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# NEWSLETTER

**ROB DOCTOR**

## *"Sustainable cities won't happen by accident"*

**D**ialogue between policy makers at EU, national and local level, architects and urban planners is necessary for the whole planning process if we want to create liveable and sustainable cities for the world of tomorrow," said **Rob Doctor**, President of the European Forum for Architectural Policies (EFAP), at a conference co-organised with the URBAN Intergroup in the European Parliament on 9 February 2011.

Participants to the conference entitled *"NON-CITY? - New urbanity - Innovative visions towards the European Urban Agenda"* agreed that the EU must acknowledge architectures' key role in the creation of sustainable cities.

"Architecture is not about luxury or pleasure for the few. It is much more than design, much more than connected to construction," stressed Rob Doctor.

"Sustainable cities won't happen by accident. If we want to secure a new livable urbanity, the EU must take responsibility," argued Rob Doctor.

Indeed, 2011 will be a turning point for architecture with the preparation of the new EU policy programs on cohesion and urban areas, research and culture.

According to UN figures, more than 70% of the populations in Europe already live in urban areas, but this fact has hardly manifested itself in EU policy making.

Moreover, EU citizens are more and more living in "in-between zones." These "Non-Cities" don't benefit from greater overall thinking or vision of the planners, the participants deplored.

**Jan Olbrycht MEP** (Poland, EPP) President of the URBAN Intergroup, said: "We need a debate on the role of European cities and the problems they face. If we don't have clear ideas, urban sprawl, for example, will be very evident".

"Cohesion policy is about development, not simply redistribution. Europe's thriving cities are the ticket to the EU's global competitiveness," he added.

"It is time to seize the full potential of this urbanity and bring in a new perspective," argued the French philosopher **Thierry Paquot**.

**Andrea Colantonio**, Research Coordinator at the London School of Economics, called for an integrated approach with action concentrated at local level to tackle the problems facing cities, including budget constraints and demographic change.

**Vincent Feltesse**, President of the Urban Community of Bordeaux (France) said that "prior to any planning, urban projects must be thought through by experts that will help to intelligently define the city and its contours."

"Architecture and urban planning are quite neglected," said **Isabelle Durant MEP** (Belgium, Greens/EFA), vice-President of the European Parliament and member of the Intergroup. "We should further develop a multilevel kind of governance but cities should also reconcile the economic and social challenges," she said.

**Cristina Gutiérrez-Cortines MEP** (Spain, EPP) stressed the need for "happiness" in EU modern cities. "A city is a kind of large family. We need to come back to humanity," she claimed.

"If we want to continue impressing not just the international tourists, but also our own citizens we must work much harder to create the livable European cities of tomorrow. Not by merely adding a few cosmetic touches to readymade neighborhoods, but by consistently involving creative urban planners and architects," concluded Rob Doctor.

**More information:**

<http://www.efap-fepa.eu/indexb.php?section=1&lg=en&id=252>

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Rob Doctor and Jan Olbrycht MEP (Poland, EPP) co-organised the conference *"NON-CITY? - New urbanity - Innovative visions towards the European Urban Agenda."*

## JAN OLBRYCHT

### "Social housing is an important tool in the hands of local authorities"

"Mistakes in housing can have a very negative impact on communities," said **Jan Olbrycht MEP** (Poland, EPP), chair of the URBAN Intergroup in the European Parliament, during the final conference of the SUITE Project, organised by CECODHAS on 16 March 2011 in Brussels.

The SUITE project aimed to create a network of cities to exchange best practices on social housing.

Indeed, new requirements for social housing have emerged in European cities as property markets are racing out of control and major democratic, economic and social changes occurred in the last decades in urban areas. Santiago de Compostela (Spain), Hamburg (Germany), Iasi (Romania), Kraków (Poland) Medway and Newcastle Upon Tyne (United

Kingdom), Nantes and Rennes (France) and Tallinn (Estonia) took part in the project. Cities' representatives exchanged their experiences and initiatives to optimize sustainability in housing, to assure social cohesion and to provide high environmental standards.

"Social housing is an important tool in the hands of local authorities," said Mr Olbrycht who stressed that URBACT networks "help to find common solutions." "This kind of network can help not only to exchange good practices but also to avoid mistakes," he added.

The Intergroup's chair also underlined that this project could be an important argument during the preparation and the negotiation of the new regulations for a new financial perspective.

## VAN NISTELROOIJ

### "Asian countries must learn from the European experience"

On 28 March 2011, **Lambert van Nistelrooij MEP** (the Netherlands, EPP), represented, as vice-president, the URBAN Intergroup at the seminar on Cooperation between European and Asian towns on urban sustainability.

The event, with mainly representatives from China and India, was meant to celebrate the official launch of a European project of Cooperation on Sustainable Renovation, urban planning and exchange of good practices in urban matters.

The theme of the conference was "*From Pilot to Sustainable Towns: satellite cities and metropolitan governance.*"

Mr van Nistelrooij spoke about the European view on cohesion policy as an essential pillar in the process of European integration and the fact that Asian countries might learn from the European experience.

"Regional policy can only be a success if the



Lambert van Nistelrooij MEP (the Netherlands, EPP), vice-president of the URBAN Intergroup, took part in the conference "From Pilot to Sustainable Towns: satellite cities and metropolitan governance."

local and regional authorities are involved from an early stage," he said.

He proposed a Territorial Pact, investment and partnership contracts with the Member States and the local authorities. "Initiatives such as Smart Cities are an excellent example of a contribution to sustainable towns," he added.



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