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Cities key to social investment package success

Europe's new strategy for social welfare, the Social Investment Package, will only succeed if it involves city governments. This was the key message delivered by EUROCIITIES at the informal meeting of the EU's ministers for employment and social affairs today in Vilnius.

EUROCIITIES senior policy adviser Silvia Ganzerla said:

“City authorities are essential stakeholders in the Social Investment Package. They are responsible for designing and delivering social inclusion and welfare measures for a majority of Europe's citizens. If we want the Social Investment Package to succeed, we need cities to be involved and their role as the front line providers of social policies recognised.”

The Social Investment Package, issued by the European Commission on the 20 February, offers strategic guidance to member states on social policies. It aims to help the EU achieve its Europe 2020 target to lift 20 million people out of poverty. Invited to address the meeting of EU ministers, EUROCIITIES underlined the importance of city administrations in supporting social cohesion.

Many city governments are already delivering innovative and integrated programmes like those recommended by the Social Investment Package. For example one of the best ways of improving the efficiency and effectiveness is to integrate services to avoid duplication and cut red tape. Strong multi-level partnerships, of all layers of government, with business, social partners and users, can also deliver services that better correspond to local needs.

Silvia Ganzerla added:

“Cities want to work in partnership with the European institutions and national governments. We know how to target financial resources for local use, who to work with and which actions to prioritise. This is all crucial when we need to do more with less.”

Cities are home to three quarters of the EU population and account for 85% of the EU's GDP. It is in cities where Europe's job creation potential is the strongest. Yet it is also in urban environments where stark social inequalities and pockets of deprivation exist. Too often the EU uses statistical data that might overlook these pockets of deprivation because it is based on aggregate information from national or regional statistics. EUROCIITIES encourages the European institutions to collect information on social trends directly from cities to better evaluate social inclusion policies.

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Notes to editors

- EUROCIITIES position paper on the Social Investment Package: <http://bit.ly/11ZQor9>
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EUROCITIES is the political platform for major European cities towards the European institutions. We network the local governments of over 130 of Europe's largest cities and 40 partner cities that between them govern some 130 million citizens across 35 countries.