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Delivering the EU's 'ambitious urban agenda'

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The European Commission's promise of an 'ambitious urban agenda' has the potential to radically reinvent EU cohesion policy, but only if it taps into the full capacities of cities and metropolitan areas.

This was the main message delivered by EUROCIITIES at the Fifth Cohesion Forum 2011, which kicked off today in Brussels.

In her remarks, Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz, Mayor of Warsaw and vice-president of EUROCIITIES, said:

"The EU's 2020 vision for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth will be impossible without smart, sustainable and inclusive cities. If Europe wants to be competitive, it must invest in its cities so that they can perform economically, socially and environmentally. Cohesion policy is central to making that happen."

Today, cities account for 75% of the EU's population, 80% of energy use and 85% of Europe's GDP. Yet currently, only 10% of EU regional funding is dedicated to urban issues. Commenting on this imbalance, EUROCIITIES secretary general Paul Bevan said:

"In today's economic climate, we need to do more with less. By channelling our efforts towards cities - the EU's centres of human capital, skills, creativity, enterprise and innovation - we stand a better chance of making our money go further."

For EUROCIITIES, the commission's proposed 'ambitious urban agenda' must fulfil five conditions to be successful in bringing forward the EU's cohesion policy. It must:

1. Be based on compulsory urban earmarking in mainstream programmes
2. Remain as a development and investment policy for the whole EU
3. Involve cities at every stage of the process
4. Be channelled toward thematic priorities managed under partnerships
5. Improve financial instruments that don't exclude cities

As outlined in our response to the commission's fifth cohesion report, EUROCIITIES' main message is, and remains, "more urban, more impact".

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Note to Editors

- Established in 1986, EUROCIITIES is the network of major European cities. It brings together the local authorities of 140 large cities in 34 European countries. www.eurocities.eu
- EUROCIITIES response to the fifth cohesion report: <http://tinyurl.com/eurocities5thcohesionreport>