



An EU urban agenda

Engaging cities for a smart, sustainable and inclusive Europe

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Executive summary

An EU urban agenda must clearly recognise the strengths and challenges of cities and metropolitan areas, including their vital role in delivering the Europe 2020 vision for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. An urban agenda is ultimately not just about cities, but about the ability of the EU as a whole to reach those strategic objectives. Empowering our cities and their surrounding areas to perform better as drivers of growth, as frontline managers of social inclusion, and as key players in climate action, will support Europe's overall competitiveness and strengthen territorial cohesion.

Respecting subsidiarity, an EU urban agenda must provide a framework for cities to contribute to policies and deliver the strategic objectives. It must support the integrated approach in cities by improving the coordination of initiatives that impact on cities and their surrounding areas. It needs a practical approach that strengthens the direct dialogue between the EU, member states and cities, joining up and engaging the different levels of government.

EUROCITIES is committed to engaging actively in further debate around an EU urban agenda. Representing 133 of Europe's major cities, including most EU capital and second tier cities, we want to make sure that an EU urban agenda goes beyond member state level and is relevant to, and supported at, city level

As cities, we offer:

- ✓ Democratic legitimacy. As the level of government closest to citizens and home to 75% of the population, we connect EU strategies and policies with the local level.
- ✓ Expertise. As leaders of sustainable integrated urban development, we hold the knowledge of what is needed and what works on the ground that EU initiatives must be based on.
- ✓ Capacity building. Through our networking activities, we share knowledge of good practice on tackling urban challenges and implementing EU policies across Europe.
- ✓ Commitment. We will engage and invest resources in EU policy developments that are based on collaboration and partnership with cities.

As cities, we ask:

- The European Commission to:
 - Appoint an urban envoy to strengthen the practical coordination and joining up of policies with an urban dimension - and the impact assessment of these - within the Commission.
 - Strengthen the direct involvement of cities in EU policy development, based on current good practices. Priority should be given to collaboration and partnership work with cities, moving beyond consultations.
- Meetings with city mayors and study visits to urban areas should be included in commissioners' programmes when they travel to member states, to increase awareness of the urban dimension of policies. Involving cities in the co-organisation

of these visits will also guarantee a meaningful experience, maximum effectiveness and impact.

- Hold biennial EU urban summits, which should engage cities and member states jointly and provide opportunities for cities to contribute to EU policy developments at both political and expert level.
- Develop better data on cities and urban development through the urban audit. This should become an up-to-date and easy-to-use instrument to help identify data on the obstacles for cities in delivering the Europe 2020 objectives.
- Publish a communication before the end of the current mandate outlining how an EU urban agenda that engages cities, member states and other stakeholders will be taken forward by the Commission.
- Develop an action plan in the first year of the new mandate, setting out the concrete steps the Commission will take to strengthen the engagement of cities and the coordination of policies with an urban dimension.
- Our political partners and representatives in the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions to:
 - Set up a strong urban intergroup as soon as possible in the new European Parliament mandate. The new intergroup should have a strategic agenda to strengthen the recognition of the urban dimension of EU policies across all relevant parliamentary committees.
 - Develop a strong and consistent position in the CoR, recognising the vital role of cities and their surrounding areas in the EU, including in terms of integrated territorial development.
 - Jointly continue to support efforts at EU level to engage cities directly in policy development and to join up EU policies with a direct or indirect impact on cities.
- Our member states to:
 - Strengthen their exchanges on national city programmes that successfully support cities delivering the Europe 2020 objectives, in particular within the Urban Development Group (UDG).
 - Involve their main cities in strategic policy development and programming, especially with regards to the National Reform Programmes and the partnership agreements that determine the investment priorities for the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF).
 - Hold regular informal council meetings for ministers in charge of urban development, prepared by the UDG, linked to the biennial urban summits.
 - Develop coordination structures for policies with an urban dimension across relevant ministries - where these do not already exist - to ensure a joined up policy approach at national level.
 - Engage cities in 'early warnings' about forthcoming EU initiatives that may impact on cities.

Introduction - why do we need an EU urban agenda?

Although there is no competence at EU level on urban development, there is a growing number of European initiatives, funding programmes, campaigns and policies that address various urban challenges. These initiatives, which have a direct or indirect impact on cities, reflect the recognition of the role of cities in the EU as drivers of the European economy and of innovation. At the same time, cities are the key players in combatting climate change and the frontline managers of social cohesion. At the European Commission's urban forum on 17-18 February 2014 ('CITIES - Cities of Tomorrow: Investing in Europe'), both Commission president, José Manuel Barroso, and commissioner for regional and urban policy, Johannes Hahn, explicitly stated that if Europe doesn't succeed in its cities, it won't succeed at all.

EU initiatives in areas such as entrepreneurship, culture, the digital agenda, air quality, transport, youth unemployment, migration, and a low carbon economy all come together in cities, which manage this diverse agenda on the ground. An urban agenda can help develop a practical and coordinated approach to EU policy-making by improving how the different policies and programmes are joined up. Addressing urban challenges in an integrated, joined-up manner ensures better, quicker results and value for money. Previous intergovernmental agreements, such as the Leipzig Charter and the Toledo Declaration, have provided the basis for better recognition of the advantages of an integrated approach in cities.

Commissioner Hahn was mandated in 2012 to oversee the coordination of policies with an urban dimension, and DG REGIO has put mechanisms in place to implement this coordination within the Commission. These measures are positive first steps, which can be strengthened by an EU urban agenda, recognising the broad scope of EU policies with an urban dimension. A better understanding of the urban dimension of policies must become a central part of policy making at EU level.

Scale and size matter when we talk about strengths and challenges in urban areas. The issue of air quality is much more acute in our larger cities, for example. Social inclusion challenges are also more prominent in our biggest cities, where greater numbers of people facing multiple disadvantages are concentrated. At the same time, productivity increases with the size of the city. The potential for achieving progress on smart, sustainable and inclusive growth is greatest in our major cities. An urban agenda must take into account the leading role that Europe's large cities and their surrounding areas play to this end.

An urban agenda is ultimately not just about the cities. The strategic challenges cities face in terms of economic development, employment, mobility, and environment go beyond the administrative city borders. Cities and their surrounding areas depend on each other to find effective policy solutions, and strengthening their functional relations can significantly speed up development. Cities that perform well benefit their surrounding areas as drivers of growth and innovation and as service providers, supporting the overall competitiveness and territorial cohesion of their regions and in the EU.

What should an urban agenda be?

Respecting the principle of subsidiarity, an EU urban agenda should be based on a practical, coherent and coordinated approach. It should be a framework for engaging cities directly at EU level in developing and delivering more joined up policies, as well as for strengthening the recognition and coordination of EU policies with an urban dimension.

Urgent challenges in cities, including youth unemployment, air quality, congestion and climate change, will change over time. An urban agenda must be able to respond to this. It cannot be a static list of policy areas with an urban dimension. Instead, it must apply a broad scope, taking into account the range of social, environmental, and economic policies that impact directly and indirectly on cities. It must recognise what cities have to offer in terms of delivering strategic EU objectives, and consider how best to develop EU level support for cities to tackle some of the most urgent priorities.

An EU urban agenda should have four overall objectives:

- empowering cities to deliver the Europe 2020 objectives
- promoting a joined-up approach to policy making
- strengthening integrated territorial development
- engaging cities directly and alongside member states in policy development

A successful urban agenda requires commitment and engagement from all levels of government and other stakeholders. The following section sets out concrete proposals to achieve this, focusing initially on how cities themselves already are, and can continue to, contributing to an EU urban agenda.

Cities and an EU urban agenda

Cities already play a role in developing some EU policies, although not systematically. As the level of government closest to the citizens and as strategic leaders in sustainable integrated urban development, cities have a lot to offer both when it comes to democratic legitimacy and understanding what works on the ground. An urban agenda must make the most of the expertise and leadership present in cities. It should recognise, streamline, and strengthen the role and engagement of cities in three areas:

Engagement in EU policy development

Different EU initiatives engage cities in various ways. This can be for example through the involvement of city and city-network representatives in European expert groups or, although applied rarely, through the engagement of cities in EU-level peer reviews of national policies. Different methods have different benefits, including promoting cross sector partnerships and integrating policies, joining up the city, member state and EU level in policy evaluation, or ensuring that new legislative proposals take into account evidence and expertise from city experts as illustrated in the examples below.

Examples of city involvement in EU policy development

European Innovation Partnership (EIP) on Smart Cities and Communities

This partnership is an innovative way of bringing together a wide range of sectors and stakeholders, under the joint facilitation of three Commission directorates general (MOVE, CONNECT and ENER). The EIP seeks to engage stakeholders, including cities, directly in the Commission's development of policies and programmes within a flexible and informal structure. It is a challenging format as it involves different sectors, different levels of governance and a very broad group of stakeholders. However, it has the potential to help build partnerships and integrate policies across different sectors. Tasked with scaling up the rollout of smart city solutions in the EU, the EIP comprises both a stakeholder platform and a high level group (HLG). Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz, mayor of Warsaw and president of EUROCITIES, represents both her city and our network in the HLG. Initially, only few cities were directly involved in the supporting 'sherpa group', including Barcelona, Almere and Gothenburg, but steps were taken in 2013 to engage more cities. London, Berlin and Tallinn have since joined, increasing the efforts to draw on cities' expertise and account for their needs.

Review of national education programmes

Since 2012, EUROCITIES has been a member of the Commission's stakeholder group that has supported the work of the two thematic working groups (early school leaving - ESL, and early childhood education and care - ECEC). The working groups were set up under the open method of coordination in the framework of the Education and Training 2020 work programme. Gathering representatives from member state ministries of education, they are key to shaping the EU policies in the field of ESL and ECEC. City representatives regularly take part in the meetings and the work of the stakeholder group. More recently, the thematic working group on ESL was replaced with a group on school policies, which will continue the work on ESL. In April 2014, EUROCITIES members presented their URBACT project, PREVENT, providing local expertise at the first meeting of the thematic working group. The presentation led to the organisation of a study visit on cities' experiences in tackling ESL in Antwerp in June 2014. This helped strengthen the exchanges between cities, their national ministries and the Commission, joining up the three levels of governance.

Commission's expert group on air quality

EUROCITIES participated in the five meetings of the Commission's stakeholder expert group on the EU air policy review, between 6 June 2011 and 3 April 2013. The group provided input into the Commission's proposal on the air policy review, published on 18 December 2013. EUROCITIES air quality experts from Berlin, London and Malmo offered a city perspective, supported by input from the EUROCITIES working group on air quality. Our city experts were able to provide information about local air quality measures and the support cities need from other levels of government to improve air quality in Europe as a whole, beyond their own cities. As they reported back on proceedings to the wider network, they shared their understanding of the challenges at EU level when reviewing the air quality policy. The involvement of cities as network representatives in EU expert groups therefore has an important multiplier effect that works both ways.

Generally, collaborative approaches that engage cities and their networks in upstream policy development and move beyond simple stakeholder consultations will help ensure that policies match the needs on the ground. Direct engagement will also help raise awareness in cities about new initiatives, securing their effective implementation on the ground. Most cities will have to focus their engagement on a set of priority areas. However, it is important that cities with a particular expertise or that are facing specific challenges are heard at EU level. Network organisations can help channel relevant cities through the system based on a thorough understanding of the strengths and challenges in different cities. They also play an important multiplier role, ensuring the views and experiences of cities participating in, for example, expert groups are based on, and disseminated to, a much wider group of cities.

Implementation of EU policies

Cities work on an everyday basis with the implementation of EU policies and programmes, managing a diverse EU policy agenda on the ground. Cities know that policy coordination is challenging but necessary. This is true for all levels of governance, and cities work on a daily basis to improve coordination and remove obstacles to joined-up policies as far as possible at local level. This includes working in partnership with their surrounding areas to develop effective solutions to challenges that often go beyond the administrative boundaries of the city. As the economic drivers in their functional areas, cities can play a vital role in facilitating partnerships that are of mutual benefit to both the hub city and its partners.

Cities and their surrounding areas will be instrumental in taking forward some of EU's strategic programmes in the new budget period for 2014-2020. These include the new instruments related to the urban dimension of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), and the Trans-European Networks, in which cities are the functional nodes without which the wider networks will not work efficiently. They will also play a vital role in meeting the EU's long term climate and energy targets and in the further implementation of the European Innovation Partnership on Smart Cities and Communities. And through a partnership between EUROCITIES and the Commission's DG EMPL, cities will help provide the evidence base informing the implementation of the EU Social Investment Package.

Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) in Warsaw metropolitan area

Warsaw is working with 37 of its surrounding municipalities to prepare an integrated development plan for the metropolitan area, to be implemented through an ITI. The Mazovia region, using €134m in ERDF and ESF co-financing, will support the implementation. It will benefit Warsaw and its surrounding areas, which are partly rural, by providing for bicycle tracks, park and ride facilities, supporting job creation, start ups, innovation, investment lots, economic promotion, e-tickets, e-administration, e-learning and e-health. In February 2014, a formal ITI partnership was established based on 38 municipal council decisions, giving leadership to the hub city Warsaw. The accession to the partnership was by choice for each municipality. As an incentive to join, national government has given funding priority to projects proposed within the ITI, rather than to similar projects proposed by municipalities outside the ITI. The ITI will be ready for implementation in January 2015, following 18 months of joint preparations.

In many cases, however, cities will only be able to fully play a role in taking forward new EU instruments, if those are supported at member state level. In the case of ITIs there are measures in place to promote delegation of responsibility to cities, and the establishment of real multi-level partnership, as well as to facilitate an integrated approach on the ground. Some member states have nevertheless decided not to make use of the instrument despite a request from their cities, hampering the potential impact of the ITIs.

Exchange of experiences and capacity building

The Commission clearly recognises the value of exchanges between cities through URBACT and the new urban development network. City-led networks, such as EUROCITIES, also play a vital role in facilitating the exchange of experience on EU policies and urban challenges more broadly, and by spreading innovation. Our network provides a permanent structure for ongoing exchanges between city experts and politicians. How are other cities implementing the EU directive on waste management? Can we do more to reach EU air quality requirements? How do other cities support their local entrepreneurs? What can we do as cities to become more energy efficient? In addition to building capacity and raising awareness of EU policies with an urban dimension, these exchanges improve the implementation of EU policies on the ground.

Sharing sustainable energy experiences and solutions across Europe

More than 300 city experts and decision makers participated in the CASCADE peer-to-peer learning and networking programme on local energy leadership. Funded by Intelligent Energy Europe and led by EUROCITIES, the programme ran from September 2013 to April 2014.

CASCADE networking has helped improve cities' existing projects and policies, and has inspired new ones. For example, the CASCADE peer review in Tampere helped the city set more ambitious energy and climate mitigation targets (GHGs down by 40% by 2025 instead of 20% by 2020). In Mannheim, a CASCADE study visit led to improvements in the way the city communicates its energy efficient services to citizens. Participating cities have recommended that the CASCADE peer-to-peer methodology, which helps cities learn from each other, should be disseminated both at national and European level.

The 19 cities that have worked together as CASCADE partners are committed to continuing the collaboration and sharing of experiences once the project ends.

CASCADE: www.cascadecities.eu

Implementation by the European Commission

Appointing an EU urban envoy within the European Commission

The increasing cross-sector coordination of policies with an urban dimension at European level must be reinforced. The commissioner for regional and urban policy, who oversees the coordination of urban issues, should be allocated the resources to drive this process and to ensure that the urban dimension is taken into account in new initiatives.

To support this, the Commission should appoint an urban envoy to monitor the practical implementation of such coordination. The envoy should maintain close links with both the implementation of Europe 2020 and the territorial agenda, and have a remit that is both horizontal (engaging all relevant policy sectors) and vertical (engaging all levels of government). The envoy must become a driving force within the Commission's inter-service group, which currently coordinates policies with an urban dimension across the different directorate generals. The role must also extend to impact assessments, guaranteeing that the urban dimension of forthcoming legislation is adequately assessed. Similar coordinator roles exist in other policy areas, notably in justice and home affairs, where the Commission has coordinators for children's rights and anti-trafficking.

Coordination procedures must be fully transparent. They should involve cities and city networks directly where this can help inform about the scope of the urban agenda and policies that work on the ground. This can facilitate a better understanding of strengths and challenges in cities, as well as the requirements for policy solutions that would support an integrated approach in cities.

Strengthening the dialogue with cities at EU level

Currently, different methods of engagement with cities are used in different policy areas, as outlined above. In general, consultation and partnership processes need to be significantly strengthened and systematically applied as early as possible and across a wider range of policy areas, including on impact assessments. The Commission should exchange internally as well as with cities on the different consultation and cooperation models, and on how to develop them further. In the longer term, an urban agenda should support a move from testing partnership approaches that involve cities to assessing the impact of these partnerships. The evidence of the impact should be found in the quality of policies being developed at EU level and implemented locally.

Engagement with cities must be geographically balanced, because cities' strengths and challenges vary in different areas of the EU. In some cases, when this requires travelling to Brussels, the Commission should reimburse costs. This would give cities from all member states the opportunity to engage. For some cities, such a direct dialogue at EU level complements their engagement with regional and national policy development. For others, it can help inspire similar processes nationally.

In addition, meetings with mayors and study visits to urban areas should be included more systematically in commissioners' programmes when they travel to member states. Our network can help facilitate this. It would be an effective way to ensure that commissioners across the board are aware of the city perspective of the European policies for which they are responsible. Involving cities in the co-organisation of these visits will also guarantee a meaningful experience, maximum effectiveness and impact.

Improving data on cities and urban development

Currently, data is mainly collected at national and regional level for the purpose of EU developments. However, Eurostat collects some data on cities, which is used in the urban audit to compare the performance of urban areas. The survey carried out for the Commission's 'State of European Cities' report is also an important source of information about our cities, as are some ESPON studies on cities and territorial development.

Still, there is great potential to do more. It is increasingly recognised that data collection must take place where policies are implemented - in many cases at local level. The collection of flow data - measuring relations between cities and their surrounding areas - is also becoming increasingly important to improve understanding of functional areas. Whereas many larger cities hold a lot of data about local development, only the European Commission, together with the OECD, has the capacity to gather comparable data at European scale, and to analyse that data, turning it into evidence for policy developments.

To this end, the urban audit should become an active and accessible tool. It should provide regular, up-to-date information on the performance of cities related to the Europe 2020 objectives. The urban data must be set against the national context to allow for comparison between the performance of urban areas in relation to their member states. In particular, data needs to make it possible to assess the ability of cities to deliver the objectives, identifying the barriers and obstacles preventing them from doing so. The data analysis should be tied in with the wider process of the European semester, and should contribute to evidence for recommendations. The process could be piloted in collaboration with a select group of cities in 2015-16.

Regular urban summits

The urban forum on 17-18 February 2014 should set a precedent for biennial urban summits, bringing stakeholders from all levels of governance and different sectors together. The format of the summit needs to be significantly developed in order to better engage both cities and member states. EUROCITIES helped organise a side event during the February forum. We would be pleased to commit to closer involvement in future events, ensuring they engage cities at both political and policy expert level. The urban summits should become working sessions with real opportunities for cities to contribute to the debates with commissioners and EU policy experts across the relevant policy areas. The summits should help assess the impact of EU policies on cities and urban areas, and how best to involve cities in forthcoming initiatives. Urban summits should stimulate a dialogue between European, national and city level government.

Member states and the EU urban agenda

An urban agenda respecting the subsidiarity principle will clearly not affect member state competences on urban development. Nevertheless, in view of the range and scope of EU initiatives impacting directly or indirectly on cities, member states must play a role in facilitating the joining up of policies on the ground. To this end, there are some practical steps that member states can take jointly and nationally to support an EU urban agenda:

- Member states should strengthen their exchanges of experience on national city programmes that empower cities to deliver the Europe 2020 objectives. The debate should include consideration of competences and resources at local level to tackle urban challenges. These exchanges could take place in the urban development group (UDG), which is chaired by the rotating EU presidencies and gathers national ministries in charge of urban development. The presidencies should make it standard practice to integrate city

presentations in their meetings, providing good practices of tackling urban challenges and policy implementation on the ground, which can inspire national policies across the EU.

- The same group should take the lead in organising regular informal Council meetings of ministers in charge of urban development. The meetings can be linked to the biennial urban summits, endorse the work of the UDG on different urban challenges, and help sustain political momentum in the EU on urban matters.
- Taking inspiration from the European Commission's inter-service group on urban matters, similar coordination structures and procedures should be established where they do not already exist at national level. This coordination should engage other ministries on the urban dimension of the policies they lead on, to ensure a joined up approach nationally.
- Member states can engage cities in an 'early warning' procedure on forthcoming EU policy initiatives. This process would strengthen national and city level exchanges about the urban dimension of new initiatives and their impact on cities, which should inform the negotiation processes at EU level.
- Member states would gain efficiency if they were to systematically and directly involve cities in strategic policy development and programming, notably in relation to the National Reform Programmes (NRP), in the framework of the Europe 2020 strategy, and within the partnership agreements (PA) that define the investment priorities of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF). However, the current governance processes in many member states diminish the role that cities can play. Europe's driving forces of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth - its major cities - need to be partners in the structures and processes that determine policy and investment priorities in their member states, and not just be consulted. Partnership requirements with sub-national authorities, including cities, have been significantly strengthened in the new ESIF. However, evidence from cities suggests that the requirements are far from systematically implemented in the different member states.

The European Parliament's urban intergroup

The European Parliament's urban intergroup has played a strong role in its current mandate in terms of raising awareness of a wide range of urban issues with a link to EU policy developments. With its more than 60 partner organisations, it helps to illustrate the scope of the urban agenda. The members of the intergroup played a vital role in securing the urban dimension of the revised ESIF.

A new European Parliament would also benefit from an urban intergroup to ensure continued coordination across the relevant committees of policies with an urban dimension, and an opportunity for MEPs' to issues of urban development in the EU. A new intergroup will have to clearly define its strategic priorities for the next five years in order to have a strong impact on an EU urban agenda.

The intergroup should build on the experiences of previous years to develop a programme of focused activities that promotes dialogue between MEPs and cities at both national and EU level, and that also strengthens the recognition of the urban dimension in different policies.

Holding as many events as possible in Brussels, organised by the Intergroup, would be beneficial for stakeholder involvement.

The CoR with a clear urban perspective

The Committee of the Regions (CoR) has an important consultative role in EU decision making. It represents the diversity of Europe's local and regional authorities, and promotes multilevel governance and an integrated approach to policy making.

The CoR has, over the past couple of years, focused some of its work on the role of cities and urban areas. Its 2012 summit, for example, focused on the urban fabric in the 21st century. The advisory body has also been vital in the preparations for the midterm assessment of the Europe 2020 strategy and in pushing for a greater use of territorial impact assessments, including an urban dimension.

The CoR is however mainly a body of regions. Initiatives and opinions demonstrating a support for and recognition of the role of Europe's cities remain limited and are sometimes contradicted by the line taken in key areas such as cohesion policy.

The forthcoming own-initiative report on an integrated approach towards an urban agenda in the EU is potentially an important new step. It should establish a clear line on the role of cities and urban areas which, when endorsed by the CoR, can become a reference point for future initiatives, also regarding broader issues of regional development.

Recommendations for next steps

To ensure tangible outcomes from the consultations and discussions around an EU urban agenda, the Commission should publish a communication before the end of its mandate outlining how it will take forward the agenda on the basis of inputs from cities, member states, and other stakeholders. Based on the objective of delivering the Europe 2020 strategy, the new Commission should publish an action plan in 2015 to continue the work on developing mechanisms to engage with cities and strengthen coordination of EU policies with an urban dimension.

Member states should, in consultation with their major cities, consider how they can support the implementation of the urban agenda. This can be both through their exchanges of experience between countries and at home, and by building partnerships with their cities delivering EU policies on the ground.

EUROCITIES will continue to engage actively in the process as it develops. Our members are 133 of Europe's major cities; cities ranging from 250,000 inhabitants, like Espoo in Finland, to London, with seven million inhabitants. Our members include most of Europe's capital cities and second tier cities. With our membership, we are well placed to ensure that an EU urban agenda is relevant to, and supported at, local level.