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**TEXTS ADOPTED**

*Provisional edition*

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**Urban dimension of EU policies**

**European Parliament resolution of 9 September 2015 on the urban dimension of EU policies (2014/2213(INI))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and in particular Title XVIII thereof,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006<sup>1</sup>,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1301/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on the European Regional Development Fund and on specific provisions concerning the Investment for growth and jobs goal and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006<sup>2</sup>,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on specific provisions for the support from the European Regional Development Fund to the European territorial cooperation goal<sup>3</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 23 June 2011 on the European urban agenda and its future in cohesion policy<sup>4</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 21 February 2008 on the follow-up of the Territorial Agenda and the Leipzig Charter: Towards a European Action Programme for Spatial Development and Territorial Cohesion<sup>1</sup>,

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 320.

<sup>2</sup> OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 289.

<sup>3</sup> OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 259.

<sup>4</sup> OJ C 390 E, 18.12.2012, p. 10.

- having regard to the Communication from the Commission of 18 July 2014 on the urban dimension of EU policies – key features of an EU urban agenda (COM(2014)0490),
- having regard to the Communication from the Commission of 18 June 2014 on the Regulatory Fitness and Performance Programme (REFIT): State of Play and Outlook (COM(2014)0368),
- having regard to the Communication from the Commission of 3 March 2010 on Europe 2020 – A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (COM(2010)2020),
- having regard to the Communication from the Commission of 10 July 2012 entitled ‘Smart cities and communities – European innovation partnership’ (C(2012)4701),
- having regard to the Communication from the Commission of 28 October 1998 on Sustainable Urban Development in the European Union: A Framework for Action (COM(1998)0605),
- having regard to the Communication from the Commission of 6 May 1997 entitled ‘Towards an urban agenda in the European Union’ (COM(1997)0197),
- having regard to the Commission’s sixth report on ‘Economic, social and territorial cohesion: Investment for jobs and growth – Promoting development and good governance in EU regions and cities’, July 2014,
- having regard to the Commission’s report entitled ‘Cities of tomorrow: Investing in Europe’, Brussels, 17-18 February 2014,
- having regard to the Commission’s report entitled ‘Digital Futures – a journey into 2050 visions and policy challenges, cities, villages and communities’, 2014,
- having regard to the Commission’s report entitled ‘Cities of tomorrow: Challenges, visions, way forward’, Brussels, October 2011,
- having regard to the Declaration of Ministers towards the EU Urban Agenda, adopted at the Informal Meeting of EU Ministers Responsible for Territorial Cohesion and Urban Matters of 10 June 2015 in Riga,
- having regard to the Council conclusions adopted in Brussels on 19 November 2014 on the sixth report on ‘Economic, social and territorial cohesion: Investment for jobs and growth’,
- having regard to the Presidency Conclusions adopted at the Informal Meeting of Ministers responsible for cohesion policy of 24-25 April 2014 in Athens,
- having regard to the Polish Presidency Conclusions on the territorial dimension of EU policies and the future cohesion policy, adopted at the Informal Meeting of Ministers responsible for EU cohesion policy, territorial and urban development of 24-25 November 2011 in Poznan,

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<sup>1</sup> OJ C 184 E, 6.8.2009, p. 95.

- having regard to the Territorial agenda of the EU 2020, agreed at the Informal Ministerial Meeting of Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning and Territorial Development of 19 May 2011 in Gödöllő,
  - having regard to the Toledo Declaration, adopted at the Informal Council Meeting of Ministers on urban development of 22 June 2010 in Toledo,
  - having regard to the Leipzig Charter on sustainable European cities, adopted at the Informal Council Meeting of Ministers on urban development of 24-25 May 2007 in Leipzig,
  - having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions of 25 June 2014 on ‘Towards an Integrated Urban Agenda for the EU’,
  - having regard to the opinion of 23 April 2015 of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) on the Communication from the Commission entitled ‘The urban dimension of EU policies – key features of an EU urban agenda’ (COM(2014)0490),
  - having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure,
  - having regard to the report of the Committee on Regional Development and the opinion of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (A8-0218/2015),
- A. whereas in 2014 half the world population<sup>1</sup> and 72 % of the European population were living in urban areas<sup>2</sup>, and by the year 2050 nearly 80 % of the earth’s population will reside in urban areas<sup>3</sup>;
- B. whereas functional urban areas in the EU comprise a unique polycentric structure built around large, medium-sized and small towns, cities and their surrounding areas, thus going beyond the traditional administrative borders to encompass various territories linked by their economic, social, environmental and demographic challenges;
- C. whereas cities, towns and functional urban areas, such as metropolitan areas, not only play an important role in participatory democracy but are also key economic pillars and drivers of jobs for the EU given that innovation and new economic activities often have their origins in the city; whereas they are therefore a major asset for the EU in its relations with other parts of the world but they are also the key areas in which barriers to growth and employment need to be overcome and social exclusion (for example, poorly trained young people in the labour market), lack of accessibility and the degradation of the environment need to be tackled;
- D. whereas cities, towns, functional urban areas and regions are responsible for the biggest proportion of energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions in the EU; whereas, on the other hand, they play a key role in the achievement of improved energy efficiency and self-sufficiency and in the development of new initiatives (such as new forms of economic activity) to encourage urban mobility and competitive, environmentally friendly transport systems, thus promoting growth, employment, social and territorial cohesion, health, safety and security;

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<sup>1</sup> Parag Khanna, Beyond City Limits, Foreign Policy, 6 August 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Eurostat – City Statistics, 2014.

<sup>3</sup> The Vertical Farm, [www.verticalfarm.com](http://www.verticalfarm.com).

- E. whereas some cities are seeing their population age and decline, and face problems due to the scale of the facilities and public services they provide, and others have a growing population, which increases pressure on existing facilities and public services (for example, education) and exacerbates other problems such as (youth) unemployment, social exclusion, traffic congestion, urban sprawl and pollution, which significantly increase commuting time and reduce the quality of life of many Europeans;
- F. whereas some of the main challenges which cities face, relating to economic and social development, climate change, transport and demographic change, can only be tackled through partnerships between the cities and their surrounding areas; whereas the expansion of interlinked areas in recent years, due to developments in the fields of transport and communications in particular, creates a need for the development of tools to promote connectivity;
- G. whereas European policy initiatives have a direct or indirect impact on the sustainable development of cities and urban policy;
- H. whereas around 70 % of European policies and legislation are implemented at local and regional level;
- I. whereas more consistency should be ensured at EU level between different EU policy initiatives and subsidy programmes by making full use of the Common Strategic Framework (Title II, Chapter I, Article 10 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 – Common Provision Regulation) and through better political coordination among and with stakeholders and tiers of government, as the sectoral approach of EU policy can lead to policies and legislation that may not favour functional urban areas;
- J. whereas in 1997 the Commission published a Communication on an urban agenda for the EU<sup>1</sup>, but the role of Europe’s cities in EU policymaking is still under discussion;
- K. whereas in the past, Parliament supported the Commission’s proposal to present an ‘Urban Agenda’ as a framework for future urban policy at European level;
- L. whereas subsidiarity, as defined in the TFEU, as well as multi-level governance, based on coordinated action by the EU, the Member States and regional and local authorities, and the partnership principle, are essential elements for the correct implementation of all EU policies, and whereas engagement of the resources and competences of local and regional authorities should be reinforced accordingly;
- M. whereas the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) regulation (Regulation (EU) No 1301/2013) reinforces the urban dimension of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) by allocating at least 5 % of its financial support to integrated actions for sustainable urban development through the delegation of management tasks to urban authorities, in particular giving them more responsibilities for tasks related at least to the selection of operations by creating tools such as integrated territorial investments (ITIs) and community-led local development (CLLD), by allocating a specific budget for ‘innovative actions’ in order to test new solutions in relation to sustainable urban development, and by establishing an urban development network;

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<sup>1</sup> Communication from the Commission of 6 May 1997, ‘Towards an urban agenda in the European Union’ (COM(1997)0197).

- N. whereas the partnership principle laid down in the Common Provision Regulation (Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013) and the European Code of Conduct obliges the Member States to ensure the early involvement of urban authorities in the EU policymaking process;

### ***The urban dimension of EU policies***

1. Is of the opinion that EU policies should support and enable towns, cities and functional urban areas to express and attain their full potential as motors of economic growth, employment, social inclusion and sustainable development; believes, therefore, that these towns, cities and functional urban areas need to be more closely associated with the entire European policymaking cycle;
2. Asks the Commission and, where appropriate, the Member States to propose ways to introduce an early warning mechanism by adapting available tools and in accordance with Article 6 of the Protocol on the Application of the Principles of Subsidiarity and Proportionality, giving the subnational government the possibility to observe whether the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality have been taken into account, allowing subnational governments to be involved in the policy processes from an early stage and allowing for well-informed territorial development strategies and more efficient implementation of future legislation;

### ***Towards an integrated European Urban Agenda***

3. Welcomes the initiative of the Commission to work towards a European Urban Agenda; supports its establishment as a coherent framework for EU policies with an urban dimension aiming to better link urban solutions with EU challenges, to better adjust sectoral policies and levels of governance, to better target EU funding to the relevant urban challenges and to better assess the territorial impact of sectoral policies; believes that the European Urban Agenda should in particular promote the development of governance solutions best geared to successfully meeting the challenges and objectives of sustainable, economic and socially inclusive development of towns, cities and functional urban areas in Europe;
4. Recognises that although there is no explicit EU competence on urban development, a broad range of EU initiatives impact directly/indirectly on towns, cities and functional urban areas; is therefore of the opinion that well-developed and established national and regional urban policies are a prerequisite for a European Urban Agenda; considers that the latter should constitute a strategy addressing towns, cities and functional urban areas in the EU that, in the long term, would develop into an urban policy at EU level; underlines in this context that urban territorial development should be based on balanced territorial organisation with a polycentric urban structure in line with the EU Territorial Agenda 2020;
5. Is convinced that the European Urban Agenda should be a joint effort by the Commission, the Member States, the local authorities and other stakeholders to rationalise, coordinate and implement EU policies with an urban dimension through a practical, integrated and coordinated, yet flexible, approach, 'in and with' the towns, cities and functional urban areas, taking account of the local territorial specificities and respecting each Member State's institutional architecture;

6. Believes that a European Urban Agenda should be fully in line with the EU's overall objectives and strategy, particularly Europe 2020, and the objectives of territorial cohesion; stresses that administrative borders are becoming less and less pertinent when trying to address development challenges at regional and local level; believes, therefore, that the European Urban Agenda should be inclusive and take clear account of the diversity of territorial entities in the EU and the cross-border and rural-urban linkages, including the services that functional urban areas provide for their surrounding countryside;
7. Urges the Commission to come up with a communication detailing the features of the future European Urban Agenda, based on the 'urban acquis' and the extensive consultation with various stakeholders, including economic and social partners and civil society organisations; asks the Commission to include the European Urban Agenda in its annual work programme;

***Mainstreaming of an integrated territorial development approach into EU policymaking and legislation***

8. Calls on the Commission to apply a more place-based integrated territorial approach when conceptualising new policy initiatives aimed at urban areas, in order to ensure consistency and to empower towns, cities, and functional urban areas to deliver the Europe 2020 objectives of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, by, inter alia, implementing an integrated EU approach to support smart and sustainable projects in European cities, helping to promote social and economic development;
9. Asks the Commission to introduce, as a general rule, a territorial impact assessment on the urban dimension in order to ensure the practical feasibility of all relevant EU policy initiatives at regional and local level, to be receptive to the input from decentralised levels of government when drawing up impact assessments and new policies ('bottom-up approach') and to make sure that all relevant sectoral EU policies adequately address the challenges that towns, cities and functional urban areas face; calls on the Commission to concentrate these territorial impact assessments on the following elements: balanced territorial development, territorial integration, aspects of governance, regulation, implementation at local level, and coherence with other policy objectives;
10. Urges the Commission to systematise and analyse all available data and shared conceptual frameworks ('urban acquis') in order to prevent duplication and inconsistencies and provide a clear definition of integrated sustainable urban development and thus identify the common coherent and transparent EU objectives in this area;
11. Is convinced that in order to be able to assess urban areas more accurately than just on the basis of the GDP indicator, sufficient data must be made available; believes, therefore, that Eurostat should provide and compile more detailed local data and that work should continue on the Urban Audit and similar surveys; calls also on the Commission to work on instruments that could measure the progress and impact of an integrated urban agenda at EU level;
12. Encourages the Commission to reduce the red tape related to the implementation of current EU legislation at local level, and to ensure that all future regulation thoroughly analyses the consequences of its implementation at local level;

***The urban dimension of EU policy instruments and funding***

13. Recalls that the EU's Cohesion Policy and its financial instruments are better equipped to support complex integrated territorial strategies for functional urban areas through shared strategic planning and rules; encourages Member States to make full use of the available new instruments such as ITIs and CLLD, as well as of the new flexible operational programmes (OPs), in order to successfully support the implementation of integrated urban development plans; encourages Member States and the Commission to draw up a coherent set of appropriate indicators to better assess the urban dimension of the implemented operations and initiatives funded by European Structural and Investment Funds;
14. Highlights the need to exploit to a maximum extent the potential of the macro-regional strategies for successful implementation of the integrated urban approach; calls on the Commission to adequately include and integrate aspects of the European Urban Agenda and to stress the urban dimension within EU macro-regional strategies which represent a model for planning and multi-level governance;
15. Regrets that, although the new cohesion policy has legally binding urban-related aspects, especially regarding involvement of cities in the programming phase, the actual participation of city and urban representatives in the shaping of the policy is weak, and believes it can be improved by an early involvement in the policy processes, for example through consultation, evaluation and exchange of best practices and experiences; calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure the application of the partnership principle (also taking into account the European code of conduct on partnership (Article 5.3 of the Common Provision Regulation (Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)) when implementing programmes and projects supported by EU funding, with particular attention being given to the involvement of cities, towns and functional urban areas in the preparation, management and governance of the programmes, including at cross-border level;
16. Calls for greater involvement of towns and cities in the Structural and Investment Funds' programmes; believes that the lessons drawn from this could feed into an important policy recommendation for the development of cohesion policy after 2020; in this context, calls on the Commission to test the implementation of the European Urban Agenda in selected thematic fields, reflecting the challenges of urban areas ('urban pilot projects'), in particular by ensuring the cross-sectoral coordination of different EU policies, removing existing overlaps and applying the multi-level governance model and conducting territorial impact assessments; asks the Commission to report to Parliament on the progress and results in this respect on a regular basis;
17. Asks for better coordination and integration of EU investment policies having the potential to ensure sustainable, integrated and socially inclusive urban development; urges the Commission and the Member States to make full use of the regulatory framework to create synergies between the European Fund for Strategic Investment (EFSI), the EU subsidised programmes (such as LIFE, Horizon 2020, Intelligent Energy Europe, etc.) and cohesion policy funds, as well as public (i.e. national) investments, private capital and financial instruments in order to obtain the greatest leverage effect of invested funds; underlines the need to ensure complementarity of all investment policies and enhanced synergy, and to avoid double financing and overlaps;

*A new model of multi-level governance*

18. Recalls that today's key economic, social and environmental challenges transcend traditional administrative boundaries, and the growing mismatch between administrative and territorial structures (urban and peri-urban cooperation, urban-rural cooperation, etc.) requires new forms of flexible governance in order to continue the integrated territorial development of functional areas;
19. Believes that the European Urban Agenda should be based on a new multi-level governance method, involving the local level more closely at all stages of the policy cycle, thus bringing the policies closer to the realities and making them more consistent with and responsive to the constant transformations in functional urban areas; takes the view, in that connection, that the Committee of the Regions, as the body representing regional and local authorities, should play a role in that process;
20. Urges the Commission to suggest elements for a new model of multi-level governance based on partnerships and genuine collaboration, going beyond simple stakeholder consultations, a model combining formal governmental structures with informal flexible governance structures that correspond to the new realities of the digitalised 'network' society, and which is adapted to the scale at which the challenges exist, a model which improves multi-level cooperation, both vertical and horizontal, with governmental and non-governmental actors at local, regional, national and European level, thus bringing government closer to the citizens and improving the democratic legitimacy of the European project; recommends that this 'sui generis' tailor-made model become the working method of the future European Urban Agenda after its acceptance by the partners and after consulting all relevant stakeholders;

#### ***Knowledge management and data sharing***

21. Is of the opinion that urban platforms and networks (such as URBACT, the Urban Development Network) and other programmes for knowledge-sharing between cities (such as Civitas, the Covenant of Mayors, Mayors Adapt, Smart Cities and Communities Initiative, Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities, ManagEnergy) have provided an excellent opportunity for the engagement of local regional and cross-border actors in urban development and knowledge-sharing between actors; urges the Commission to consolidate and ensure better coordination between these platforms in order to allow local actors to better understand them and engage with them in a more efficient way;
22. Urges the Commission and the Member States to make the most out of the knowledge-sharing and capacity-building activities that EU-funded projects and other networking activities between cities provide; encourages the Commission to develop mechanisms for better project result sharing throughout its services and to make sure that the results feed into both national and EU-level policy developments;
23. Believes that in order to formulate better-tailored policies the Urban Audit Database needs to be updated and improved; encourages Eurostat and the Commission to provide and compile more detailed data, collected where policies are implemented – in many cases at local level; underlines that the collection of flow data – measuring the relationships between cities and their surrounding areas and within functional urban areas – is also becoming increasingly important in order to improve the understanding of these complex functional areas, and therefore urges the Commission to gather and analyse that data; turning it into evidence for policy developments;

#### ***Implementing the future European Urban Agenda***



24. Believes that in order for the European Urban Agenda to be an effective tool it should be a shared and regularly updated conceptual framework with a thematic focus on a limited number of challenges in the larger context of the Europe 2020 goals of smart, inclusive and sustainable growth;
25. Strongly believes that these challenges should respond to the following criteria: (1) are in line with the shared conceptual framework; (2) are major urban challenges with significant impact on cities, towns and functional urban areas in and between Member States; (3) cannot be solved by Member States unilaterally; (4) where an EU approach has a clear added value; asks the Commission to start working on mapping such challenges, but also identifying remaining bottlenecks, policy incoherencies or capacity and knowledge gaps, in close cooperation with all relevant stakeholders, particularly those at local level;
26. Urges the Commission and the Member States to make sure that a higher degree of cross-sector coordination of policies with an urban dimension is ensured at all levels of government to allow better mainstreaming of integrated urban development; calls on the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO), responsible for the EU's urban policies, in close cooperation with the Commission's existing Inter-service Group on 'Urban Development', to drive this process and to make sure that the urban dimension is taken into account in all relevant new initiatives; asks the President of the European Commission to appoint a political lead within the College of Commissioners to give strategic direction to the Urban Agenda of European policies and to report annually to Parliament on the Urban Agenda;
27. Asks the Commission to designate a special EU urban coordinator, based on already existing services or bodies within the Commission, to monitor and evaluate the practical implementation of such coordination in a horizontal (engaging all relevant policy sectors) and vertical (engaging all levels of government) manner; is of the opinion that the special EU urban coordinator should, with the help of the Commission's Inter-service Group on 'Urban Development', establish a 'one-stop shop' on urban policies within the Commission and ensure the proper collection, management and dissemination of data on urban policies within and between Commission services and with various stakeholders in such a way as to establish an awareness-raising mechanism for early warning and early stage involvement of local and regional authorities in policy processes with an impact on towns, cities and functional urban areas;
28. Encourages the Commission to develop, while using the existing structures and, for example, as part of the 'urban pilot project', single points of information in Member States on the urban dimension of EU policies (Urban One-Stop Shops), with the aim of providing comprehensive information in particular on different EU initiatives, guidelines and financial possibilities in relation to urban development;
29. Calls on the Commission to hold a regular urban summit drawing on the 'Cities of tomorrow' forum, bringing stakeholders from all levels of governance and different sectors together; believes that such summits should provide a real opportunity for cities to engage in a constructive dialogue with policymakers across the relevant policy areas and should help assess the impact of EU policies on towns, cities and functional urban areas and how best to involve them in the forthcoming initiatives;
30. Urges Member States to fully associate cities and functional urban areas with, and involve them in a binding manner in, strategic policy development and programming (such as

national reform programmes, partnership agreements and operational programmes); calls on the Member States to strengthen their exchange of experience on national programmes for urban development, which empowers cities to deliver the Europe 2020 objectives, by setting regular informal Council meetings of ministers in charge of urban development;

***External dimension of the European Urban Agenda***

31. Urges the Commission and the Member States to take full account of the ongoing preparatory works for the Habitat III agenda and to ensure that the future European Urban Agenda is fully compatible and coordinated with the goals and objectives of this global urban agenda; asks the Commission to regularly inform Parliament about the external dimension of the European Urban Agenda and believes that the urban agenda could become the EU contribution to the international debate on the United Nations' 'New Urban Agenda' and the Habitat III conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development in 2016;
32. Believes that there should be a clear, coherent and open engagement of the EU and the Member States, with consultation and contribution of local and regional authorities, at the International Standards Organisation (ISO) regarding the development of new standards for sustainable urban development, respecting the work on UN universal guidelines for urban and territorial planning; stresses that the new ISO standards should be seen as a supportive and not a normative tool;  
  
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33. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the national parliaments.