



“Dear partners, dear colleagues, this 13th newsletter of the URBAN Intergroup is the last one of this term. I was very pleased to chair the URBAN Intergroup over the last five years. I think that we should be proud of what we have achieved together during this half a decade. All along this term, we welcomed in our Intergroup MEPs from most of EU Member States, all political groups and almost all committees. We also got support from new partners – culminating at 83 – from local, regional, national and European level that represent the interests of Europe’s town and cities or work in the domain relevant for urban development.”



*Jan Olbrycht
President of the URBAN Intergroup*

“Over the past five years, we organised no less than 27 conferences and over 30 meetings, concerning issues such as transports, housing, biodiversity, culture, sustainable development or urban planning. Members of the URBAN Intergroup followed closely what was happening in their respective committees in the European Parliament. They reported on latest developments and defended urban related issues in various fields. Moreover, our members and partners were deeply involved in the negotiations of the EU post 2013 cohesion policy, especially concerning the urban elements in the structural funds’ regulations. Finally, we are very proud to have initiated two preparatory actions: “RURBAN”, which aimed at improving urban-rural partnerships, and “World cities: EU-third countries cooperation on urban development”, currently still under preparation.

We also followed closely the symbolic change of name of the Directorate-General for Regional Policy (DG REGIO) and welcomed the addition of “Urban Policy”. Recently, we warmly welcomed a launch of a consultation on the need for an EU Urban Agenda at the urban Forum “CiTIEs. Cities of Tomorrow: Investing in Europe” that took place mid-February in Brussels. Enhancing direct cooperation and dialogue between the European Union and European cities and towns is a crucial step for helping our local authorities, which daily face new environmental, budgetary or demographic challenges. We notice with great satisfaction that we are talking more and more about European urban policy – something the URBAN Intergroup has been lobbying for, for many years.

We hope that the URBAN Intergroup will continue its mission with new members and fresh ideas after May European elections.”

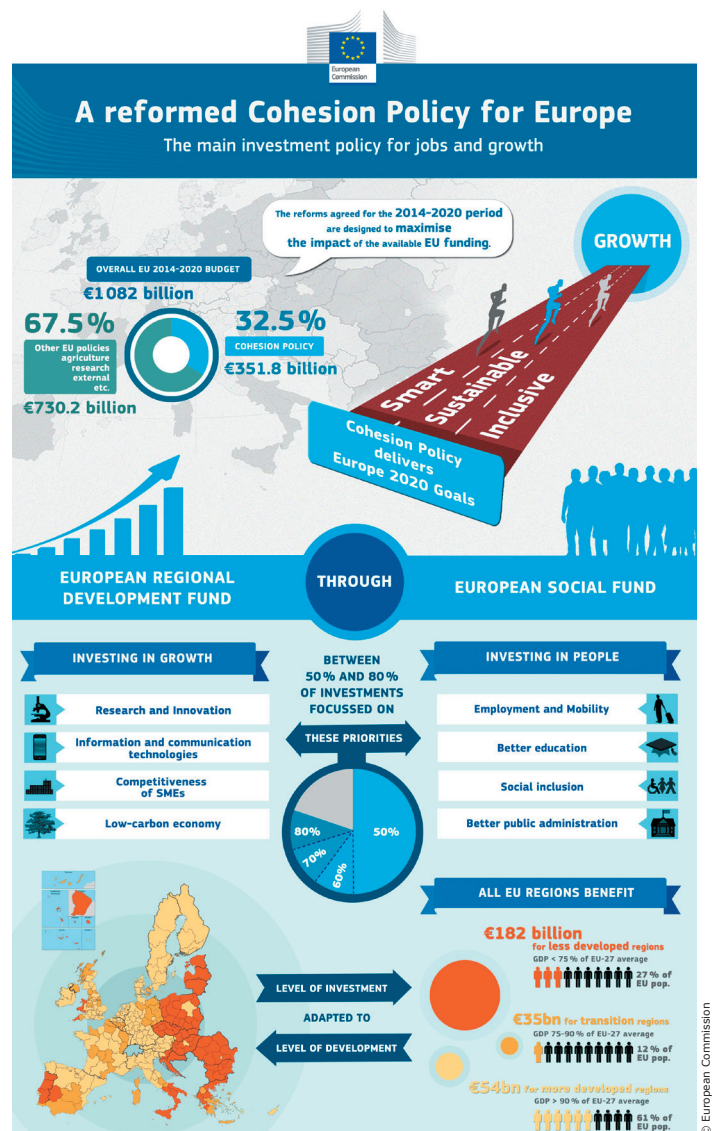
Bureau of the URBAN Intergroup

STRUCTURAL FUNDS

Urban dimension in cohesion policy 2014-2020

Over the past years, many members of the URBAN Intergroup were actively and directly involved in the preparation of EU legislation especially concerning the urban elements. In 2011, **Oldřich Vlasák MEP** (ECR, Czech Republic) was rapporteur on an own-initiative report on European Urban Agenda and its future in cohesion policy. Recently our members and partners were deeply involved in the negotiations of the cohesion policy package for the period 2014-2020, presented by the European Commission in October 2011 and adopted finally in November 2013. For the first time, the EU executive proposed the obligatory urban dimension of cohesion policy which has been strongly supported by the Intergroup. **Jan Olbrycht MEP** (EPP, Poland), was rapporteur on the ERDF Regulation and **Lambert van Nistelrooij MEP** (EPP, the Netherlands) was co-rapporteur the Common Provision Regulation, the two main regulations defining the future provisions for cities. Moreover, several members of the Intergroup were also shadow-rapporteurs on various regulations of this package.

Thanks to the work of the URBAN Intergroup, the urban dimension of cohesion policy 2014-2020 was strengthened. We welcomed the obligatory allocation of 5% of the national ERDF resources to integrated, sustainable urban development projects in functional urban areas rather than just in cities, as proposed by the European Commission. We strongly advocated the obligatory delegation of tasks to urban authorities. Many investments priorities were designed especially for cities and towns to tackle inter alia issues of energy efficiency in public buildings and in the housing sector. We supported the decision to dedicate €330 million to studies and pilot projects to identify and test new solutions related to sustainable urban development. To avoid overlap of competences, we lobbied for a change of the proposed Urban Development Platform of 300 cities, to Urban Development Network. This Network will be limited to the monitoring of



the implementation of innovative actions and the obligatory 5% of the ERDF resources dedicated to integrated actions in urban areas. Moreover, we welcomed two new instruments for territorial development which have been also created: the Community-led Local Development (CLLD) which aims at involving citizens and stakeholders in the implementation of local development strategies; and the Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) which focuses on a place-based approach to solving problems or addressing challenges, and allows connections of different elements from larger strategies or programmes dealing with the same issue under a single umbrella.

The URBAN Intergroup will observe now how Member States and European cities and towns will use proposed possibilities to tackle urban challenges.

PREPARATORY ACTIONS

URBAN Intergroup focused on urban-rural partnerships and EU-third countries cooperation

During this ending term, the URBAN Intergroup successfully submitted two proposals for preparatory actions in the framework of yearly EU budgets. After ensuring the funding for both projects at the European Parliament, they were transmitted to the European Commission for implementation.

"RURBAN, Partnership for sustainable urban-rural development" was initiated by the URBAN Intergroup in 2010 and granted €2 million under the EU budget for 2011 and 2012. The main idea of the project was to draw policy lessons concerning the potential role of urban-rural partnerships in improving regional competitiveness and territorial cohesion. Reflection about an effective urban-rural partnership was developed during seminars *inter alia* in Metz (November 2012), Warsaw (April 2013), Bologna (October 2013) and finalized with the closing seminar, that took place in January 2014 in Brussels.

This preparatory action, carried on for two years by the European Commission, was concluded with the publication of two

studies: "Partnership for sustainable rural-urban development: existing evidence" prepared by the German Association for Housing, Urban and Spatial Development (DV) and the OECD report "Rural-Urban Partnerships: an integrated approach to economic development".

The second preparatory action concerns the international dimension of EU regional and urban policy. Entitled "World cities: EU-third countries cooperation on urban development", the preparatory action aims at promoting the exchange of experience and best practice between the EU and third countries on the theme of territorial development with particular reference to urban development, urban-rural partnership and urban cross-border cooperation. With €2 million budget for 2014 and 2015, the project will support current policy dialogues and EU global relations and cooperation on urbanisation matters with strategic partners such as Brazil, China, India or Japan. Most of the actions will start in the second quarter of 2014.

More information about RURBAN

OVERVIEW

URBAN conferences and meetings

Over the past five years, the URBAN Intergroup organised no less than 27 conferences and events in Brussels and 31 meetings, mainly in Strasbourg. Diverse issues related to the problems and challenges for urban areas were on the agenda, including adaptation to climate change, urban mobility, housing, cultural heritage or urban regeneration. URBAN members and partners dealt also with integrated urban governance and discussed new concepts of city management such as smart cities. Moreover, they contributed to debates about the implementation of EU policies by addressing issues such as urban-rural cooperation, urban dimension of cohesion policy, or EU dialogues with third countries. The majority of these events

were organised with the collaboration of the most active partners.

Apart from conferences and meetings in Brussels and Strasbourg, various Intergroup members organised annual events in their home countries, for e.g. the Prague conference organised by **Oldřich Vlasák MEP** (ECR, Czech Republic) and the "City" international conference in Katowice by **Jan Olbrycht MEP** (EPP, Poland).

Representatives of the URBAN Intergroup were also invited to participate in many international events and to outline the Intergroup's position on the urban development in Europe and abroad. They were present at the 5th and the 6th World Urban Forums organised by UN-Habitat in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) in 2010 and in Naples (Italy)

in 2012. The conference “Sustainability City Finance” by the Urban Age Institute and New York Academy of Sciences in New York in 2010 and the conference “Healthy Cities” in Shanghai (China) in 2010 were also joined by our members. Last but not least, members of the URBAN Intergroup shaped the EU Urban Agenda at the Informal Meeting of Urban Development Ministers in Toledo (Spain) in 2010, the 5th European Summit of Regions and Cities in Copenhagen (Denmark) in 2012 and contributed to the establishment of EU-China relations during the EU-China Mayors’ Forum in Brussels in 2012.

Moreover, members of the URBAN Intergroup were speakers at numerous conferences, depending on their field of expertise: **Jan Olbrycht MEP** in his capacity as President of the URBAN Intergroup and rapporteur on the European Regional Develop-

ment Fund (ERDF) on the urban dimension of cohesion policy, urban governance, territorial cooperation, urban mobility or financial instruments, **Karima Delli MEP** (the Greens/EFA, France) on the issues of energy, climate change and housing, **Peter Simon MEP** (S&D, Germany) on urban-rural partnerships and governance in metropolitan regions, **Lambert van Nistelrooij MEP** (EPP, the Netherlands) on smart specialisation, **Marie-Thérèse Sanchez-Schmid MEP** (EPP, France) on culture, **Cristina Gutiérrez-Cortines MEP** (EPP, Spain) on urban planning and cultural heritage of old European cities and **Oldřich Vlasák MEP** on smart technologies and urban transport. Mr Vlasak, as vice-President of the Union of Towns and Communities of the Czech Republic, was also recently re-elected Executive President of the CEMR, one of the Intergroup’s partners.

MEP AWARDS 2014

URBAN Intergroup received best MEP prize



(1) **Jan Olbrycht MEP** (EPP, Poland) received the Parliament Magazine’s MEP Awards 2014 for the URBAN Intergroup in the category “Sustainable built environment”, together with (2) **Marie-Thérèse Sanchez-Schmid MEP** (EPP, France) in the category “Regional development”. (3) **Danuta Hübner MEP** (EPP, Poland) and (4) **Lambert Van Nistelrooij MEP** (EPP, the Netherlands) were awarded in the same category in 2011, 2012 and 2013. © The Parliament Magazine

Mid-March, **Jan Olbrycht MEP** (EPP, Poland), received the Parliament Magazine’s MEP Awards 2014 in the category “Sustainable built environment” for his work as President of the URBAN Intergroup. The organisers considered Mr Olbrycht “a champion of towns and cities as engines driving national and regional eco-

nomics”. Unusually, the 10th best MEP prize did not only recognise the hard work of MEPs in the past year, but over the whole ending parliamentary term.

Every year, NGOs and stakeholders suggest names of most active MEPs. The Parliament Magazine shortlist three of them in different categories and all MEPs are in-

vited to designate the best of them. "First of all, I would like to thank all my colleagues, Members of the European Parliament, and of course all the partners of the URBAN Intergroup. We are doing together a lot of interesting things," said Mr Olbrycht during the ceremony. The prestigious prize went this year also to another member of the URBAN Intergroup: **Marie-Thérèse Sanchez-Schmid MEP** (EPP, France) in the category "Regional

development" as rapporteur rapporteur to the directive on the interoperability of rail transport system in the REGI committee. During the 2009-2014 parliamentary term, many members of the URBAN Intergroup were shortlisted for the prize and several received the award, such as former Commissioner and REGI Committee chairwoman **Danuta Hübner MEP** (EPP, Poland) in 2013 and **Lambert Van Nistelrooij MEP** (EPP, the Netherlands) in 2011 and 2012.

EU URBAN AGENDA

Addressing more effectively urban development challenges

The European Commission officially launched a consultation on the need for an EU Urban Agenda at the occasion of the recent CiTIEs conference. The EU executive published mid-February an issue paper outlining challenges for the future of European cities and started the debate about the creation of an EU Urban Agenda. The Commission underlined that, with two thirds of EU population, urban areas are where the opportunities and threats to sustainable development come together. The EU executive stressed that to be effective, national and European policies need to be fine-tuned to the urban realities of where they are often implemented. It also underlined that the development of urban areas cannot be isolated from the wider European policy framework, but also that more and more EU policies should explicitly target urban areas. However, the Commission acknowledged that, although there was an agreement on the principles that should guide urban development in Europe, there was also a lack of explicit objectives, targets and instruments. The Commission suggested that an Urban

Agenda could contribute to the achievement of the Europe 2020 strategy goals. While reducing the redundancies and consolidating the urban dimension of different EU policies, an Urban Agenda could be a good tool improving the quality of the policies in general. It would also define and strengthen the role of cities in the implementation process and contribute to a better coordination between different governance levels. In the first step of the debate, the Commission proposed a reflection on 3 core questions:

- **Why** do we need an Urban Agenda? What is the main goal of defining it?
- **What** form should it take? Should it be a coordination instrument, a global strategy, an action plan, guidance? Should it focus just on a limited number of issues?
- **How** should it be implemented? Should it introduce a new method of cooperation between the EU, Member States and other actors?

Next page: URBAN Intergroup partners' positions on the idea of an Urban Agenda

"After many years of discussions about the urban dimension of cohesion policy and taking stock of numerous positive experiences of the European initiative URBAN I and II, I notice with great satisfaction that we are talking more and more about a European urban policy," stressed **Jan Olbrycht MEP** (EPP, Poland).

"Its elements are already present in many EU policies but today, for the first time, we are aware of the process of creating it. The programming period 2014-2020 will be the first test for this new approach," he added.

Some of URBAN Intergroup partners' positions on the idea of an Urban Agenda



An EU Urban Agenda must encompass all municipalities, regardless of their size

An EU Urban Agenda is an encouraging initiative to give more weight to the local level, says the CEMR in a position paper. The question arises as to how this initiative can become something adapted to municipalities and regions. First, and taking into account that almost 80% of rural population live close to an urban area, the European Commission approach should take into account the interdependencies of cities and their surroundings. In many cases, rural-urban partnerships appear as the best solution to deliver services and, moreover, to satisfy citizen's needs. Second, it is vital that the qualifying term "urban" is understood as including all municipalities, from small, to medium-sized and large cities. These two key messages were put forward during a breakfast meeting at the European Parliament with members of the URBAN intergroup, on 19 February 2014.



energycities

A new governance model for the EU Urban Agenda

Energy Cities believes that the future EU Urban Agenda should aim at defining a new way of governance which empowers local authorities to contribute to EU strategies, as described in more detail in our position paper.

It should take inspiration from the successful model of the Covenant of Mayors, which is based on signatories' voluntary commitment to helping the EU and Member States meet their climate and energy objectives. It has generated multi-level cooperation between different levels of government, and participating local authorities have succeeded in mobilizing citizens and local players.

Energy Cities believes that this new governance model should be replicated to other domains, since it enables all players to contribute to common goals at their level and empowers local authorities to tap their full potential.



An EU Urban Agenda for and with cities

EUROCITIES argues in a position paper that an EU Urban Agenda has to be based on a practical, coherent and coordinated approach. It must allow cities, the EU, and national governments to work more closely together and to develop more joined up policies. The network's initial suggestions for concrete measures to implement an Urban Agenda include the appointment of an urban coordinator to support the Commissioner for regional and urban policy in joining up EU policies with an urban dimension. Existing methods for involving cities directly in EU policy developments should be reviewed and their further development considered. European Commissioners should make urban study visits and meetings with city mayors a standard part of their programmes when they visit Member States. EURO CITIES also suggests that the urban forum on 17-18 February should set a precedent for biennial urban summits involving the EU, national and city governments.



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