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NEWSLETTER

<http://urban-intergroup.eu>

INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

Global interest in the EU's regional and urban policy model

There has been a dramatic increase in interest in different parts of the world in the process of European integration, not just from an institutional point of view but also in terms of the European policies that promote European cohesiveness. Foremost among the latter is European regional and urban policy which seeks to ensure that the benefits of the single market in Europe, based on the free movement across borders of goods and services, labour and capital, are as widely shared as possible across the territory of the Union. Today, in the international relations arena, the European Commission's Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy acts in support of the external relations policy of the European Union in promoting co-operation with third countries, regions and cities on regional and territorial development issues. It is work that has been strongly supported by the European Parliament which has voted resources in five consecutive years, 2009-2013, which has made possible most of the external policy dialogue taking place in this particular field.

Principal among the features of EU regional policy that are of interest to large third countries such as China, Russia and Brazil, as well as to international organisations such as MERCOSUR, UEMOA and ASEAN, are: the geographical targeting of resources on Member States, regions and cities; the territorial and strategic objectives; the different dimensions of the implementation system based on multi-level governance. There is equally much interest in the values that underpin EU regional and urban policy such as in the way it seeks to promote open, competitive mar-

kets (including in the field of public procurement), respect for the environment and for equal opportunities, participative democracy and partnership in the conception and implementation of development policy. Indeed, the latter are the framework conditions under which EU financial support is granted and act as positive incentives to achieving the highest standards in public policy. It is such features that have inspired interest in large countries or territories with major territorial imbalances that are seeking to combine the pursuit of a more even pattern of growth with governance systems that contribute to transparent and efficient public policies and that help to further integration through decentralisation.

In terms of the territorial dimension of European regional and urban policy a theme of major interest in many parts of the world is that of policy for the promotion of sustainable urban development. A major trend towards urbanisation has appeared, and has been encouraged, in many of the world's rapidly emerging economies. China with a total population today of 1.3 billion, is a case in point. From 1949 to 2009, China's urban population increased from 58 million to 622 million while the urbanised population rose from 10.6% to 46.6% of the total. China's urbanisation rapidly increased after the economic reform, while the implementation of the urbanisation strategy during the 10th Five-Year Plan period gave a strong additional impetus to the urbanisation of many regions. From 2000 to 2009, China's urbanisation level increased from 36.2% to 46.6% with an average annual increase of 1.15%.

In 2009, 145 million people, equivalent to the whole of the combined population of Germany and France, left rural China to work in the cities. Today, most of the world's mega-conurbations with more than 15 million of population are to be found in the rapidly emerging economies, such as China, accompanied by the challenges of congestion, pollution and the provision of efficient housing, employment and services to the new urban dwellers. The major study launched jointly between China and the EU, published in 2011, placed an emphasis on the challenges of urban development and rural-urban migration, and urban development has grown to become a key theme of the cooperation of the EU with China, which today include the EU-China Urbanisation Partnership and EU-China Mayors' Forum.

In Latin America since 2011, DG REGIO and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) have been supporting urban networks under the name of URBELAC (URBan European and Latin American and Caribbean cities). It aims to promote sustainable development in cities and to help to meet the challenges of promoting social development, higher urban productivity and greater environmental protection through the creation of networks, exchanges of experience, benchmarking and the preparation of action plans in Latin American cities. In two successive editions, URBELAC has allowed 9 EU cities and 13 Latin-American cities to exchange experience and good practices (by means of round tables, working groups, field visits and continuous exchange) covering a wide range of topics such as management models for specific urban areas, the complex and compact city as a sustainable model within an integrated view of the city, or, management of tourism with implications for the city development model. In 2012, participating cities were: Cochabamba (Bolivia), Cuenca (Ecuador), Manizales (Colombia), Mar del Plata (Argentina), Pereira (Colombia), Edinburgh (United Kingdom), La Laguna (Spain), Malaga (Spain), Porto (Portugal) and Venice (Italy).

Also in 2012, the Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy and the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT) of Japan together with EU and Japanese cities began an exchange expe-

rience and best practices through the EU-Japan programme exchange on urban development. Following the successful outcome of the seminar "Putting urban development into an international context: exchanging best practice between Europe, Japan and Latin America" organised in October 2011 in Brussels, a seminar on urban development was co-organised in May 2012 in Tokyo by the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism of Japan and the DG REGIO with the participation of more than 50 experts, including senior representatives from the authorities in the cities of Leipzig, Stockholm and Torino on EU side and Kanazawa, Kitakyushu and Kumamoto on Japanese side.

There are, in fact, many excellent examples of co-operation between the EU and third countries in the field of regional and urban policy that seek to improve prospects for a more even pattern of economic development, while setting an agenda for decentralisation based on effective, multi-level governance. Readers are invited to consult the REGIO website for further information.

In sum, over the past 7 years since the co-signature of the first co-operation agreement on regional policy by the National Development and Reform Commission in China and the European Commission, co-operation on regional and cross-border policies has grown to be a field of global interest. In the EU, it is clear that there is much institutional interest, perhaps most notably in the European Parliament and in the Committee of the Regions, in seeing that the work continues to flourish and that the European Union can provide a best-practice example when it comes to decentralisation, co-operation, stability and in building inclusive prosperity.

Ronald Hall, Principal Advisor, Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy

For more information: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/cooperate/international/pdf/brochure_eu_china_v17_en.pdf and http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/cooperate/international/studies_en.cfm

The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and are not necessarily those of the European Commission.

URBAN conferences and meetings

ONLINE TOOL

Reference Framework for European Sustainable Cities



Over 60 people attended on June 4th in Brussels a breakfast event on “Reference Framework for European Sustainable Cities (RFSC) tool” organised by the URBAN Intergroup in cooperation with the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) and ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, an international association of local and metropolitan governments dedicated to sustainable development.

The main aim of this event was the presentation of the Reference Framework for European Sustainable Cities (RFSC) tool, a new online and free of charge toolkit created to help cities in promoting their work on integrated sustainable urban development. The RFSC is a joint initiative of EU Member States led by France, the European Commission and European organizations of local governments.

The breakfast event was opened by **Frédéric Vallier**, CEMR Secretary General. In his introductory statement, **Jan Olbrycht MEP** (EPP, Poland), President of the URBAN Intergroup, underlined the role of cities in EU

policies and sustainable development in Europe. He stressed the importance of adding a social dimension in urban sustainability and deplored the lack of coherence and unity within the European Commission’s programmes and initiatives when dealing with sustainable cities. “We should fight for integrated thinking in EU policies. If sustainable means environmental protection, there is no added value. We must consider sustainable as integrated!” he stated.

Jan Olbrycht insisted on the importance of partnerships between different actors which would raise the effectiveness of cooperation and reduce the costs of actions. He concluded that the most sensitive element for the role of cities today was the delegation of power: “a big step to make is to delegate the competences to the city level, which will go in line with the subsidiarity principle!” he said.

Jerôme Masclaux, Deputy Head for Sustainable Planning, French National Government, presented the RFSC tool as a multi-governmental initiative, before an interactive panel with participants.

For more information: www.rfsc.eu

URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Study on 50 projects supported by ERDF in 2007-2013

On June 18th, DG REGIO presented the outcome of a case study on projects co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) in the current programming period and aiming at improving the standards of living and working in Europe’s cities. This event followed the presentation of the first findings of the study to the URBAN Intergroup members and partners on March 14th in Strasbourg. The Commission’s study “Urban Development in the EU: 50 Projects supported by the European Regional Development Fund during the 2007-13 period” presents projects which received ERDF investment and offers an information package for selected cities with detailed information on projects conducted. The study collects a range of good urban practice and

is a “state of play” in how cities have put local urban policies into action with ERDF investment from 2007-2013.

The 50 cases cover eight themes chosen by DG REGIO for their relevance to resolving the main issues in European urban and regional policy today (smart growth, sustainable growth, inclusive growth, urban regeneration of deprived urban areas with a sustainable, participative and integrated approach, housing for marginalised groups, financial engineering, local empowerment and public participation, and co-operation, networking and learning). These case studies come from a wide variety of places in the EU and demonstrate the broad range of activities that can be carried out with the support of the EU’s structural funds. The study

proves that cities are committed to tackling all challenges pertinent to the cohesive future of European urban areas.

“What is striking in this study is the fact that urban problems are not only problems of cities, but also rural areas. Local governments and authorities should reinforce programs supported by the ERDF,” said **Jan Olbrycht MEP** (EPP, Poland), President of the URBAN Intergroup.

During the panel debate following the presentation of the final conclusions of the study, **Władysław Piskorz** (DG Regional and Urban Policy) stated “We hope that this study is going to be a major source of information and inspiration for cities, managing authorities and other institutions which have a stake in urban development”.

Peter Ramsden, the lead author, highlighted the importance of the exchange of knowledge between cities, regions and countries. “If we wish to accelerate and improve cohesion policy, we need to increase the know-how and cooperation of cities. Cooperation on local level in order to exchange knowledge is one of the key elements for the effective cohesion policy of tomorrow,” he said.

“The cohesion policy has changed and in the



The European Commission presented its study “Urban Development in the EU: 50 Projects supported by the European Regional Development Fund during the 2007-13 period”.

new programming period it will be more efficient, simply better,” added **Jan Olbrycht** in the enclosing word.

The report has been prepared by AEIDL on behalf of DG Regional and Urban Policy. It is the collective work of a team of experts and researchers.

For more information:

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/studies/pdf/50_projects/urban_dev_erdf50.pdf

CEMR

European Funding: crucial tool for urban and rural partnerships

By the end of 2013, the European Commission will be finalising negotiations on Partnership Agreements and Operational Programmes of the cohesion policy for the 2014-2020 programming period. The current discussions between the EC and the member states will have an impact on the way that cities or municipalities and their surrounding local authorities can cooperate and carry on cross-sectoral actions with the financial support of the EU funds.

Theoretically, urban and rural partnerships should be set up without difficulty. At the EU level a strong legislative and political support is given to territorial matters: the Lisbon Treaty promotes territorial cohesion objectives and the Territorial Agenda 2020, endorsed by all Member States in 2011, insists on the importance of a strong territorial dimension in the future cohesion policy. The policy orientations provided by TA2020



URBAN Intergroup MEPs and CEMR representatives exchanged views on urban-rural partnerships during a breakfast meeting in the European Parliament.

stresses on recognition of urban-rural interdependences that require integrated governance and planning based on broad partnership.

Furthermore, in the new structural funds

regulations, the Commission is proposing new instruments like the integrated territorial investments (ITI) and community-led local development (CLLD) to support the integrated approach through European structural and investments funds.

Nevertheless, in practice there are some obstacles to overcome. On one hand, the sectorial approach is still predominant. On the other hand, the implementation of the new instruments like ITI and CLLD depends on managing authorities' willingness to use them or not.

Urban-rural linkages: indispensable for territorial development

This gap between the theory and practice was discussed by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) representatives and member associations as well as with members of the URBAN intergroup of the European Parliament, during a breakfast meeting on 25th June 2013 in Brussels.

Jan Olbrycht MEP (EPP, Poland), President of the URBAN Intergroup presented the "RURBAN" initiative that originated in the European Parliament and was carried on by the European Commission. Following an in-depth study that the OECD will submit to the Commission, a tool-kit will be prepared to help urban-rural partnerships to be effective.

The Vice-President of the CEMR Swedish section and Chair of the CEMR Thematic Platform on Sustainable Territorial and Local Development, **Carola Gunnarsson** highlighted at the breakfast meeting: "CEMR is interested in a good collaboration with the European Parliament and, more precisely, with the members of the URBAN Intergroup and the REGI committee. We call the European Parliament to monitor the implementation of the structural funds and in particular the application of the new instruments."

The Deputy Mayor of Venice, **Carla Rey** invited MEPs to encourage national administrations to support urban and rural partnership

and to trust local authorities in managing funds locally.

The Vice-Presidents of the URBAN Intergroup **Oldřich Vlasák MEP** (ECR, Czech Republic), **Lambert van Nistelrooij MEP** (EPP, the Netherlands) and **Marie-Thérèse Sanchez-Schmid MEP** (EPP, France), expressed their interest in communicating and monitoring the implementation of the structural funds and in particular the involvement of local and regional authorities.

During the meeting, CEMR presented the outcome of its survey on "urban-rural partnership for integrated territorial development". This study was made with CEMR's members and aim at taking stock of existing cooperation models.

The report exposes reasons for urban and rural authorities to cooperate: lack of connectivity in transportation, housing and public service provision as well as the current economic and financial crises. In Austria, for example, the depopulation and closure of enterprises has severely impacted rural areas. In order to attract new businesses and create jobs, rural authorities have formed partnerships with urban areas.

In some cases, it is the mutual benefit that motivated communities to set up partnerships. This is the case in Estonia, where some local authorities cooperate in organising cultural events or establishing a service for monitoring public order at municipal level.

In Romania, the access to EU funds was a crucial goal to set up collaboration through the establishment of inter-communal associations as a pre-condition for getting aid for waste and water services infrastructure investments.

All these examples show the importance of cooperation between urban and rural local authorities. The issue now is how the urban-rural partnerships will be promoted by the EU policies for the programming period 2014-2020? The ball is in the court of the EU legislators.



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