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NEWSLETTER

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Commissioner Hahn's message to the URBAN Intergroup



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imately 40% of structural funds are being spent in cities in the 2007-2013 period and this is likely to rise to 50% in the 2014-2020 period.

Each Member State will be required to spend a minimum of 5% of its ERDF allocation on integrated urban strategies with a degree of delegation of implementation to urban authorities; €330 million will be set aside for innovative actions in urban areas; and Community Led Local Development (CLLD) will be mainstreamed to all areas including cities.

We now need to translate the main ideas of this new policy into practice, in a way that will make EU citizens feel the benefits of these investments. The expertise and assistance of the URBAN Intergroup will be vital in this regard. I look forward to continue the productive relationship between DG Regional and Urban Policy and the URBAN Intergroup in this new programming period."

"Two years of often difficult negotiations are over and the main pillars of the Commission's proposals concerning sustainable urban development have now been accepted. This is warmly welcomed as it will allow cities to be at the forefront of our efforts to build a smart, sustainable and inclusive Europe.

The reform of our policy places greater emphasis on sustainable urban development and includes important new elements such as investment priorities directly targeting urban areas: urban mobility, revitalisation of cities, and the upgrading of research and innovation capacity in urban areas. Approxi-

Johannes Hahn
*European Commissioner
for Regional and Urban Policy*

COHESION POLICY

A new and ambitious urban outline for the next years

In October 2011, the Commission put on the table a cohesion policy package with a strong urban flavour. It proposed a variety of possible investments that could be financed mostly from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). They covered such areas as transport, energy efficiency or reduction of social imbalances. It also came up with two new elements. Coming back to the ideal of EU initiatives but at a smaller scale, the Commission proposed a fixed

amount of ERDF resources to be spent on innovative actions in the field of urban development. They were supposed to be managed directly by the Commission. Apart from that, the Commission proposed for each of the Member States to put aside at least 5% of the ERDF resources for integrated actions to tackle the economic, environmental, climate and social challenges affecting urban areas. It foresaw the delegation of management to cities and suggested a new instru-

ment – Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI) – that was supposed to help Member States in the obligatory implementation of the idea. The Commission called also for the establishments of an Urban Development Platform that was supposed to gather 300 cities from the whole of Europe for the exchange of experience and dialogue.

Members of the URBAN Intergroup welcomed the reinforced and, for the first time, obligatory urban dimension of cohesion policy. In the following months, many of them were actively and directly involved in the work on it at the European Parliament. Many meetings between the members and with the involvement of partners were organised. Many informal talks took place. With the rapporteurs of the two main regulations defining the future provisions for cities (**Jan Olbrycht MEP**, rapporteur on ERDF, and **Lambert van Nistelrooij MEP**, co-rapporteur on Common Provision Regulation), being one of the main actors of the URBAN Intergroup, the final result of the negotiations was shaped to a large extent with the Intergroup's influence.

More than two years later, the regulations for the next years of cohesion policy were adopted, together with the new urban dimension. The urban dimension was not only maintained, but even strengthened. Firstly, many of the so called investment priorities were designed especially for Europe's cities and towns. They are given the opportunity to invest in energy efficiency in public buildings and in the housing sector, and to promote low carbon strategies for urban areas, e.g. through urban mobility solutions. They can improve the urban environment through the support for the revitalisation of cities, the decontamination of post-industrial areas or while promoting and protecting the cultural heritage. Cities can also provide for the regeneration of deprived communities and invest in health and social infrastructure, and to promote social inclusion. Last but not least, they have means to create a business friendly environment and to support innovation. Secondly, the new cohesion

policy forces Member States to dedicate a fixed amount of resources to sustainable urban development. For the first time, Member States must support projects to tackle in an integrated way challenges affecting urban areas, being it economic, environments, demographic or social. A special focus is put on thinking beyond the administrative borders. i.e. thinking of functional urban areas and on promoting urban rural linkages. The delegation of tasks to urban authorities is obligatory but flexible, so is the method of implementation.

Thirdly, starting from 2014, the Commission will dedicate €330 million to studies and pilot projects to identify and test new solutions related to sustainable urban development. Fourthly, the Commission will establish an Urban Development Network to monitor the implementation of the innovative actions and the obligatory 5% of the ERDF resources dedicated to integrated actions in urban areas. This should ensure that the lessons learned during the next years, will be taken on board and mainstreamed in the even next generation of cohesion policy. Finally, fifthly, there are two new instruments for territorial development: Community-led Local Development (CLLD) and Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI). The first one aims at involving citizens and stakeholders in the implementation of local development strategies. The second focuses on a place-based approach to solving problems or addressing challenges, and allows connecting different elements from larger strategies or programmes dealing with the same issue under one umbrella.

The long and not always easy process of creating new rules for the urban dimension of cohesion policy has been accomplished. The URBAN Intergroup members contributed significantly to what can be described a new, ambitious urban outline for the next years. It is now in the hands of governments and regions across Europe to build on it, and for the cities to make the most of it. URBAN Intergroup members are eager to see the results!



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