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NEWSLETTER

<http://urban-intergroup.eu>

URBAN conferences and meetings

STRUCTURAL FUNDS

The development of EU cities will determine the future of Europe

URBAN partner organisations debated on the 6th of December at the European Parliament with MEPs and representatives of the European Commission about the future of urban development in Europe and the cohesion policy support for it in the new programming period after 2013.

Corinne Hermant de Callatay and Christian Svanfeldt from DG Regio presented the final Report "Cities of tomorrow" to which 60 renowned European experts have directly contributed. This reflection process was due to provide inspiration for policymakers and practitioners involved in urban development at local, regional, national or European level.

The conclusions of the report support the main urban and territorial development principles, priorities and objectives that have been expressed through the Leipzig Charter, the Toledo Declaration and the Territorial Agenda 2020, underlining the importance of a stronger territorial dimension in future cohesion policy.

Segregation and poverty

EC representatives stressed that if cities play a crucial role as engines of the economy, as places of connectivity, creativity and innovation, and as centers of services for their surrounding areas, they are also the places where problems are concentrated: unemployment, segregation and poverty. They reminded that more than two thirds of EU citizens live in urban areas.

The study showed that the administrative boundaries of cities no longer reflect the physical, social, economic, cultural or environmental reality of urban development. It pledged for new forms of flexible governance to be developed (for example reinforcing cooperation

and networking between cities or increasing the citizens' participation).

The study also pointed out differences between EU cities. If some are facing crucial issues such as ageing populations, shrinking cities or intense processes of suburbanisation, others are seriously threaten by economic stagnation or decline (mainly non-capital cities in Central and Eastern Europe and old industrial cities in Western Europe).

In the coming years, income disparities are also expected to grow whereas the poor will get poorer. Consequently, spatial segregation processes will be increased and closed subcultures could develop ('society dropouts').

However, both Commission representatives insisted that there are opportunities to turn the threats into positive challenges: diversity of EU cities has to be exploited, as well as the potential of socio-economic, cultural, generational and ethnic diversity.

Combating spatial exclusion and energy poverty with better housing is also key, as well as developing a holistic approach to environmental and energy issues (not only CO2 reduction).

Margit Tünnemann from DG Regio later presented the proposals from the European Commission on the urban dimension in the legislative package for the cohesion policy 2014-2020, and the differences with the 2007-2013 regulations. She insisted on the "reinforced integrated approach" to tackle urban challenges, the increase of responsibilities and opportunities for cities, and the possibility to combine actions financed by ERDF, ESF and CF either at programme or operation level.

More information: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/conferences/citiesoftomorrow/index_en.cfm

URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Railway areas, a specific aspect of urban planning

The URBAN Intergroup organised together with the regional authorities of Picardie (France) and Flanders (Belgium) a seminar entitled "Railway station districts enhancing urban development in mid-sized cities" on the 8th of December at the European Parliament in Brussels.

The seminar aimed at highlighting railway areas as a specific aspect of urban planning. During the meeting, the representatives of the city of Breda (the Netherlands), the city of Leuven (Belgium) and the Picardie region (France) presented their good experiences of transformation of abandoned and neglected railway areas into the heart of the city. The meeting was also a forum for discussion about the urban dimension in cohesion policy after 2013.

Wilbert Willems, representing the city of Breda, insisted on the key position of the Dutch city, between the two ports of Antwerpen (Belgium) and Rotterdam (the Netherlands) and on the Amsterdam-Paris high-speed train route, connecting the city at local, national and European levels.

Integrating traffic modes

Jef Deneut, a representative from the city of Leuven (Belgium) showed the transformations of the railway station area since 1875, when



The new railway station area in Leuven (Belgium) integrates the different traffic modes and new offices for public administration and private companies. (Google Earth)

the train station was built. The project started in the early 1990s included the need to bridge two agglomerations split by the railway, to integrate the different traffic modes but also to build offices. The project also included architectural aspects and the idea to create a new "identity or skyline" for the city.

Claude Gewerc, President of the Regional Council of Picardie, presented the role of local railway stations in his region. He stressed that "railway stations are communication and exchange hubs which require intermodality at different levels." At the north of Paris, Picardie is indeed a region connected to the Thalys and Eurostar high-speed trains networks (TGV Haute Picardie station) and close to the Roissy international hub (airport and railway connections).

ARCHITECTURE

"Architects should anticipate the future needs of society"

The URBAN Intergroup organised jointly with the European Forum for Architectural Policies (EFAP) a conference "Non City?... Next City?", on the 11th of January in the European Parliament in Brussels.

The conference brought together directors of architecture from the EU Member States along with architects, representatives of EU institutions and European organisations to discuss how architectural policies can take a more active part in the development and the implementation of the European Union's aims set out in the EU 2020 Strategy.

The highlight of the conference was a tour through Europe by Prof. Winy Maas, architect and urban planner (MVRDV). He presented examples of innovative urban development, among which his research in the framework of

the Grand Paris project, that triggered a lot of reactions.

Jan Olbrycht MEP (EPP, Poland), President of the URBAN Intergroup and chair of the meeting, underlined that the issue is not "if" but "how" architectural policies are very important for the development and the implementation of the European Union's objectives.

He said that architects should anticipate the future needs of society rather than respond to present ones. "Architects are playing a crucial role in the impact of regulations and policies and the way they can be adapted," he said. "They must design a vision on the future and inspire the public and decision makers," he added.

More information: www.efap-fepa.eu

STRASBOURG

MEPs visit retrofitted low energy standards' tower

Members of the URBAN Intergroup participated on the 16th of February in a study visit to ESCA Tower in Strasbourg organised in cooperation with BOUYGUES Construction. The aim of the visit was to see a reference retrofitting construction site, being in accord with the low energy standards promoted by the EU politics of reducing energy consumption and with its fight to curb climate change. The building sector is well recognised as one of the strategic EU priorities in its politics of reducing energy consumption and in its fight to curb climate change.

The visit of the 10 storey and 9000 sqm office tower built in the early 1970's started with the short presentation concerning the materials used to reconstruct the building and the reconstruction itself. During the tour of the building, the MEPs observed all designs, techniques and materials solutions applied for the retrofitting and had the possibility to discuss about the project with the representatives of the team in charge.

64% reduction of energy consumption

The project of the BOUYGUES Construction is considered as a model for its double French certification HQE® (High Environmental Quality) and the label "BBC Rénovation" (reduction



MEPs from the URBAN Intergroup visited the 10 story ESCA Tower in Strasbourg.

by at least 40% of energy consumption). The building's energy consumption is planned to decrease by 64% from 218 kWh ep/m².year to 79 kWh ep/m².year. This is the first project of that type with these objectives in the north-east of France.

SEMINAR

New technologies can influence urban policy

On the 6th March the URBAN Intergroup organised a seminar "Urban policy – what do you mean?" at the European Parliament in Brussels. The seminar provided for a great opportunity to discuss different understanding of urban policy in the private and public sector. Members of the Intergroup, numerous partners present at the seminar and representatives of three private companies (IBM, Nokia Siemens and Philips) exchanged views on the EU policy towards the cities, the integrated approach versus smart cities, public/private partnerships, the role of the leadership, the influence of new technologies on the public sphere or the simplification of EU rules.

Olaf Schulz from the Nokia Siemens Networks stressed that cities cover only 2% of the earth surface, but hold 50% of the world population, are responsible for 75% of energy consump-

tion and 80% of CO₂ production. He assured that telecommunications play a pivotal role in achieving Smart cities objectives which are manifold, diverse and specific.

Threefold partnerships

Harry J. van Dorenmalen, chairman of IBM Europe, stressed the need to work for large partnerships between private, public and academic actors. He explained that these kinds of partnerships are a base for urban projects and new technologies can help to build them. He added that big companies are not anymore about technologies selling, but they take active part in strategic discussions on high level. For Ronnie Koster from Philips, new lighting solutions offer great opportunities to simply enhance people's life in livable cities.

STUDY

Urban-Rural partnerships should be mutually beneficial

Christian Huttenloher, Secretary General of the German Association for Housing, Urban and Spatial Development, presented to MEPs from the URBAN Intergroup and partners on the 15th of March in Strasbourg, the results of the first preparatory study on the urban-rural partnership in the EU in the context of preparatory action RURBAN (initiated by the URBAN Intergroup).

Raising efficiencies

Representatives of the European Commission and organisations responsible for conducting the studies related to the preparatory action RURBAN were present to discuss the outcome of the work and the next steps.

Władysław Piskorz, Head of Unit Urban Development and Territorial Cohesion at the European Commission and Betty-Ann Bryce, from the OECD Rural and Regional Development Unit, took part in the debate.

Ms. Bryce presented the first remarks from

OECD. The study, under preparation, will be the main contribution for RURBAN preparatory action. She pointed out “typically large differences between the interests of the urban core and the more rural periphery.”

“The aim of the study is to understand if the partnerships are conducive to regional growth, to assess if the partnerships are mutually beneficial, to analyse the form and function of these partnerships structures, and to assess how and if these arrangements should be further supported through public policies and/or through regional, urban and rural policy instruments,” she said.

Mr Huttenloher stressed that rural-urban partnerships help raising efficiency & avoiding inefficiencies. He however deplored the division between the EU cohesion and rural development policy, the local perspective of funded projects (either in urban or rural places), and the EAFRD agricultural driven versus ERDF dedicated to business development, regional and urban infrastructures.

SIGNATURE

The Cittaslow Manifest to improve life quality in cities

On the 22nd of March, the URBAN Intergroup hosted a conference in the European Parliament of the international Cittaslow Network.

Cittaslow is the international hallmark for small cities, which aims at the highest possible quality of life for its citizens, entrepreneurs and visitors. Good food, local and regional branding stood in the spotlight.

During this event, the Cittaslow Manifest was signed by over 20 European towns, cities and municipalities in the presence of nine MEPs.

This manifest links the EU 2020 strategy with the Cittaslow strategy by improving green quality areas with the surrounding towns, often also within a metropolis and aim to ensure that the cultural history and community values are maintained and strengthened.

“Combining the agendas create opportunities for towns and cities on themes such as knowledge, ecological production, environment and social cohesion,” said **Lambert van Nistelrooij MEP** (EPP, the Netherlands), Vice chair of the URBAN Intergroup. “The Cittaslow manifest can be a fruitful input for future EU policy. We can use the digital agenda and create smart cities, towns and regions,” he added.



The Cittaslow Manifest was signed in the European Parliament by over 20 European towns, cities and municipalities in the presence of **Lambert van Nistelrooij MEP** (EPP, the Netherlands), Vice chair of the URBAN Intergroup (on the right).

URBAN voice in Europe

URBAN FORUM

“EU cities must be able to decide about their priorities”

The President of the URBAN Intergroup, **Jan Olbrycht MEP** (EPP, Poland), represented on the 16th February in Brussels the Parliament Intergroup at the first Urban forum entitled “Paving the way for smart, sustainable and inclusive cities.”

The main subject of the discussion was the development of European cities in the innovative cohesion policy after 2013 with the reference to the Commission’s legislative proposals from October last year.

Jan Olbrycht gave an introductory speech to one of the three thematic panels: Europe 2020 and the challenge of coordinating thematic investments in cities and promoting integrated urban development.

“Members of the Intergroup are looking into the urban aspects of the new regulations’ proposals with great attention. As the President of the URBAN Intergroup and the EP rapporteur for the ERDF regulation, I can assure you that the MEPs will put all the effort to make the regulations simpler and their provisions more flexible,” said Mr **Olbrycht**.

He declared moreover that the integrated ac-

tions for sustainable urban development should concern the functional urban areas – not only the city itself, but also its rural surroundings or the whole agglomeration. “The concentration of EU funds is needed, but Europe’s cities and towns must be able to decide about their priorities in relation to the regional situation and needs,” **Jan Olbrycht** commented, referring to the proposed thematic concentration.

The Forum was organised by the European Commission with the aim to start a direct dialogue with the representatives of Europe’s cities and towns on how to achieve the goals of the EU 2020 Strategy with a more dynamic approach to development of urban areas. Around 400 participants, including mayors of large EU cities (Amsterdam, Barcelona, Warsaw, Lisbon, Sofia, Bratislava, Manchester, Leipzig, Naples, Łódź, Lille Métropole, Turin and Dunkerque), representatives of urban networks and associations, as well as cities involved in various EU urban policy initiatives, attended the Forum.

More information: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/conferences/urban_forum2012/index_en.cfm

KATOWICE

“We need an integrated territorial approach for urban policy”

On the 15th and 16th of March **Jan Olbrycht MEP** (EPP, Poland) and the think tank “Think Silesia” organised the VIth International Conference “City 2012” with the collaboration of the URBAN Intergroup, the Association of Polish Cities, the Silesian Union of Municipalities and Districts, the Metropolitan Association of Upper Silesian, the City of Katowice and the European Economic Congress Katowice 2012.

The main subject of this annual event was the preparation of cities for the new programming period of the EU policies for 2014-2020. The first part of the conference was dedicated to the debate on the “Cities of Tomorrow” and the challenges and instruments of spatial planning in cities. The second part concentrated on the future

urban dimension of the cohesion policy.

For the first time, **Jan Olbrycht**, the European Parliament rapporteur on the ERDF regulation, representatives from the European Commission and the Polish government (taking part in the negotiations in the Council), and mayors of European cities had a deep discussion on the urban elements in the legislative package for cohesion policy after 2014, with a particular consideration of the ERDF regulation.

“We need an integrated territorial approach for urban policy,” said **Jan Olbrycht** at the congress.

Petar Zaklanovic, architect and urban planner (KCAP Rotterdam) presented city revitalization examples of Shenzhen in China and Lille Urban community in France.

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