing together different cultures, personalities and egos, and drawing them together.

A major danger with these associations is that the central office in Brussels becomes a law unto itself, out of the control of its members. Within its first 25 years **EUROCITIES** has only experienced one serious dispute. This came in 1999.

There was growing discontent within the executive committee and amongst the staff about the performance of the chief executive. The chief executive felt that this discontent was being stoked up by ambitious middle managers. At the annual general meeting of the association in Helsinki a secret meeting of the executive decided to ask for consultants to investigate. The chief executive and treasurer recommended local Belgian consultants. They produced a report that backed her. At the key executive meeting to discuss the report the politicians voted to reject their conclusions and ask for the resignation of the chief executive. Birmingham and then Leipzig managed the office in the interim and began the process for the appointment of a new chief executive. To ensure a clean slate no existing member of staff was permitted to apply. After both officer and then politician interviews Catherine Parmentier was appointed. She took up post in autumn 2000. The principle of political control by the membership had been clearly asserted. The crisis was over.

It left a strong mark on the association. Tensions have been evident on other occasions but they have been held within bounds. Thus, on a couple of occasions there have been arguments between the Brussels office and AGM host city as the office sought to defend the role of the network as a whole and ensure that the AGM did not just promote the interests of the host city. At other times, issues of geographical balance have arisen: is the association understating the issues of southern Europe, or the problems of cities in central and eastern Europe? The issue of membership criteria remains a topic for debate: how strictly should the association stick to the criteria of 250,000 population plus a key strategic role. Other contested issues include the size of the membership fee and how to work with business partners. For those involved in such disputes it is vital to keep a sense of perspective. There has to be a recognition that such arguments are part of the 'rough and tumble' of real life, they are the signs of life and argument within a living association. It is important that the senior staff and politicians ensure that any such disputes are kept within bounds and do not get out of hand. It is an indication of the political sense of the association that since 2000 this has been the case.



6 The future

The preceding pages have shown that **EUROCITIES** has come a long way in the past quarter of a century. There are important signs of steady, if slow, progress continuing to be made within parts of the EU institutions, as decades of consistent lobbying, persuasion and argument bear fruit. For instance, looking to the future of structural funds, the Commission's 5th Cohesion Report, published in November 2010, placed a new emphasis on the importance of cities. It states that it is considering "an ambitious urban agenda" which would identify financial resources more clearly than in the 2006-2013 programmes and would give a greater role to urban authorities in designing and implementing urban development strategies. Within other parts of the Commission such as within DG Information Society there is a growing understanding of the potential of smart cities, while those directorates dealing with climate change are increasingly aware that action in the major urban areas is crucial to achieving the EU's carbon reduction and energy efficiency targets.

There are a number of areas where the association needs to continue with this detailed lobbying and high-quality research work in order to gain further recognition.


There is certainly scope to strengthen its connections and activity with the European Parliament and Council of Ministers, for example, and the linkage between its pilot projects and its policy proposals should always be made explicit. At the same time there is always scope to develop organisationally. **EUROCITIES** needs to show itself consistently to be a smart organisation using modern technology to minimise unnecessary travel and to communicate more effectively with its membership. This would contribute to the further promotion of **EUROCITIES** as a powerful and dynamic urban brand.

The next big step However, the association faces a much bigger challenge. The harsh reality is that cities still barely register within the big picture thinking of the European Commission and member states. As secretary general Paul Bevan wryly remarked when Europe 2020, the EU's successor to the Lisbon strategy, was published,

“the central role of Europe's major cities in achieving these goals has so far been entirely missed.”

Cities are still not making waves, collectively. The real challenge for **EUROCITIES** is to change that reality. There is a compelling story here. It has roots in the original **EUROCITIES** theme, namely of the potential of Europe's cities as 'engines for growth.'

That slogan, conjuring 19th century industrial images, now feels rather dated. But the economic potential of cities remains and the events of the last quarter of a century have served to re-emphasise it. Europe's major cities are centres for innovation, creativity and dynamism. At the same time, the centrality of cities to the climate change agenda has become ever more evident. It is in urban areas that Europe can make a reality of its 2020 aspirations for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.



That is the story **EUROCITIES** needs to tell and re-tell. Perhaps the early intellectual momentum on cities got lost. The network has concentrated on making its long march through the EU institutions. But ‘beyond the Brussels bubble’ it has had little impact and within it, the message has been diluted.

The challenge now is to generate a new excitement and substance. There is a strong narrative here which should focus on the European urban model. This serves as a powerful contrast to both the reality of sprawling US metropolises but also to the mega-cities of Asia, Africa and Latin America. The attractiveness of European cities is evident in the annual survey of world cities by Monocle magazine. In 2010 of the 25 cities heading their Liveable Cities Index, 14 were from Europe and all are members of **EUROCITIES**, while seven of the top eight are from Europe.¹⁶ Urban life is an arena where Europe is genuinely a world leader.

Europe’s cities are continuing to display ingenuity and initiative even in an age of austerity. New ideas are emerging across the continent. We see smart partnerships with universities, for example in Eindhoven, Helsinki and Manchester. There is a turn against mono-cultural, edge-of-city business parks and their replacement with liveable, creative metropolises which are part of the urban fabric, as in Dortmund and Barcelona. New sectors of the economy are emerging which focus on the quality of life and the environment often through the development of social economy incubators as in Grenoble. Metropolitan and urban areas are establishing new partnerships – city economic forums, science cities. City leadership is the key. Mayors and city governments have the legitimacy and capacity to pull institutions, organisations and companies together in a way no-one else can.

Europe’s cities are showing they are the hub of social and economic innovation, the smart places of the future.¹⁷ Yet how can this be translated into the broad political arena? Here lies the great challenge for **EUROCITIES** and its members.

Pointers for the future

So looking to the next decade, here are some pointers for **EUROCITIES**.

- Tell and re-tell the story of the strength and vitality of the European urban model. Contrast it with the shortcomings of classic American sprawl.
- Show how this European urban model is adapting and responding to the changing 21st century economy; the new social realities with multi-racial cities and high female participation at work; and the demands of climate change. **EUROCITIES** needs to be a perpetual test-bed for new ideas on urban living and the urban economy.
- Renew the intellectual momentum on cities. Stimulate academic and journalistic debate and discussion so that the future of cities moves centre stage. Don’t be afraid to promote new cutting edge ideas.
- Maximise **EUROCITIES** as a political platform, both within and beyond the European institutions. Political big-hitters are needed to get cities properly embedded in the European agenda. Mayors are required, who see the space that exists and who are determined to fill it.



As the Mayor of Lyon, Gérard Collomb, expresses it,

“Our involvement has been sustained by a political belief: that cities have become one of the pivots for the future of the people of Europe.”

Making a mark on the European stage is a long slog. In the words of long-standing mayor of Frankfurt, Petra Roth:

“Frankfurt understood very early that close contacts to other European cities facing similar challenges would become more and more important in the future. And we were proved right. It’s thrilling that this rather loose network has developed into such a big player...”

21st century politics demands big personalities, politicians of ability and charisma who will speak for Europe’s cities. **EUROCITIES** has established itself as a ‘Premier League’ European association able to speak with knowledge and authority on the major urban issues. Its task in the decade ahead is to move into the ‘European Champions League’ and to transfer cities’ local impact onto the national and European stage.

It will meet powerful resistance from those who want to ignore or downgrade urban politics, especially in national governments. But given the progress it has made over the last 25 years, there is no reason why this change cannot occur. It goes with the grain of existing reality. Smart cities; sustainable cities; cities as the hubs of social and economic innovation, these are key objectives if Europe and its citizens are to have a decent, prosperous future. **EUROCITIES**, its politicians and its members should aim high. Europe can only fulfil its aspirations if it places cities and metropolitan regions at the heart of its policy proposals and its work.

*Jon Bloomfield,
Honorary Research Fellow, University of Birmingham*

Annex 1. EUROCITIES members January 2011

- AUSTRIA** Vienna*
- BELGIUM** Antwerp, Brussels Capital Region, Brussels City, Charleroi, Ghent*
- BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA** Banja Luka, Sarajevo
- BULGARIA** Bourgas, Plovdiv, Sofia, Varna
- CYPRUS** Nicosia
- CROATIA** Zagreb
- CZECH REPUBLIC** Brno, Pilsen, Prague
- DENMARK** Aarhus, Copenhagen*
- ESTONIA** Tallinn
- FINLAND** Espoo, Helsinki, Oulu, Tampere, Turku, Vantaa
- FRANCE** Bordeaux, Grenoble Alpes Metropole, Lille Communaute Urbaine, Lyon*, Marseille, Nancy, Nantes Metropole*, Nice Cote d'Azur, Paris, Rennes Metropole, Saint Etienne Metropole, Strasbourg, Toulouse
- GEORGIA** Tbilisi
- GERMANY** Berlin, Bonn, Chemnitz, Cologne, Dortmund, Dresden, Dusseldorf, Frankfurt am Main, Hamburg, Leipzig*, Mannheim, Munich, Munster, Nuremberg
- GREECE** Athens, Thessaloniki
- HUNGARY** Budapest*
- IRELAND** Dublin
- ITALY** Bologna, Florence, Genoa*, Milan, Naples, Palermo, Rome, Turin, Venice
- KOSOVO^a** Pristina
- LATVIA** Riga
- LITHUANIA** Vilnius
- FYR MACEDONIA** Skopje
- THE NETHERLANDS** Amsterdam, BrabantStad Metropolitan Area, Eindhoven, Parkstad Limburg, Rotterdam, The Hague*, Utrecht
- NORWAY** Bergen, Oslo
- POLAND** Bialystok, Bydgoszcz, Gdansk, Katowice, Krakow, Lodz, Lublin, Poznan, Rzeszow, Warsaw*, Wroclaw
- PORTUGAL** Lisbon, Porto
- ROMANIA** Timisoara
- SLOVENIA** Ljubljana
- SLOVAKIA** Bratislava
- SERBIA** Nis, Novi Sad
- SPAIN** Barcelona, Bilbao, Gijon, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Madrid, Malaga, Murcia, Seville, Terrassa Metropolitan Area, Valencia, Zaragoza*
- SWEDEN** Gothenburg, Malmo, Stockholm*
- SWITZERLAND** Geneva, Zurich
- TURKEY** Bursa, Istanbul, Izmir, Sanliurfa
- UKRAINE** Kharkov, Kiev, Lviv, Odessa
- UNITED KINGDOM** Belfast, Birmingham, Brighton & Hove, Bristol, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool, London, Manchester, Newcastle/Gateshead, Sheffield, PUSH (Partnership for Urban South Hampshire), Sunderland

* Executive committee members

a. Kosovo under UN Security Council resolution 1244

Annex 2. Presidents of EUROCITIES 1990-2011

1990 - 1991	Frankfurt am Main, Mr. Volker HAUFF
1991 - 1992	Frankfurt am Main, Mr. Andreas von SCHOELER
1992 - 1994	Lisbon, Mr. Jorge SAMPAIO
1994 - 1996	Bologna, Mr. Walter VITALI
1996 - 1998	Rotterdam, Mr. Bram PEPPER
1998 - 1999	Bilbao, Mr. Josu ORTUONDO LARREA
1999 - 2000	Bilbao, Mr. Iñaki AZKUNA URRETA
2000 - 2002	Helsinki, Mrs. Eva-Riitta SIITONEN
2002 - 2004	Leipzig, Mr. Wolfgang TIEFENSEE
2004 - 2006	Manchester, Sir Richard LEESE
2006 - 2008	Lyon, Mr. Gérard COLLOMB
2008 - 2010	The Hague, Mr. Jozias van AARTSEN
2010 - now	Copenhagen, Mr. Frank JENSEN

Endnotes

1. See Aisling Healy, Sarah Russeil. Circulation de savoirs entre villes et sélection d'une expertise de l'urbain: la place des mondes académiques au sein des **EUROCITIES**. Especially pp.2-4; and Chris de Lange, **EUROCITIES**: the European cities' lobby. The author was Rotterdam's officer representative on the **EUROCITIES**' executive committee from 1992-2002
2. Lyon municipal archives 1729 W1, letter from Jacques Moulinier to Jordi Borja 8 August 1988.
3. For more detail on the origins see Renaud Payre, The Importance of Being Connected. City Networks and Urban government: Lyon and **EUROCITIES** 1990-2005. In the International Journal of Urban and Regional Research Volume 34.2 June 2010 pp.260-280. Especially pp 264-265.
4. See R. Payre and P.Y. Saunier. A World of cities: Lyon, France. Municipal associations as political resources in the twentieth century. Especially p161. Article in Another Global City: Historical Explorations into the Transnational Municipal; Moment 1850-2000 Shane Ewen and Pierre-Yves Saunier (Ed) (2008)
5. The first office was based at Rue du Moniteur 9, Brussels
6. Discussion with the author. November 2010
7. See Europe 2000 DG Regional Policy Brussels 1991
8. Urbanisation and the Functions of Cities in the European Community. Regional Development Studies 4. European Institute of Urban Affairs, Liverpool John Moores University Brussels 1992
9. Stephen Fox was seconded as a detached national expert from the Scottish office. Much of this section is based on his recollections and material
10. Bram Peper. **EUROCITIES** magazine no.8. Summer 1998
11. Ibid
12. Discussion with the author December 2010
13. Discussion with the author July 2010
14. This calculation is based in the majority of cities on the official figures for that municipality presented in the Urban Audit 2005
15. Discussion with the author October 2010
16. In their survey in 2007, 11 of the top 20 cities were from Europe. In their survey in 2010, 14 out of the 25 top cities were from Europe with 13 of them being **EUROCITIES** members. See Monocle issue 05 volume 1. July/August 2007; issue 35 volume 4. July/August 2010
17. See The URBACT Tribune. www.urbact.eu

VIENNAANTWERPBRUSSELCITY&CAPITALREGIONCHARLEROIGHENT
KORTRIJKBANJALUKASARAJEVOBOURGASPLOVDIVSOFIAVARNA
NICOSIARIJEKAZAGREBBRNOOSTRAVAPILSENPRAGUEAARHUS
COPENHAGENTALLINNESPOOHELSINKIOULUTAMPERETURKU
VANTAAAMIENSBORDEAUXGRENOBLELILLELYONMARSEILLENANCY
NANTESNICEPARISREIMSRENNESSAINTETIENNESAINTDENISDEL
REUNIONSTRASBOURGTOULOUSETOURSTIBLISIBERLINBREMEN
BONNCHEMNITZCOLOGNEDORTMUND DRESDENDUSSELDORF
FRANKFURTAMMAINHAGENHAMBURGLEIPZIGMANNHEIMMUNICH
MUNSTERNUREMBERGAMAROUSSIONATHENSHERA KLION
BUDAPESTDUBLINBOLOGNACESENAFLORENCE
GENOAMILANMODENANAPLES PALERMOROME
SALERNOTURINVENICERIGAVILNIUSLUXEMBOURGSKOPJE
AMSTERDAMBRABANTSTADEINDHOVENNETWERHSTADTWENTE
PARKSTADLIMBURGROTTERDAMTHEHAGUEUTRECHTBERGENOSLO
BIALYSTOKBYDGOSZCZGDANSKKATOWICEKRAKOWLODZLUBLIN
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