



URBAN@IT launch, Bologna

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Introduction

- I am pleased to bring EURO CITIES' perspective to the discussions. We kicked off the debate at the Commission's Urban Forum in February in Brussels and we have since maintained an engaged dialogue in our network. EURO CITIES brings together more than 130 member and 40 partner cities, including most EU capital and second tier cities. Ensuring the ongoing engagement of all of our major cities in this process is crucial.
- We welcome the Commission's continued efforts to engage with stakeholders in shaping such an agenda. Its recent communication rightly points out that the performance of our cities has a strong impact on the EU's ability to reach the Europe 2020 objectives. We are particularly thankful to DG REGIO and Mr Piskorz' team for their strong engagement in urban Europe.
- Cities are the level of government closest to citizens. As EURO CITIES, we connect EU strategies and policies with the local level. Cities hold the knowledge of what is needed and what works on the ground. Through the activities of our network, they share knowledge of good practices on tackling urban challenges and implementing EU policies. This helps build local capacity.
- EURO CITIES is fully committed to support the shaping of an EU urban agenda. With the direct contribution from cities, we can make sure that an urban agenda takes a practical and concrete approach, reflecting urban priorities on the ground.

Main points of EURO CITIES' position

- We would not support an urban agenda that generates more legislation for cities to implement. Instead, it should add value by creating a framework for better coordination of EU policies with an urban dimension, and involving cities in policy and programme development. We believe that an EU urban agenda must be about:
 1. empowering cities to deliver the Europe 2020 objectives for a smart, sustainable and inclusive Europe,
 2. promoting a joined-up approach to policy making and
 3. engaging cities directly and alongside member states in EU policy development.

Proposals for the Commission

At EU level, there are some specific initiatives the new Commission could take to move towards an EU urban agenda:

- We would like to see the Commission appoint an urban envoy to strengthen the practical coordination of policies with an urban dimension within the Commission. Commissioner Hahn was given the political responsibility for this coordination in 2012. DG REGIO supports him in this role, and it is now time to back the commitment with sufficient resources to ensure an impact. An urban envoy should become a driving force in joining up both policies and different levels of government.
- The Commission should also strengthen the direct involvement of cities in EU policy development. Priority should be given to collaboration and partnership work with cities, moving beyond stakeholder 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 a wider range of policies.
- We would like to see biennial urban summits at EU level, involving stakeholders from all levels of government and different sectors. The summits should provide opportunities for cities to contribute to EU policy development at both political and expert level.

Member states

- We believe that member states should strengthen their exchanges of experience on national programmes for urban policies that empower cities to deliver the Europe 2020 objectives. These exchanges could take place in the urban development group (UDG), which is chaired by the rotating EU presidencies and should involve cities directly.
- Member states should also strengthen coordination between sector ministries of policies with an urban dimension, where this doesn't already exist.
- We would also like to see regular informal Council meetings of ministers in charge of urban development to sustain political momentum in the EU on urban challenges and opportunities.
- Member states should also increasingly involve their main cities in strategic policy development and programming, especially with regards to the National Reform Programmes (NRP) and the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF). 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
- These proposals to member states and the Commission will help create a framework for joining up policies with an urban dimension and engaging cities in policy development. They are practical first steps of an EU urban agenda that would make sense to cities, and the first steps towards tackling the immediate challenges around strengthening policy coordination and the involvement of cities.

An EU urban agenda based on evidence

- An urban agenda must be based on solid data and evidence of both urban challenges and the solutions that already exist in our cities to tackle those challenges.
- Currently, data is mainly collected at national and regional level for the purpose of EU policy development. However, it is increasingly recognised that data collection must take place where policies are implemented - in many cases at local level. 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 development.
- There is a lot of information in the urban audit, but there is still potential to do more. The urban audit should become an active and accessible tool providing regular, up-to-date information on cities related to the Europe 2020 objectives. Data should make it possible to assess the ability of cities to deliver these objectives, and identify the barriers and obstacles that prevent them from doing so.
- Evidence is not just about statistics. It is also about the practical solutions to urban challenges that are taken forward in our cities. These good practices are often developed through EU funded projects (e.g. Implementoring, CASCADE). When experiences are exchanged more broadly in networks such as EUROCITIES, we help build capacity not just in those cities that were directly involved as project partners.

Next steps on an EU urban agenda

- The next steps on an EU urban agenda will involve identifying more clearly what an urban agenda should be about, including the urban policy areas of priority for cities, member states and the EU. We also need a more detailed reflection on how we can take forward actions in those policy areas, identifying the actions that actually add value on the ground in our cities.
- At EUROCITIES, we are working across our network to take those questions forward. We want to contribute to the EU urban agenda based on the needs and the solutions that are already available on the ground. It is challenging work, but we have both the experience and the expertise, across a broad range of policy areas, to help shape an EU urban agenda. We also have a strong political backing from our mayors, who want to see tangible outcomes from an EU urban agenda.

SEISMIC (Society engagement in science - mutual learning in cities)

- The FP7-funded project aims to connect urban people to urban research. It is a mutual learning exercise in which city stakeholders have an opportunity to influence research policy, and researchers can explain the fruits of their work to beneficiaries. To enable this exchange, SEiSMiC has set up urban stakeholder networks in 10 countries (AT, BE, CZ, DE, HU, IT, NL, SE, UK, TR).

- A wide range of people are involved in the urban stakeholder networks, including artists, activists, academics, policy makers, social entrepreneurs, museum curators, social workers and more. Each network will identify issues of common concern that are also linked to the Europe 2020 goals for employment, education, climate change, research and innovation, and social inclusion. The objective is to think about urban development in Europe in a socially innovative way, considering solutions to social challenges while also empowering society to act on them.
- Through the national network meetings and other events, participants will have a chance to influence the European research agenda, the activities of JPI Urban Europe and others. In turn, European research institutes will have a chance to better connect with the constituencies they serve, ensuring that research priorities are in line with social needs.
- EUROCITIES is a partner in the project, leading on the “policy watch” work package. We provide information and updates on the state of play of urban-related policies at European level. We also keep an eye on national policies and the international context, and follow research trends in social innovation.

Concluding remarks

- An urban agenda is ultimately not just about cities. The strategic challenges cities face in terms of economic development, employment, mobility, and environment go beyond the city borders. Cities and their surrounding areas depend on each other to find effective policy solutions, and 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 the EU.
- Therefore, an EU urban agenda is about much more than its cities: it is about the EU’s ability to deliver its strategic objectives for a smart, sustainable and inclusive Europe.