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# NEWSLETTER

<http://urban-intergroup.eu>

**"T**his new issue of the URBAN Intergroup Newsletter comes at a very timely moment. With the finalisation of the negotiations of the Cohesion Policy operational programmes for 2014-2020 and the unprecedented impetus for an EU Urban Agenda, we are witnessing a decisive strengthening in the role of cities in the European Union.

Indeed, with the finalisation of the new programmes, cities have been put at the forefront of our efforts to build a smart, sustainable and inclusive Europe. For the very first time, up to € 15 billion will be earmarked to sustainable urban development, with cities being empowered to select the most appropriate projects for EU support.

Last 2 June, the Cities Forum in Brussels brought highest level political support to the EU Urban Agenda, and allowed over 500 participants to discuss how to make it a reality, in particular in the fields of smart, green and inclusive urban development. For the Commission, it was also the opportunity to present the results of the public consultation launched in 2014, and to propose a way forward including the following strands:

- 1) Focus on specific priorities, able to deliver and show results;
- 2) Effective application of better regulation tools, with reinforced urban impact assessment and stronger stakeholder involvement;
- 3) Better coherence and coordination of EU policies relating to cities; and
- 4) Improved urban intelligence, benchmarking and monitoring.

Moreover, at the informal ministerial meeting on Territorial and Urban matters of last 10 June in Riga, where we could count on the presence of three members of the REGI Committee, Member States clearly supported and committed to developing an EU Urban Agenda, in line with the subsidiarity and proportionality principles.

It is now time to prove that the EU Urban Agenda can be more than just words. We need to think of future joint actions, clear deliverables and a strong partnership between all relevant stakeholders.

In this context, the expertise and assistance of the URBAN Intergroup of the European Parliament will be of vital importance. I look forward to continuing the fruitful relationship between the European Commission, in particular DG Regional and Urban Policy, and the URBAN Intergroup.



*Corina Crețu*  
*European Commissioner for Regional Policy*

## World Cities project is now under way

Urbanisation is a world challenge. By the year 2050, approximately two-thirds of the world's population will live in urban areas, compared to 54% today, with 95% of the urban population growth taking place in emerging countries outside the EU. This new wave of urbanisation brings additional pressure on policymakers at a global level to ensure that it is managed in a sustainable and inclusive way. It is an issue that is increasingly drawing in the entire global community, as emerging countries seek to develop a successful urban development model, while more mature, industrial economies seek to address deficiencies of past urbanisation. Inside the EU, promoting sustainable regional and urban development is already established as a major priority and a key element of EU regional and urban policy. The latter is implemented through a decentralized methodology based on tailored, integrated urban development and investment strategies prepared in partnership with the authorities in the cities themselves.

It was against this policy background that the European Parliament, under the heading of Preparatory Actions (PA), proposed "*World Cities: EU third countries cooperation on urban development*" for implementation by the Commission (REGIO) in 2014 and 2015.

The centrepiece of the implementation of the World Cities PA is a project, which has been branded with the same name, which will help the EU to project its bottom-up, integrated urban development model into partner countries. In terms of methodology, the World Cities project will seek to support decentralised cooperation between regional and urban authorities and other stakeholders in EU and non-EU countries in a genuine two-way interactive process.

The World Cities project builds on the emerging role of cooperation on urban development in the EU's relations with the rest of the world. This is perhaps particularly evident in the relationship with China where, in May 2012, leaders of the EU and China together launched the Partnership on Urbanization with the objective of creating an open political platform for EU and Chinese stakeholders to cooperate and share experiences

in addressing the economic, social and environmental challenges of urbanisation (see also the results of the EU-China CETREGIO project).

### EP "World Cities" project begins

Following the preparation of detailed project specifications and calls for tender, the World Cities project is now under way on the ground. It focuses, in a first round, on the promotion of cooperation between a group of regions and cities from different EU member states, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, regions and cities in four non-EU partner countries selected for their diversity of experience in the urban development field: Canada, China, India and Japan (see *table on the right page*). For each partner country, some 4-5 cities have been identified in cooperation with the relevant national authorities to work with European counterparts in direct city-to-city pairs. The EU cities have been identified for their value as demonstration areas and for their readiness in the short-term to identify and develop concrete actions or programmes with non-EU cities, including those that can open up new market opportunities. The themes for the cooperation include those of "green" city development, energy efficiency and sustainable mobility. The themes also address the business environment including the promotion of regional and urban innovation systems, the internationalisation of SMEs, promoting start-ups, etc. The project involves non-traditional stakeholders from both EU and non-EU countries such as firms, technology transfer agencies, universities and research centres.

As of July 2015, kick-off conferences for the World Cities project have already taken place with India (in Mumbai in May), China (Brussels, June, in the framework of the EU-China Summit, following earlier city-to-city meetings in China in April) and Canada (Toronto, July) while the meeting with Japanese cities is scheduled for end-August/September. The project foresees that working meetings take place in both the partner countries and in Europe.

An important output will be a collaborative,

electronic on-line platform to facilitate the exchange of information and good practices with the general aim to provide technical assistance to urban policymakers and experts on urban policy issues, including urban-rural linkages. It should help to foster ongoing dialogue and exchange between cities in the European Union and non-EU countries, beyond those directly participating in the city pairings.

The results of the first round of meetings between the city pairings have eliminated any residual doubt there may have been regarding the enthusiasm for the project, and for the idea of direct exchanges between cities facing similar challenges, and for sharing information, best practices and lessons. In the case of EU-China, the city pairings have already signed, respectively, memoranda of understanding in order to structure their cooperation .

For the EU, the World Cities project will contribute to strengthening relations with its

key partners by developing joint tools and solutions to similar problems. As such the lessons will be important for future EU external relations projects and programmes, notably those under the Partnership Instrument. Through such imaginative actions as World Cities, the EU can take a leading role in the creation of a new international urban development agenda and bring genuine added value to international cooperation.

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

*(The views expressed in the article are those of the author and are not necessarily shared by the European Commission.)*

**For more information:**

<http://world-cities.eu/>

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/index.cfm/fr/policy/cooperation/international/](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/index.cfm/fr/policy/cooperation/international/)

China-EU	India-EU	Canada-EU	Japan-EU
Wuhan-Barcelona (ES)	Mumbai-Copenhagen (DK)	Edmonton-Vitoria-Gasteiz (ES)	Kitakyushu-Riga (LV)
Chengdu-Dublin (IE)	Navi Mumbai-Stuttgart (DE)	Halifax-Tallinn (EE)	Kumamoto-Leipzig (DE)
Guangzhou-Lyon (FR)	Chandigarh-Lazio Region (IT)	Ottawa-Hannover (DE)	Toyama-Burgas (BG)
Shantou-Andalucía (ES)	Pune-Warsaw (PL)	Saanich-Almada (PT)	Shimokawa-Växjö (SE)
Tianjin-West Midlands (UK)			

## URBAN voice

### EUROPEAN COMMISSION

#### 2nd CiTIES Forum: next step towards the EU Urban Agenda

The 2<sup>nd</sup> CiTIES Forum was held on June 2<sup>nd</sup> in Brussels. This one-day event organised by the European Commission was aimed at discussing the future of the EU Urban Agenda. Some 700 participants attended the venue in Brussels' "The Square" and much more followed through web streaming.

The key point of the second edition of CiTIES Forum was the unveiling of results of the public consultations on the EU Urban Agenda launched by the European Commission in July 2014. Last year's edition was seen as a milestone because it revealed the profound need for an integrated approach towards urban policy in Europe. For last two decades much has been said and many patterns have been developed but until now no clear po-

licy for European cities and towns has been made.

Two high-level panels gathered representatives of the EU Institutions, European cities and stakeholders and aimed at answering two key questions, respectively: what should be the next steps and who should do what for the EU Urban Agenda? The message heard from speakers was clear: Europe needs this instrument and an integrated approach is the only possible way to achieve this.

First steps have been done, in particular in last months with the public consultation, works at the European Parliament on the report on the urban dimension of the EU policies and Latvian presidency. **Kerstin**

**Westphal MEP** (S&D, Germany) who is the EP rapporteur on the topic attended the first high-level panel and argued that the added-value should be the key point of each European policy and in this case the added-value for urban and suburban areas as well as the partnership principal are fundamental in further drafting of the EU urban agenda.

One argument, which had already been said multiple times, and which resounded during the Forum was that cities, or urban areas as a whole, need to take an active part in urban policymaking - in consultations and works. They should be given a direct access to European institutions and should be listened to as they, both their representatives and citizens, are the best source of knowledge on what they need and what should be done.

**Jan Olbrycht MEP** (EPP, Poland), President of the URBAN Intergroup, invited to take part in the second roundtable, underlined that an integrated approach is needed, and the word integrated is really meant as all levels - local, regional, national and European - should work together and agree with each other in order to create a sustainable instrument: a European urban policy.

"European cities do not need a structure or imposed guidelines. They need clear priorities around which they will organise their activities. The EU Urban Agenda should be a reference point for cities and to be so a close cooperation, firstly between different fields inside the European Commission, and secondly, between the Commission and other actors should be established" said **Jan Olbrycht MEP**.

He also argued that there might be a misunderstanding on the ground of subsidiarity



**Kerstin Westphal MEP** (S&D, Germany) Rapporteur on the urban dimensions of EU policies and **Corina Crețu**, European Commissioner for Regional Policy.

saying that many cities are afraid that a new European policy will be imposed on them. "EU urban policy is to support, to help and to create a good priorities' framework FOR cities," and, "it should be proposed and not imposed" he added.

Also present at the panel was **Mark Frequin**, Director-General for Housing and Building in the Dutch Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relation, who stressed that there is a misleading notion of completing the EU Urban Agenda with the Amsterdam Declaration next year. "Policymaking is a journey with many stops. Riga or Amsterdam Declarations are just steps in this process but it will continue" he said.

Apart from the two high-level panels, participants could attend one of four workshops respectively focused on green cities, inclusive cities, smart cities and urban-rural linkages. The official launch of the "Urban Innovative Actions" took place in the afternoon. This pilot project which aims at testing innovative solutions to key urban challenges was granted a total budget of €371mln for 2015-2017 period.

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## URBAN events and meetings

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### STRASBOURG

#### Discussions on Urban revitalisation processes and the Riga Declaration

The monthly meetings of the URBAN Intergroup took place in May and June during Plenary sittings of the European Parliament in Strasbourg. The key objective of these meetings is to discuss issues related to urban development and to exchange views and good practises, not only with members

and partners of the Intergroup, but also with stakeholders active in various fields.

#### Urban revitalisation

In May, the Intergroup hosted **Kersten Gerkens**, Director of the Office of Urban Re-

generation and Residential Development of Leipzig City Council, who delivered a presentation on urban restructuring in relation to EPOurban project. This project gathering cities from Central Europe was aimed at enabling private owners (of flats, houses and other buildings) to be involved in urban development. He presented the framework conditions of the project, its results and core-outputs and drew conclusions and approaches for consolidation and implementation in Integrated Urban Development Strategies. Vivid discussion followed Mr Gerkens's presentation and several issues were raised, e.g. rental prices and affordability of real-estate

in Europe, involvement of citizens in urban matters, homelessness and social inclusion. One of the conclusions drew from the discussion was that urban revitalisation can be a very fruitful process but can also be a troublemaker. It may act as leverage of attractiveness and thus change the profile of a district or area, which may have either positive or negative consequences on the local community.

"Idealistically, urban revitalisation can lead to social inclusion. Unfortunately, in practice it can also lead to social exclusion" said **Jan Olbrycht MEP** (EPP, Poland), President of the URBAN Intergroup.

**EPOurban** is a project implemented through CENTRAL EUROPE program co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund. It gathers **seven cities** and two partners in Central Europe: Bolzano (Italy), Bratislava (Slovakia), Celje (Slovenia), Sopot (Poland), Voitsberg Region (Austria) and Academia Istropolitana Nova and Aufbauwerk Region Leipzig GmbH. Under the title "**Enabling private owners of residential buildings to integrate into Urban restructuring Processes**" it tries to help bridge gaps between different levels of governance and to help private owners play a role in urban development. The two main objectives are:

- to build capacity of **private owners of residential buildings**, to take adaptation measures and **to generate private investment** into the residential building stock, which can also help tackle issues such as empty building and deprived districts
- to **foster social cohesion** and remove a **critical market-failure in private housing**

## EU Urban Agenda-follow-up

The URBAN Intergroup also held a meeting on June 10<sup>th</sup> in Strasbourg to discuss the Declaration of Ministers towards the EU Urban Agenda adopted during the Informal Meeting of EU Ministers Responsible for Territorial Cohesion and Urban Matters which took place the day before in Riga (Latvia).

**Lambert van Nistelrooij MEP** (EPP, Netherlands), URBAN Intergroup's Vice-President, attended the meeting in Riga and made a short presentation stressing the importance of this Declaration but also reminding that much more has to be done in order to provide the EU with a strong urban policy. He underlined that the EU Urban Agenda will be one of key objectives of the Dutch Presidency, which will steer the Council in the first part of 2016, and that a strong leadership

should be established by that time.

The discussion focused on few other aspects including the relation between regional and urban policies, the role of local and regional authorities in the EU Urban Agenda and the ownership of the Agenda.

Members of the Intergroup agreed there should be a strong focus on the coordination of works related to the EU Urban Agenda within the European Commission, as well as between different levels of governance. **Jan Olbrycht MEP** (EPP, Poland), President of the URBAN Intergroup has since tabled a Written Question to the European Commission asking for clarifications on subject of next steps towards the Urban Agenda and the coordination of policies and instruments with an urban dimension within the Commission.

The **Riga Declaration** identifies the key elements and principles that should be taken into account in future work on development of the EU Urban Agenda during the upcoming Presidencies.

The main elements of the EU Urban Agenda covered by the Declaration are: recognition of the diversity of urban areas, focus on opportunities offered by urban areas, improvement of the urban dimension of EU policies and cooperation between urban areas.

# Looking ahead

We would like to invite you to the conference organised jointly by the URBAN Intergroup, STOA, JPI Europe and DG Research & Innovation: "Transition towards sustainable and liveable urban futures - September 29<sup>th</sup> 14:30-18:00, European Parliament in Brussels, PHS 3C050

Apart from the OPEN DAYS, there are at least 3 other venues which may interest you in autumn.

- EURO CITIES 2015 - November 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>, Copenhagen/Malmö
- 2015 Annual Polis Conference - November 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup>, Brussels
- 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP21/CMP21) - November 30<sup>th</sup>-December 11<sup>th</sup>, Paris



13<sup>th</sup> European Week of Regions and Cities

OPEN Brussels

DAYS 12 - 15 October 2015

The URBAN Intergroup would like to draw your attention to the biggest regional and urban oriented event taking place in Brussels this autumn. These are of course OPEN DAYS 2015. Taking place between October 12<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>, this annual four-day European Week of Regions

and Cities is being organised for the thirteenth time and is to host over 100 workshops.

OPEN DAYS have become a networking and exchange platform for experts, MEPs and stakeholders committed to regional and local development, where issues such as growth and jobs, social inclusion and economic development, public-private partnerships, regional innovation and cross-border cooperation can be discussed and good practices exchanged.

There is also a new point on the agenda - the OPEN Urban DAY organised on Thursday, October 15<sup>th</sup> in different buildings in Brussels' "Canal Area". This joint undertaking of the European Commission, DG REGIO, Committee of Regions and Brussels Capital Region will be an occasion for some 800 practitioners, experts and officials from all over Europe to take part in various workshops oriented on the new financial urban instruments, Smart Cities, Urban Innovative Actions, circular economy, revitalisation and many others.

OPEN DAYS programme and registration platform are available online at [www.ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/opendays/od2015](http://www.ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/opendays/od2015)

## Others about us

### UITP: Public transport and urban mobility at the core of the URBAN Intergroup



The International Association of Public Transport (UITP) is pleased to see that also thanks to our fruitful cooperation, mobility and public transport becomes more visible on the Intergroup's agenda. There is also a robust argument to be made in favour of placing a strong emphasis on the development of urban transport infrastructures in the EU.

Cities are the powerhouses of the European Union. More than 80% of the European GDP is generated in urban areas. The economic health and the competitiveness of European cities represent key conditions for the needed wealth creation leading to more and better jobs. This

priority makes sense as the improvement of sustainable urban transport represents an important lever for growth, innovation, employment and sustainable development of cities where two-thirds of all European citizens live. By generating benefits well beyond the mobility sphere and contributing to the cities competitiveness and well-being, public transport investments also support the very dynamic of the EU Package for Jobs, Growth and Investment.

UITP is ready to actively support the URBAN Intergroup in advocating for more public transport-friendly European cities. We are also very much looking forward to our joint seminar in the European Parliament in late October.



Jan Olbrycht - ASP 12E102 - [jan.olbrycht@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:jan.olbrycht@europarl.europa.eu) - tel.: +32 (0)2 28 455 11

Agnes Jongerius - ASP 11G173 - [agnes.jongerius@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:agnes.jongerius@europarl.europa.eu) - tel.: +32 (0)2 28 456 99

Karima Delli - ASP 04F151 - [karima.delli@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:karima.delli@europarl.europa.eu) - tel.: +32 (0)2 28 453 62

Lambert van Nistelrooij - ASP 08E206 - [lambert.vannistelrooij@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:lambert.vannistelrooij@europarl.europa.eu) - tel.: +32 (0)2 28 454 34

Peter Simon - ASP 12G158 - [peter.simon@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:peter.simon@europarl.europa.eu) - tel.: +32 (0)2 28 455 58