



November 2015 - 16<sup>th</sup> issue

# NEWSLETTER

<http://urban-intergroup.eu>

"Dear readers, I am flattered to write some words on the "European Urban Agenda" in our URBAN newsletter. It is in our common interest to put the Urban Agenda into the focus of European politics.

As rapporteur for the European Parliament report on the urban dimension of EU policies, I had many meetings and discussions about an European Urban Agenda. And after remarks and comments from Member States as well as from some MEPs, I have the impression that we still have to fight for this focus, and we still need to explain.

The goal of the report (and of all MEPs who were involved)

is not to suggest new legislation and to impose additional bureaucracy for cities. It is also not our aim to be lobbyists for Paris, London, Berlin and other big capitals, but we also care for smaller and medium sized urban areas. And I think we, as people who fight for urban interests, should also make clear that supporting cities and urban areas does not mean that we want to weaken rural areas.

What we want is a better and earlier involvement of urban areas in European decision making, and a better coordination within the Commission.

For example by creating a special "coordinator" and a Task Force in the Commission, who can oversee urban related legislation. For example by reducing the "red tape" related to the implementation of EU legislation. Or by encouraging Member States to make use of ITIs, CLLD, and even own Operational Programmes for cities.

And, last but not least, by supporting knowledge sharing. We do not think that urban politics should be a "top down" process. More important is the "bottom up": good networks between cities offer an exchange of best practices.

For further steps, I think it is crucial to keep the momentum. Some Member States are quite hesitant regarding an Urban Agenda. The Dutch presidency in the first half of 2016 is on our side. The planned "Declaration of Amsterdam" should become a strong signal for cities and urban areas.

I think also our URBAN Intergroup should play a role in the future of an Urban Agenda. We are a good example of "coordinating urban issues". Some of us are members of REGI, but some work in other committees which also deal with urban issues. We all know how important cities are for growth, jobs, and as motors for innovation. Let's spread the word!



© European Union 2015 / Michel Christen

**Kerstin Westphal MEP** (S&D, Germany)  
*Rapporteur for the urban dimension of EU policies*

# URBAN voice

## VISIT

### London, Europe's leading start-up city

From 23 to 25 September, **Lambert van Nistelrooij MEP** (EPP, Netherlands), vice-president of the URBAN Intergroup, visited London with a delegation from the European Parliament. The visit initiated by the European Internet Forum, offered the Members a hands-on experience of one of the greatest entrepreneurial hotspots and technology hubs in Europe. "London is the Europe's leading start-up city," said Mr **van Nistelrooij** after his visit.

The delegation visited start-up hubs and the Digital Catapult Centre. MEPs also met **Ed Vaizey**, the Minister of State responsible for the digital industries, and spoke about the necessary improvements for the Digital single market (DSM). Mr **van Nistelrooij** said that every start-up cluster has its "own strong points". "In London this is traditionally the access to sufficient high risk capi-



URBAN Intergroup MEPs met in London **Ed Vaizey**, the UK Minister of State responsible for the digital industries.

tal, an aspect where other European cities are lagging behind," he explained. "This is the reason why London ranks number 6 worldwide for best start-up ecosystems and a city like Amsterdam is only placed number 19", he said. He added that the aim of such visits is to share best practices which can be used in "stimulating the development of good start-up ecosystems all over Europe".

## BOOK LAUNCH

### *Cities in the spotlight* by Lambert van Nistelrooij MEP



**Lambert van Nistelrooij MEP** (EPP, Netherlands), vice-president of the URBAN Intergroup, launched his 28<sup>th</sup> publication *Cities in the spotlight* on the 14<sup>th</sup> of October, during the European Week of the Regions and Cities. Guests of honour were **Markku Markkula** (EPP, Finland), president of the Committee of the Regions (CoR) and **Jan Olbrycht MEP** (EPP, Poland), president of the URBAN Intergroup. The book discusses the importance of an integrated policy for cities. Mr **Van Nistelrooij MEP** said: "For years the cities in 'the Europe

of the regions' played a supporting role. Today, almost three out of four Europeans live in cities". He insisted that cities are more and more seen as engines for economic growth and creators of jobs. Therefore, the European Union has to wake up: "we need an EU Urban Agenda", he urged. He explained that the Netherlands may play an important role there. He stressed that during the Dutch Presidency of the EU, the EU Urban Agenda will be a focal point and announced that the intension was to work towards the "Pact of Amsterdam", "a bottom-up approach where cities are empowered and play a key role", to be presented by May next year.

## TESTIMONY

### Agnes Jongerius MEP visited Rotterdam South

"Friday 16 October I went on a working visit to Rotterdam South with a delegation from the European Institutions. Rotterdam is a typical port city, with traditionally many working class neighbourhoods and a high percentage of immigrants. The population of the south of the city is even predominantly of immigrant decent. This has brought

many socioeconomic problems to the burrow, such as crime, poverty and unemployment. It is, however, also a neighbourhood where many people and institutions are working hard to make the difference and improve the quality of life; as I shall show you later. We were welcomed by the now quite famous major of Rotterdam, **Ahmed Aboutaleb**,

who told us enthusiastically about his city and the project they have started to change the South for the better. This project is named "The National Program Rotterdam South" and is a joint program between the municipality, schools, government and social housing associations. After this interesting presentation we went into the neighbourhood to meet the people involved.

We have visited many places and spoken to so many people over the day that I can never do them all justice. However I would like to highlight two meetings I found especially inspiring. The first was a school in the *Afrikaanderwijk* neighbourhood. It was built in 1900 for rural folk coming to the city to work at the docks and shipyards, but now houses mainly first and second generation Moroccans, Turks and Surinamese. At this school, we had a talk with children from all walks of life who were thinking, together with the other partners, about how to improve their own surroundings. They really inspired me with their enthusiasm and, frankly, simple yet brilliant solutions.

### ***Improving the lives of vulnerable European citizens***

The second meeting I would like to point out was the one with the director of Woonbron, one of the biggest social housing associations of the city. This organisation really invests in quality housing and tries to help their tenants any way they possibility can. The Dutch social housing association sector is traditionally very strong, providing quality not-for-profit housing for lower and middle income families. The average rent is only €479, which leaves people with higher disposable income without imposing a cost

## **COOPERATION**

### **MEPs seek to promote regional policy dialogue with China**

**I**n Shanghai, at the beginning of November, a delegation of the European Parliament headed by **Lambert van Nistelrooij MEP** (EPP, Netherlands), vice-president of the URBAN Intergroup, explored cooperation possibilities between China and the EU in the field of Information Communication and Technology (ICT), under the "World Cities: EU third countries cooperation on urban development" project.

This preparatory action, backed by the Inter-



**Agnes Jongerius MEP** (S&D, Netherlands), vice-president of the URBAN Intergroup, met with children from a school in the 'Afrikaanderwijk' neighbourhood.

© URBAN Intergroup

on society (government only provides some guaranties). However this unique and productive system has come under pressure from the European Commission, who deems it a form of State aid!

I think that, also in light of the horrific events in Paris, we should redouble our efforts to improve the lives of vulnerable European citizens who are increasingly excluded from society, such as immigrants and the poor. Affordable quality housing is not the only answer, but it should be one of the priorities, just like schooling and decent jobs. The city of Rotterdam is leading the way, but can not work without the right support from Brussels. Therefore, I would like to call on my follow URBAN Intergroup members to work together and rectify the Almunia Package, making affordable, decent housing for a broad group of citizens the service of general economic interest it deserves to be!"

**Agnes Jongerius MEP** (S&D, Netherlands)  
*vice-president of the URBAN Intergroup*

group, seeks to support decentralised cooperation between regional and urban authorities in EU and non EU strategic partners such as China, India, Canada and Japan. MEPs visited the Chinese Business Network headquarters and had an open dialogue with its CEO. They discussed about the broadcasting of European regional and urban issues in China and the innovation capacity of China and the EU.

## Cities as engines of competitiveness

How to effectively revitalise urban spaces? How to shape liveable cities? How to use new technologies to manage cities? Those key questions were at the centre of the debate during the international conference “City 2015 - city management” organised on November 17<sup>th</sup> in Katowice (Poland) by **Jan Olbrycht MEP** (EPP, Poland), president of the URBAN Intergroup. The keynote speech was delivered by **Professor Michael Parkinson** from the University of Liverpool (ULK) who outlined the *raison d’être* of urban policy both from national and European perspectives. He underlined that “cities drive regional economies and are engines of competitiveness”. The question “what kind of cities do we want to develop and build” is crucial in the decision making. Different challenges of urban policy with a special focus on urban regeneration were discussed.

### **Taking into account citizens’ needs**

The debate later focused on how to keep the balance between modernisation of urban spaces and taking into account citizens’ needs. In conclusion **Jan Olbrycht** stressed



**Jan Olbrycht MEP** (EPP, Poland), president of the URBAN Intergroup, organised the conference “City 2015 - city management” in Katowice (Poland).

that the European Union and some Members States are more and more interested in urban areas. The development of big cities, but also of second tier cities will be very important for the growth of the whole EU. He added that “the role of cities will be essential in the upcoming discussion about the future cohesion policy”. More than 200 local politicians, urban planners, experts and students took part to the conference.

---

## URBAN events and meetings

---

### TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION

## Strategic Research & Innovation Agenda (SRIA) launched in Brussels

The Joint Programming Initiative (JPI) URBAN Europe launched its “Strategic Research & Innovation Agenda” (SRIA) during a conference co-hosted by the URBAN Intergroup on 29<sup>th</sup> September at the European Parliament in Brussels. More than 250 urban stakeholders, urban policy makers and representatives from European institutions and beyond joined the conference “Transition towards Sustainable and Liveable Urban Futures”.

The SRIA defines urban research priorities for transnational cooperation. Its ambition is to set the scene for a new paradigm in

research, technology development and innovation. It also promotes new ways to facilitate urban transition towards sustainable, resilient and liveable urban areas.

“We are the missing link that can make a difference, bridging silos with an integrated approach, linking national and European funding and linking science and policy”, said **Ingolf Schädler**, Chair of the JPI Urban Europe Governing Board.

**Lambert van Nistelrooij MEP** (EPP, Netherlands), vice-president of the URBAN Intergroup, stressed the importance of the SRIA in the context of the ongoing works on the

EU Urban Agenda and the UN-Habitat's Global Urban Agenda. He also suggested applying an "invitational approach" opening up for better research and closer cooperation with citizens, NGOs and practitioners. JPI Urban Europe is a Member State-led initiative set up in 2010 to strengthen European research and innovation in the field of urban development. Other co-organisers of the conference were the European Parliament's Science and Technology Options Assessment unit (STOA) and European Commission DG Research and Innovation.



The "Strategic Research & Innovation Agenda" (SRIA) was launched in the European Parliament in Brussels at a conference co-hosted by the URBAN Intergroup.

## COP21

# Urban transport at the forefront of the fight against climate change

One month before the COP 21 UN climate talks in Paris, the URBAN Intergroup, jointly with the International Association of Public Transport (UITP) Central and Eastern Europe, organised on 20 October at the European Parliament in Brussels a seminar entitled "The road to Paris: Advancing climate action with sustainable urban transport". Participants showed that national ambitions agreed in Paris could be achieved by providing a greater role to collective mobility initiatives. They stressed that public transport was at the forefront of the transition to sustainable mobility.

### *Urban public transport is our main bullet*

In her keynote speech, **Marie Buchet** from the Permanent representation of France to the EU, agreed that "advocating public transport within the COP21 and the Lima-Paris Action Agenda (LPAA) [was] clear for everyone". According to her, there is no doubt that cities are fundamental in the fight against climate change. She reminded participants that urban transport accounted for around 40% of emissions from the entire transport sector.

**Gilles Pargneaux MEP** (S&D, France), member of the URBAN Intergroup, presented the recently adopted European Parliament's position for the Paris conference. As rapporteur, he stressed that the role of local public transport authorities and transport operators was crucial in introducing low-carbon fleets and technologies. "While climate

change is the fight of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, urban public transport is our main bullet," he said. Mr **Pargneaux** showed two main actions to be taken in the field of transport to address climate change in cities: promoting the development of sustainable urban transport by promoting railways, trams, electrified buses, electric cars and bikes; and supporting urban transport in developing countries.

**Daniela Rosca**, Head of Clean transport and Sustainable urban mobility unit at the European Commission's DG for Mobility and Transport (DG MOVE) presented some elements of the 2013 Urban Mobility Package. She said that "public transport [was] definitely an important part of EU's solutions towards climate change". She insisted that the fight against climate change should not be perceived as a cost but as an investment in the future.

Representatives of Alstom and Warsaw public bus company gave examples of technological solutions and investments in public transport which lead to the reduction of CO2 emissions in urban areas.

**Philip Turner**, Sustainable development manager at UITP, later presented the association's Declaration on climate leadership gathering 350 climate pledges from 80 cities and 110 UITP members. Concluding the meeting, **Jan Olbrycht MEP** (EPP, Poland), president of the URBAN Intergroup stressed that the COP21 was "just the beginning for a broader change".

# Forward looking discussion on EU Urban Agenda

A representative of the European Commission presented the URBAN Intergroup the state of play of the EU Urban Agenda during 29 October meeting in Strasbourg. **Olivier Baudalet**, Policy officer at Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (Unit Inclusive Growth, Urban and Territorial Development), reminded MEPs that the aim of the EU Urban Agenda was to involve cities in the design of policies at EU and national level, as well as to mobilise them in the implementation of the European and national policies.

## Europe can help cities address common challenges

He explained that the Urban Agenda will focus on 12 key priority themes: jobs and skills in the local economy, urban poverty, housing, inclusion of migrants and refugees, sustainable use of land and nature-based solutions, circular economy, climate adaptation, energy transition, urban mobility, air quality, digital transition and finally innovative and responsible public procurement. Those themes, broadly supported by Member States, cities and the European Commission,

address the major challenges faced actually by the cities and require integrated actions at different levels. They were identified during the consultation phase which showed that Europe can help cities address common challenges and also contribute to the Commission’s priorities such as a resilient Energy Union with a forward-looking climate change policy.

Cross cutting issues are linked to these 12 themes, such as good governance, sound and strategic urban planning or the availability and quality of public services of general interest.

Each of 12 priority themes will be covered by a partnership which will prepare and implement an Action Plan in the 2/3-year timeframe. The aim of the partnership is to develop a multilevel and multi-dimensional approach. A partnership will be composed by around 15 members representing the European Commission, Member States, cities, NGOs and experts and will have two coordinators. During the meeting the European Commission confirmed that the three first Partnerships will start this year. Those will focus on housing, inclusion of migrants and refugees and urban poverty.



# Looking ahead

## DUTCH PRESIDENCY

### Towards the "Pact of Amsterdam"



The URBAN Intergroup looks very closely to the work of the current Luxembourg Presidency and the coordination between the successive presidencies of the Council in the field of urban development. In the letters sent in the end of September to Luxembourg and Dutch ministers responsible for urban matters, the URBAN Intergroup asked for the clarification concerning further steps to be taken in order to develop the EU Urban Agenda and concrete initiatives in this matter. Responses received clearly show that the Dutch Presidency will further develop the

urban dimension of EU policies during the first half of 2016. The culminating point will be the approval in May 2016 of the "Pact of Amsterdam" by ministers responsible for urban matters. To meet this objective, **Nicolaas Beets** was appointed Dutch Urban Envoy. His task will be to bring forward the EU Urban Agenda and to ensure continuity after the Dutch Presidency. No doubt that the City of Amsterdam will be the place of different important meetings during this Presidency, including those regarding the future of European cities. The EU Capitals Mayors' meeting is already planned for 20-21<sup>st</sup> April 2016. Ministers in charge of urban matters will also meet on 30<sup>th</sup> May 2016.

## Others about us



### CEMR proposals for an Urban Agenda that fits the diversity on the ground

For many years we worked with the European Parliament and the Commission on the development of an EU Urban Agenda. As we approach its launch in May 2016 and the Global Urban Agenda (Habitat III) in October 2016, CEMR wishes to highlight some of the points raised in our position paper promoting an EU Urban Agenda:

- The EU urban agenda must not only fit the diverse needs of municipalities irrespective of their size, it must also be pertinent for local governments in functional areas.
- This agenda is an opportunity to boost local governments' involvement in the decision making process and to match their priorities. To that end, CEMR calls for an Urban

Agenda inspired by the principle of governance in partnership, enabling all levels of government to cooperate.

- CEMR has worked closely with the European Parliament's URBAN Intergroup during the development of the EU Urban Agenda and a similar collaboration must be maintained at the global level (Habitat III).

The future of urban territorial development will be central to discussions at CEMR's Congress in Nicosia (Cyprus) on 20-22<sup>th</sup> April 2016. We hope that you can join us!



Jan Olbrycht - ASP 12E102 - jan.olbrycht@europarl.europa.eu - tel.: +32 (0)2 28 455 11  
Agnes Jongerius - ASP 11G173- agnes.jongerius@europarl.europa.eu - tel.: +32 (0)2 28 456 99  
Karima Delli - ASP 04F151 - karima.delli@europarl.europa.eu - tel.: +32 (0)2 28 453 62  
Lambert van Nistelrooij - ASP 08E206 - lambert.vannistelrooij@europarl.europa.eu - tel.: +32 (0)2 28 454 34  
Peter Simon - ASP 12G158 - peter.simon@europarl.europa.eu - tel.: +32 (0)2 28 455 58