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# NEWSLETTER

<http://urban-intergroup.eu>

## EUROPEAN COMMISSION

### European Innovation Partnership in Smart Cities and Communities

One of the greatest challenges for the future wellbeing is how best to design and adapt cities so that they become smart, intelligent and sustainable environments. Almost three quarters of Europeans live in cities, consuming 70% of the EU's energy. Congestion costs Europe about 1% of its GDP every year; most of it is located in urban areas.

Smart urban technologies can make a major contribution to addressing the dual "urban" objectives of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and delivering more efficient public services. Although investments in smart city solutions have a huge potential, their impact has been limited to a small number of cities and communities in Europe. For example, the EU's CIVITAS programme co-financed the ELAN project that brought together the cities of Ljubljana, Gent, Zagreb, Brno and Porto facing similar challenges of urban and sustainable mobility. Together, these cities successfully mobilised citizens to take up public transport, walking, cycling, and to increase their use of cleaner and more energy-efficient vehicles.

In July 2012, the European Commission presented its proposal for a European Innovation Partnership in Smart Cities and Communities. The Partnership aims to boost the development and wide-scale application of smart technologies in cities – by pooling innovations in energy, transport and ICT. The European Innovation Partnership's added value is to connect local initiatives (existing partnerships of local government, business and community-based organisations) and to offer tools for meaningful exchange and assistance to cities, civil society and business

for using smart city solutions to meet their local needs.

The Partnership's stakeholders define joint targets for 2020 and more specific operational objectives, they analyse barriers, and develop a shared innovation agenda ("Strategic Implementation Plan"). This Strategic Implementation Plan is followed through by the Partnership's members in cooperation with each other. They bring in their own commitments and contribute to mobilise other resources. In support of an EIP, the European Commission uses all its policy instruments; political leadership, innovation and deployment support, standardisation mandates and regulatory measures. The Strategic Implementation Plan (running till 2020) will be presented by the European Innovation Partnership's High Level Group this autumn.

Developing "smart cities" is not "business as usual", nor is it a "one size fits all" approach. It will engage many sectors (ICT, transport and energy) and areas (e.g. finance, technology, legislation, procurement). Increased cooperation between policy sectors and joining-up of measures taken by European, national, regional and local government organisations is essential to spur on local action and investment. The expertise of the URBAN Intergroup and its partners will therefore be invaluable to deliver real impact in our cities, for our citizens and for creating opportunities for European business.

**Dr Henriette Van Eijl**, European Commission, DG Mobility and Transport

**For more information**, "Smart Cities Stakeholder Platform" ([www.eu-smartcities.eu](http://www.eu-smartcities.eu))

# URBAN conferences and meetings

## LINKS

### Eco-constructions' techniques for restoring old buildings

The URBAN Intergroup hosted the final conference of the URBACT-LINKS network "Old European cities as a key for sustainability" on 10<sup>th</sup> January, to examine the historic centres in the light of sustainable development.

#### Historic centres are tomorrow's eco-districts

How can the challenge concerning the environment and heritage building protection be reconciled to offer a majority of people sustainable and attractive housing at the very heart of the city? To answer this question, Almeria (Spain), Anderlecht (Belgium), Bayonne (France), Brasov (Romania), Budrio (Italy), Delft (the Netherlands), Kilkenny (Ireland), Veria (Greece), the cities involved in the LINKS project (URBACT programme) are proposing a new approach to the restoration of historic centres. These reflections are directly in line with the strategy Europe 2020.

#### Thermal renovation: new knowledge, new markets!

At a time when the construction sector is suffering severely from the crisis, the European commitments regarding energy saving represent a breath of fresh air. The search for performance in new buildings is a technical challenge but the real source of energy saving and the great perspective for the market lies in the thermal renovation of the huge stock of existing buildings.

In Europe, traditional buildings (built before 1945 with pre-industrial techniques) represent between 16 and 30% of existing buildings. In fact, these buildings have a very specific behaviour in terms of moisture management and temperature control.

Unfortunately, for energy saving reasons, heritage buildings have been mishandled for years. Techniques developed for post-war buildings were applied and proved not only



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inefficient but also damaging to old buildings.

It has recently been shown that only techniques inspired from eco-constructions are appropriate and efficient for restoring old buildings.

Therefore eco-restoration is not only a thrifty restoration technique or a simple niche for the renovation market. Eco-restoration is THE answer to an imperative technical need and a real opportunity for the construction sector as a whole.

In many cases, the local markets have difficulty in meeting new demand and it is obvious that know-how and local supply chains need to be developed.

Some initiatives could contribute to triggering a real dynamism in the market:

- The institution of a regulatory framework which would not just exempt historic buildings from energy regulations but which would provide specific measures to guarantee these buildings a real and lasting energy performance.

- Accompaniment of the new regulations by all the appropriate means to structure the offer and stimulate the demand.

The LINKS city partners solicit, in this regard, the support of the EU. The reinforced urban focus of the ERDF is an opportunity to reaffirm the key role of historic city centres using revitalisation as a leverage for urban, social and economic development.

## CONFERENCE

# Tackling health inequalities through investment in affordable housing sector

On January 22<sup>th</sup>, the European Public Health Alliance (EPHA) and the European Federation of Public, Cooperative and Social Housing (CECODHAS Housing Europe) held a joint conference with the URBAN Intergroup at the European Parliament. The event focused on the connection between health inequalities and affordable housing and emphasised that investment in good quality housing can bring returns in health and environmental outcomes.

***"The first victims of poor dwelling conditions are the poorest households"***

**Karima Delli MEP** (the Greens/EFA, France), as Vice-President of the URBAN Intergroup and author of the European Parliament report on social housing in the EU, explained the consequences in terms of health that could result from poor dwelling conditions like bad insulation. She pointed out the lack of funding in favour of housing refurbishment, and the lack of a clear definition of standards for decent housings in the Member States.

"Poor dwelling conditions perpetuate social exclusion. More than 100 million people in the EU are deprived of proper and decent housing, which is, as the WHO recognises, a source of illness," she stressed. "Moreover the first victims of poor dwelling conditions are often the poorest households," she added.

She also emphasized how important it was for the EU to get its own reliable data on housing and fuel poverty, and to make a better connection between health issues and



**Karima Delli MEP** (the Greens/EFA, France) is the author of the European Parliament's report on social housing in the EU.

housing conditions in its legislation. "When the EU discusses social inequalities, housing is the big elephant in the room. It is plainly evident that, at a European level, we are failing to associate health and housing," she said. According to her, Member States must take integrated measures to reinforce the cooperation between public health and affordable housing sector.

During this event, experts from OECD and WHO presented the latest data on health conditions in the reduction of social inequalities in health achieved through investment in housing. All agreed that Member States should intensify their efforts to support affordable housing (renovation and new construction) as a way to enforce a prevention policy for public health.

## JOINT-MEETING

### Social housing to overcome the crisis

On January 28<sup>th</sup>, the URBAN Intergroup and the Public Services Intergroup of the European Parliament held a joint meeting at the European Parliament on "social housing in the EU." On this occasion, **Karima Delli MEP** (the Greens/EFA, France) presented its long-awaited EP draft report on social housing in the EU. This presentation was fol-

lowed by reactions from the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and DG Regional and Urban policy (DG REGIO) representatives, MEPs and stakeholders.

For **Karima Delli**, this report aims to show that the social housing sector is primarily a lever to overcome the economic and social crisis and to achieve the objectives of the

EU2020 Strategy. In particular, she emphasized its potential in terms of creating sustainable local jobs that cannot be relocated. She also stressed the need to encourage a real fair energy transition through the construction and renovation of social housing. "We need to tackle the scourge of energy poverty, which affects between 50 and 125 million Europeans" she added.

**"Access to housing is a fundamental right"**

Even if the situation of social housing varies a lot between and within Member States, she emphasized the role of social buffer of this sector in the fight against inequalities and poverty. "Access to housing is a fundamental right that affects access to other fundamental rights and to a life of dignity. It is up to the Member States to implement it," she said, recalling here the subsidiarity principle.

According to her, social investments should be better monitored in order to strengthen



For **Karima Delli MEP** (the Greens/EFA, France), social investments should be better monitored in order to strengthen the Union's economic and budgetary governance.

the Union's economic and budgetary governance. "I call for the creation of a Social investment pact and the establishment of a European Housing Observatory," she said. The EU must enhance investments in social housing by encouraging inter alia the use of structural funds and the EIB instruments.

## 2014-2020

### Territorial instruments for urban development

During the monthly meeting in Strasbourg held on January 17<sup>th</sup>, members and partners of the URBAN Intergroup had a possibility to discuss with representatives of DG Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO) the role of cities in the post-2013 cohesion policy and especially the new territorial instruments for urban development.

After the presentation of the state of play of negotiations on the urban dimension in the Common Provisions Regulation and the regulation on the ERDF, the discussion focused on territorial aspects in the legislative package.

#### Integrated Territorial Investments

Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI) were characterised as an implementation tool for area-based strategies requiring integrated investments. ITI will allow Member States to draw on funding from several priority axes of one or more operational programmes, and will be focused on urban areas or other functional territories. This instrument can be implemented by a city, a managing authority

or other entities. In this context, urban actors will be empowered by the delegation of management of ITIs.

#### Community-led Local Development

Community-led Local Development (CLLD), based on LEADER experience, is a specific tool for use at sub-regional level. It will allow delivering local development strategies while using the bottom-up approach. This instrument will be led by local action groups composed of representatives of local public and private socio-economic interests. In cities, different types of CLLD will be possible such as CLLD covering small areas within cities (for example historic centres, deprived urban neighbourhoods), CLLD for smaller cities and their surrounding rural areas, CLLD with a target group approach (e.g. Roma community, young people) or finally with a thematic approach (e.g. housing, mobility). It will also be possible for territorial strategies implemented through an ITI to have in practice CLLD as one of the components.

# URBAN voice in Europe

## CEMR

### Urban and local voice needs to be heard more in Brussels



For **Oldřich Vlasák MEP** (ECR, Czech Republic), all EU institutions should be an integral part of the CEMR's lobbying strategy and it's everyday work. (© CEMR)

The Political Committee of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) was held in France at the end of January 2013. Local associations' representatives from across Europe have gathered in the "Salle du Conseil" of the Paris town hall to discuss current challenges faced by self-government bodies in the European context. Among other issues, the debate on the role of CEMR in lobbying EU institutions has been held.

During the debate, **Oldřich Vlasák MEP** (ECR, Czech Republic), Vice-President of the European Parliament and Vice-President of the URBAN Intergroup, stressed that all EU institutions – not only the European Commission or the Council, but also the European Parliament – should be an integral part of the CEMR's lobbying strategy and it's everyday work.

**"The interest given to the post-legislative phase is very low"**

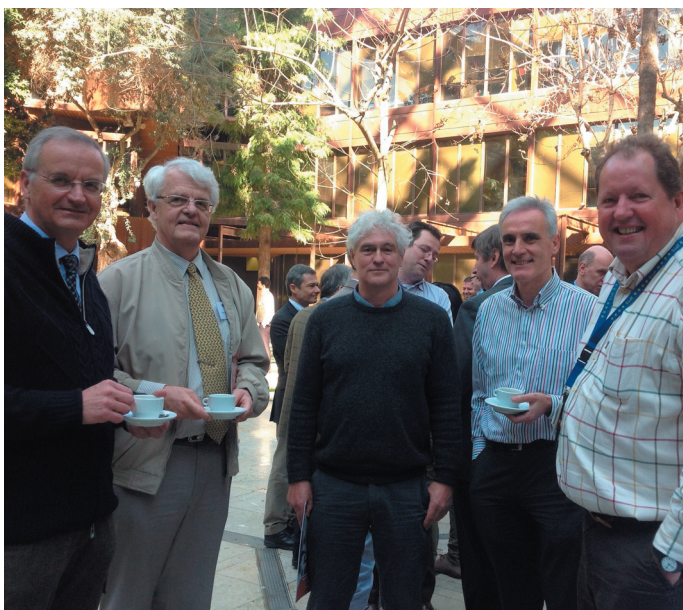
**Oldřich Vlasák** also expressed worries concerning concentration on the pre-legislative process. "Have you ever tried to find out how many officials work in the European Com-

mission? According to the Human resource Key Figures for 2012, there are 33,033 various staff in the Commission," he said. He also stressed that the staff in the European Parliament has significantly increased (from 3,946 in 2004 to almost 5,600 today). "And I don't speak about the Council," Mr **Vlasák** added. "All these people more or less concentrate on the pre-legislative phase of legislation. But in my opinion more attention should be paid on the actual or potential impact of the adopted legislation on local and regional lives," he explained.

The Vice-President deplored that "the interest we give to the post-legislative phase, to the impact assessment of the adopted legislation is very low". He asked: "What experiences do local and regional governments have with the legislation? What are its consequences? Is this experience reported back to the European Commission, to the Council or to the Parliament?". According to him, there is a need to think about these questions. He suggested the European Commission "to start with some good practice on some kind of regulatory impact assessment on the local and regional level."

## DELEGATION

# Smart Specialisation Strategies to manage cities' potential growth



Lambert van Nistelrooij MEP (EPP, the Netherlands) (on the left) took part in a delegation to Tarragona and Seville (Spain) to see how these two cities have constructed their Smart Specialisation Strategy for 2014-2020.

**Lambert van Nistelrooij MEP** (EPP, the Netherlands) took part in a delegation to Tarragona and Seville (Spain) from 12-14<sup>th</sup> February, to see how these cities have constructed their Smart Specialisation Strategy for 2014-2020. "Smart Specialisation is a strategy to help cities to identify the priorities they would like to focus on and in which they would like to excel," said Mr **van Nistelrooij**.

***"Cities are growing as key drivers of regional and national growth"***

"It is important to develop clear strategic priorities, to focus on areas of strength and to

eliminate barriers to innovation," he added. The Vice-President of the URBAN Intergroup explained that cities are growing both in size and as key drivers of regional and national growth. "What will define one city from another, however, is whether it is managing its potential growth effectively and sustainably," he assured participants.

The University of Tarragona, together with the industry and the local authorities, has created numerous jobs by strategically specializing in energy and chemical industry and tourism. The Joint Research Centre of the European Commission in Seville, assists cities in drafting these strategies. Many others will follow.



## CONTACTS

Jan Olbrycht - ASP 14E101 - jan.olbrycht@europarl.europa.eu - tel.: +32 (0)2 28 455 11  
Arlene McCarthy - ASP 13G351 - arlene.mccarthy@europarl.europa.eu - tel.: +32 (0)2 28 455 01  
Oldřich Vlasák - WIB 03M113 - oldrich.vlasak@europarl.europa.eu - tel.: +32 (0)2 28 453 57  
Marie-Thérèse Sanchez-Schmid - ASP 13E158 - marie-therese.sanchez-schmid@europarl.europa.eu - tel.: +32 (0)2 28 457 83  
Karima Delli - ASP 08H342 - karima.delli@europarl.europa.eu - tel.: +32 (0)2 28 453 62  
Ramona Mănescu - ASP 08G254 - ramonanicole.manescu@europarl.europa.eu - tel.: +32 (0)2 28 458 65  
Lambert van Nistelrooij - ASP 12E142 - lambert.vannistelrooij@europarl.europa.eu - tel.: +32 (0)2 28 454 34  
Peter Simon - ASP 12G146 - peter.simon@europarl.europa.eu - tel.: +32 (0)2 28 455 58  
Rui Tavares - ASP 07F265 - rui.tavares@europarl.europa.eu - tel.: +32 (0)2 28 456 52

