



## **EUROCTIES - URBAN Intergroup**

### **Dinner debate**

**25 February 2015**

#### **An EU urban agenda - how to make it work**

Venue: Radisson Blu Hotel, Rue d'Idalie 35, 1050 Brussels

#### **Programme**

19.30 Cocktail reception

20.00 Welcome by MEP Lambert van Nistelrooij, vice-president of the URBAN Intergroup and Karine Daniel, deputy Mayor of Nantes and President of EUROCTIES

20:15 Working dinner around the themes of

- Climate change and air quality
- Sustainable urban mobility
- Work - the role of cities
- Investment and income generation in cities
- Social investment and innovation in cities

21:30 Concluding remarks by Anna Lisa Boni, Secretary General, EUROCTIES

MEP Kerstin Westphal, rapporteur on the resolution on the urban dimension of EU policy, will make a brief intervention during the course of the dinner.

The discussion tables will be jointly hosted by a EUROCTIES politician and an MEP, who will start by introducing everyone and subsequently launch the debate.

The European Commission will be represented by Nicola De Michelis, Director in charge of Inclusive Growth, Urban and Territorial Development and Northern Europe in the Regional and Urban Policy Directorate General.

A EUROCTIES member of staff will take notes at all tables which will feed into a summary

of the debates.

## **The debates - introduction**

Discussions on an EU urban agenda were officially kicked off in February 2014 at the Urban Forum organised by the European Commission. A lot of the debate has since then focused on the broader governance perspectives regarding an urban agenda. There appears to be a general consensus that more can be done at EU level to coordinate initiatives that impact on cities. There is also wide-spread agreement of the need to involve cities more in EU policy making.

However, the challenge for an EU urban agenda will be to demonstrate added value for cities and the EU more generally, but also for the citizens. It can do so by better joining up local urban solutions with EU level challenges and vice-versa. The objective of the dinner debate is to move the political discussion a step further by bringing together local and EU level perspectives on both potential content and added value of an EU urban agenda. To this end, the debate will focus on five cross-cutting themes in which the role and performance of cities impact on the EU's ability to meet its broader strategic objectives for a smart, inclusive and sustainable Europe by 2020:

### **1) Climate change and air quality**

CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are highest in cities, but their dense populations also mean policies for reducing them can have the greatest impact. Many cities are leading the transition to a low carbon, green and resilient economy, with local sourcing and a more circular economy. This makes cities central to achieving the Europe 20/20/20 objectives, which is recognised in a number of EU initiatives such as the Covenant of Mayors, Mayors' Adapt and the European Innovation Partnership for Smart Cities and Communities.

As the level of government closest to the citizens, cities can drive the shift towards more sustainable behaviour, cleaner air, and zero or low carbon mobility solutions, including walking and cycling, public transport, and alternative fuels. But air pollution is a case in point: local action alone cannot meet the challenges. Harmful pollutants can travel a long way, and the causes of poor air quality are often beyond the control of cities. Cities - and our citizens - depend on national and EU level action reducing harmful pollutants. This would make a big difference to our citizens' health, and to the attractiveness, quality of life and competitiveness of our cities.

- Tackling air pollution in cities requires concerted action from all levels of government. EU legislate, cities implement and influence local behaviour. Are member states the missing link to meet the challenges?
- Reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and improving energy efficiency requires integration of actions across different sectors, including energy, transport and ICT. What are the challenges at different levels of government to move beyond sector policies towards integrated actions?

### **2) Sustainable urban mobility**

As Europe's poles of economic activity and innovation, cities are the first and final links of the transport chain for passengers and freight. Cities have rightly been recognised as crucial nodes in the new TEN-T strategy, alongside member states and other stakeholders. Urban mobility has an important contribution to make to Europe's overall transport strategy, not least due to the role sustainable mobility in cities can play in reducing green house gas emissions and contributing to tackling climate change.

The EU has taken a step in the right direction towards a more sustainable and liveable Europe by putting a new emphasis on the urban dimension of the EU transport strategy over the past few years. This has emerged with the recognition of the central role of cities in developing and implementing urban mobility solutions in the Green Paper on Urban Mobility, the Urban Mobility Action Plan and the revised White Paper on Transport.

- How can we maintain the current level of flexibility that cities have to plan urban mobility and to use demand management tools while at the same time ensuring strong support at EU level for sustainable urban mobility?
- How can we foster and strengthen a partnership between different levels of governance to achieve better transport coordination and integration?

### **3) Work - the role of cities**

To create sustainable quality jobs, cities must support innovation at all levels: creating a favourable entrepreneurial environment, putting culture at the heart of urban development, addressing (youth and long term) unemployment, and stimulating education and skills, while continuing to attract a highly-skilled workforce. For cities to offer a good quality of life and allow all citizens to benefit from the opportunities available to them, economic growth must be both sustainable and inclusive.

National and EU initiatives are important to stimulate job creation and developing inclusive labour markets but the city context is crucial to make the initiatives work. Cities understand the reality on the ground across the EU in the places where the majority of people live. They have the potential for targeted supply side interventions and to better match labour market demand and to provide the targeted and tailored support needed for those furthest away from employment, such as the long-term unemployed, single parents and vulnerable groups.

- City administrations hold the knowledge of local circumstances and of tailoring and coordinating integrated services that invest in people for the future. The EU and national governments hold the means to support and capitalise on local solutions. How can we better join up the solutions with the means to more effectively tackle the common challenges?
- Fostering innovation by creating the right conditions for entrepreneurship and SMEs to flourish is a priority for cities, member states and the EU. Is there scope for working together in partnership to better harness to potential of all levels of governance?

### **4) Investments and income generation in cities**

Europe's large cities are its drivers of growth, innovation and jobs. The attractiveness of European cities to investors, creative talent and skilled migrants remains central to the competitiveness of Europe as a whole. Reduced public budgets have forced cities to

diversify their economies, building new partnerships and identifying alternative means of ensuring access to finance and investment. European structural funds remain an important source of public investments in many regions and cities.

The new Commission has made it one of its top priorities to boost investment in the EU to aid economic recovery, create jobs, and drive the competitiveness of the EU. The proposed Investment Package will support both larger strategic infrastructure programmes and SMEs. It demonstrates a new approach to investments in the EU based loans and leveraging private funding rather than grants.

- The new investment package will support infrastructure projects in urban development but are cities equipped to tap into the opportunities for loans and greater use of financial instruments?
- The urban dimension of the new European Structural and Investment Funds is in the process of being implemented across the EU. Can we already now identify the main challenges in this process?

### **5) Social investment and innovation in cities**

For many cities, their diverse populations are a source of strength and creativity, generating economic opportunities locally and abroad, and enhancing cultural attractiveness. Cities design and deliver services for their most vulnerable citizens, so European policies relating to the free movement of people and the Europe 2020 objective of lifting 20 million people out of poverty, impact directly on them. Dealing with growing immigration flows, diversity, ageing populations, urban poverty and disparities, makes cities frontline managers of social cohesion in the EU.

At the same time, the role of city government is changing in terms of its relationship with citizens and other sectors. Modernisation of government and public services through the direct participation and engagement of citizens in e.g. urban development has a huge potential in terms capitalising on the resources of community groups and citizens to engage in the sustainable development of their local urban neighbourhood. Empowering citizens can provide cities with new solutions to tackle their challenges around public services, innovative use of public services and community development. It is also a necessity with regards to rebuilding trust between communities and local governments, a trust on which the EU also depends.

- How can cities become stronger partners in the shaping of European social policy governance, especially in relation to National Reform Programmes and in working more closely with the EU institutions?
- How can EU and local level work together to empower our citizens, strengthen the political engagement and rebuilding trust in our political systems?