

May 2015 - 14th issue

NEWSLETTER

<http://urban-intergroup.eu>

"Dear colleagues, dear partners, it is my pleasure to present this 14th issue of the URBAN Newsletter, which is also the first one in the 8th parliamentary term. I would like to thank all of you for the support you had expressed towards the URBAN Intergroup. It was a pleasure to see partners and MEPs strongly willing to re-establish this formation for the third time.

I was pleasantly surprised by the immediate reaction from partner organisations, which came up with action plans, and by a great interest among MEPs. The URBAN Intergroup was re-launched with the support of three political groups and it is now one of 28 intergroups in the European Parliament. I am honoured to be re-elected chairman and I warmly welcome all 87 MEPs and 107 partner organisations. I hope our Intergroup will be again a discussion forum and a breeding ground for good ideas and practices. Together, we can achieve even more."



*Jan Olbrycht
President of the URBAN Intergroup*

WHO WE ARE

The URBAN Intergroup was re-established in December 2014. Over 70 MEPs immediately expressed their interest in enrolling and held a very first meeting on December 18th in Strasbourg where members of the bureau were elected.

Karima Delli MEP (Greens/EFA, France), **Agnes Jongerius MEP** (S&D, The Netherlands), **Peter Simon MEP** (S&D, Germany) and **Lambert van Nistelrooij MEP** (EPP,

The Netherlands) together with the chairman **Jan Olbrycht MEP** (EPP, Poland) are going to steer works of the Intergroup for next five years.

Since December, over 20 new organisations have shown their interest in becoming a partner. Currently 107 partners and 87 members signed up for the URBAN Intergroup.

Our vice-Presidents share their priorities



Karima Delli MEP
(Greens/EFA, France)

"A house for all European citizens, regardless of how old they are and where they are from. **Accessible, clean and sustainable transports** in all the European cities: these are the top priorities the URBAN Intergroup needs to work on to make the city of the future happen."

Agnes Jongerius MEP
(S&D, The Netherlands)

"Cities are the key drivers of smart and inclusive growth. But the increased attention for smart growth prompts us to think about the issue of smart cities. How can we develop **a city which is resilient for future challenges** like energy poverty, changing demographics and new perceptions on work? These topics are vital in the 21st century. Furthermore, the EU must stimulate to a liveable and affordable housing. Thus, a more inclusive social housing policy is paramount."



Peter Simon MEP
(S&D, Germany)

"During the last parliamentary term, we succeeded in including explicitly the urban dimension and **the binding participation of the regional and local level** in the respective regulations for the current EU funding period from 2014-2020. In the next years, our focus will be aimed at the supervision and analysis of the concrete implementation."

Lambert van Nistelrooij MEP
(EPP, The Netherlands)

"I will focus mainly on the next phase of the EU Urban Agenda, in particular on the Smart Cities initiative. The Netherlands will hold an informal **ministers conference on the Urban Agenda** during the first half of 2016. Together with the Dutch stakeholders, I will prepare a booklet on the Urban Agenda and the EU Smart Specialisation approach."



URBAN meetings and events

PRESENTATION

Intergroup members and partners met for the first time

The very first meeting between members and partners of the URBAN Intergroup took place on January 7th in the European Parliament's premises in Brussels. More than 100 people, including MEPs and stakeholders attended the session.

It was an opportunity to present newly nominated members of the bureau and make a first overview of the Intergroup's action plan for the coming year. **Peter Simon MEP** (S&D, Germany), URBAN Intergroup vice-President chaired the meeting. The main point was a presentation of the

state of play of the EU Urban Agenda by **Christian Svanfeld**, Policy Officer at European Commission's Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy.

During his presentation, he set out the preliminary analyses of the outcomes of the public consultation on an EU Urban Agenda launched on 18th July, 2014.

Many doubts and opinions were expressed by MEPs and partners, reaching a common conclusion: the URBAN Intergroup should maintain a strong influence on shaping the future EU Urban Agenda.

ROUND TABLE

EUROCITIES and URBAN discussed the Urban Agenda

On February 25th, members of the URBAN Intergroup and politicians from Europe's cities, and also members of EUROCITIES' network, gathered together to discuss the future of EU Urban Agenda.

Participants had a choice between five debate themes, such as investment and city income generation, sustainable urban mobility, employment, climate change and air quality, or social investment and innovation in cities.

Lambert van Nistelrooij MEP (EPP, The Netherlands), URBAN Intergroup's vice-president and **Karine Daniel**, Deputy Mayor of Nantes (France) opened the venue and encouraged guests to fully benefit from this occasion to take an active part in conversations, share good ideas and practices already applied in different European cities in order to enrich guidelines of the future EU Urban Agenda.

Cities should tell what they need

"Local actors, you now have a favorable opportunity to express your ideas, your knowledge but also your fears and hesitations about the Urban Agenda. Your voice should be the most prominent in the coming years so that together we build a Euro-



Lambert Van Nistelrooij MEP (EPP, the Netherlands) and Karine Daniel opening the roundtable debates.

pean framework for sustainable and intelligent cities," said Lambert van Nistelrooij MEP in the opening speech.

Nicola De Michelis, Director in charge of Inclusive Growth, Urban and Territorial Development and Northern Europe in the European Commission's Regional and Urban Policy Directorate General was also present at the meeting. He insisted that cities should make a signal to the European Commission, stating exactly what they want and need as this would be a crucial step into shaping of the EU Urban Agenda.

The general conclusion of these fruitful debates could be resumed in one sentence: cities need to act now.

Why building renovation matters?

During April's Plenary sitting in Strasbourg, the URBAN Intergroup hosted a meeting initiated by Renovate Europe. The theme of this encounter was Energy efficient building renovation. Representatives of Renovate Europe Campaign, the European Commission and Energiesprong all tried to answer to the question: "What are the multiple benefits of building renovations?"

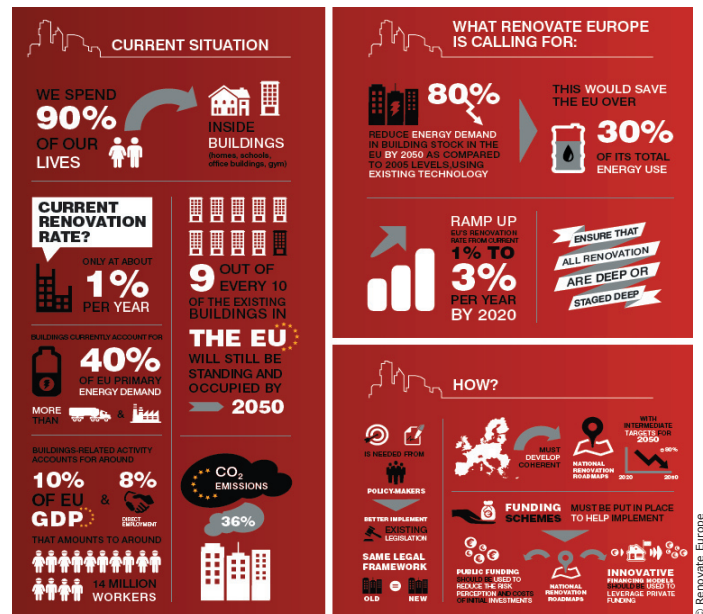
In Europe, there are around 210 million buildings which are the biggest energy consumer. Two-thirds of European energy consumption comes from residential buildings. Most of them were constructed in the 1970' and are far away from energy efficient but they should be the first source for savings. Furthermore, the energy dependence is one of Europe's all time constraints which cannot be resolved in any other mean than by cutting the energy use.

Renovate Europe's Campaign Director **Adrian Joyce** stood behind the Stop Energy Waste in Buildings Manifesto published last year and signed by 81 MEPs from seven political groups and coming from 21 countries. Speaking at URBAN meeting, Mr Joyce argued that renovation was a source to multiple benefits, including economic, social and environmental ones for instance.

90% of our lives inside buildings

"We spend 90% of our lives inside buildings, many of which are highly inefficient with poor indoor climate conditions which can impact negatively on our health. Investing in large scale energy efficient renovations will reduce the energy bill for EU citizens, while increasing their health and wellbeing at home and at work," said Mr Joyce.

Moreover, building renovation can help create jobs, boost research and innovation, as well as improve air quality. Also present at the meeting was **Yamina Saheb**, policy and scientific officer at Joint Research Centre of the European Commission, who presented the results of the scientific analysis "Energy Renovation: The Trump Card for the New Start for Europe" led by the Institute for Energy and Transport. She insisted that 60% of the added value was generated by activities linked to the envelope of the building.



Another key point she mentioned was the construction and building sector being the largest single contributor to EU employment, whereas specialised construction activities including energy efficient renovations stabilise the building sector from sudden fluctuations. Building renovations should be profitable to all EU citizens, improving conditions in both residential building and offices.

Ron Van Erck, Energiesprong's European Market Manager, shared his practitioner's knowledge with participants introducing them to techniques and products used in energy efficient building renovation. Energiesprong, a government funded non-profit market development program to drive energy efficiency in building, offers Net Zero Energy levels refurbishments for residential building in the Netherlands and soon in France and the UK.

Energiesprong made a deal to turn 110,000 Dutch houses into energy self-sufficient and suggested that the initial scale of demand was essential to change the dynamics in the market. Therefore, one of their principals was to start with social housing and the private owners would follow later, they said.

Jan Olbrycht MEP (EPP, Poland), President of the URBAN Intergroup, who chaired the meeting, warmly welcomed the initiative raised by all three speakers and underlined that energy efficiency and affordable social housing were the URBAN Intergroup's key priorities.

Looking ahead

There are at least eight venues taking place in June which, from the URBAN Intergroup point of view, are worth considering. Various European cities will host events, seminars and conferences devoted to urban related issues such as mobility, air quality and pollution, social inclusion and jobs. The most-awaited is undoubtedly the European Commission's CITIES Forum 2015 where more information about the EU Urban Agenda is to be announced.

- 2nd CITIES Forum 2015: An Urban Agenda for Europe - June 2nd, Brussels
- Velo-city 2015 Conference - Cycling: fu-

ture maker - June 2nd-5th, Nantes

- Smart City Event 2015 - June 2nd-5th, Amsterdam
- Green week 2015 - June 3th-5th, Brussels
- Sustainable Energy Week 2015 - June 15th-19th, Brussels
- 2nd European Conference on Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMPs) - June 16th-17th, Bucharest
- Cities for accessibility, jobs and inclusion: breaking down barriers together conference - June 18th-19th, Lisbon
- Interreg MED Programme Kick Off event - June 22nd-23rd, Marseille

Dutch Presidency to focus on Urban Development



During its presidency in the first half of 2016, the Netherlands plan to focus on cities. Cities are engines of economic growth and innovation and important actors in efforts to achieve the EU 2020 objectives. The Presidency will focus on improved procedures at EU level: an Urban Agenda for Better Regu-

lation and Innovation. The aim of the Urban Agenda is to improve European legislation that unnecessarily restricts urban development and to share best practices on innovative solutions to Europe's urban challenges. The URBAN Intergroup is looking forward to discovering guidelines of the Dutch Presidency and will be observing further developments of legislations for European cities.

Others about URBAN



A strategic agenda for the URBAN intergroup 2014-2020

The recognition of the role of cities to deliver on the EU strategic objectives has grown over the past years, not least due to the work of the URBAN Intergroup. 2015 is an important year for cities and we need the URBAN Intergroup to be a strong partner on:

- an EU Urban Agenda: working with partners for the agenda to make a real difference for both cities and the EU through stronger policy coordination and involvement of cities in policy development with an urban dimension
- European structural and investment funds: ensuring the urban dimension is ad-

equately implemented

- the Europe 2020 strategy mid-term review: continuing to push for partnerships across different levels of government for more effective policies towards the strategic objectives

In the longer term, we need a clearer recognition of the challenges and opportunities in European cities that are relevant to the broader EU agenda. We look forward to a continued partnership with the URBAN Intergroup to strengthen its positive impact on EU policies with an urban dimension for the benefit of cities and citizens as well at the EU.



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