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NEWSLETTER

<http://urban-intergroup.eu>



"Once, I was an ambassador, in Latvia, Saudi-Arabia, Finland and Kuwait. Last year, almost overnight, I was appointed 'Dutch Urban Envoy'. My mission: to get 28 Member States, institutions and stakeholders, 38 partners in total, to agree on the text of the *Pact of Amsterdam*, during the current Dutch Presidency of the EU. If I succeed, the Pact will be signed on 30 May 2016. It will establish the *EU Urban Agenda* (EUUA).

After that, there is another hill to climb: to formalise and consolidate the conclusions of the Pact, the aim is to have the Member States endorse the Pact of Amsterdam in Council

conclusions in the General Affairs Council on 21 June. If both are realized, I will be a happy Urban Envoy indeed.

The aim of the EU Urban Agenda is, in short, **to maximize the contribution of cities to European objectives and goals**, through a focus on better regulation, better access to funding and better knowledge exchange. All of this seen from the urban perspective and, of course, in close harmony with the surrounding rural areas. Cities should be more involved – and earlier – in the design of EU policies and the legislation. EU legislation has a large impact on urban matters! The EUUA does not aim to create new rules. It rather strives to make a more effective and better coordinated use of existing ones.

The EUUA will launch Thematic Partnerships (four of which have already started, Inclusion of migrants and asylum seekers, Air quality, Urban poverty and Housing) to identify bottlenecks and come up with proposals for improvement.

As the Dutch minister for the Interior and Kingdom Relations, Mr **Plasterk** stated in the REGI Committee last January, that the European Parliament has – for years – been instrumental in promoting and supporting the development of the EUUA. And, as **Kerstin Westphal MEP** (S&D, Germany) correctly pointed out in this same newsletter last November, the Dutch Presidency is on your side. However, a Presidency is a short-lived affair. After 1 July, we will have to let go and see how the Agenda holds up in the future, preferably for years to come. The EUUA is of course a European project and continuity is key. In the past months, I have seen initial hesitations and doubts towards the EUUA and the Pact turned into solid support and even enthusiasm. We want to keep this momentum going. I am sure that the EUUA can count on the continued support of the URBAN Intergroup."

Nicolaas Beets
Dutch Urban Envoy

URBAN voice

MEETING

Joint REGI and COTER hearing on the EU Urban agenda

Members of the URBAN Intergroup took actively part into the hearing on the EU Urban Agenda organised jointly by the European Parliament Committee on Regional development (REGI) and the Committee of the Region's Commission for Territorial Cohesion Policy and the EU Budget (COTER). This meeting was a discussion between experts and practitioners about the Pact of Amsterdam and the future developments of the EU urban policy.

In his kick-off presentation, Professor **Michael Parkinson** from Liverpool University summarised 20 years of European Union urban actions. He explained the purpose of the real European urban policy. In conclusion, he stressed that there is a need to reconsider EU regional policy in light of the development of a new European urban policy. He said that those policies should be complementary and that the concept of "city-region" could reconcile both of them.

Iskra Mihaylova MEP (ALDE, Bulgaria), Chairwoman of the EP REGI Committee, said during the meeting: "I firmly believe that the European Parliament, together with the other EU institutions, national governments and local and regional actors, has a key role to play in shaping the new urban paradigm". **Raffaele Cattaneo** (EPP, Italy), chairman of the CoR's COTER Committee welcomed the



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efforts announced by the Dutch Presidency to develop the EU Urban Agenda. However, he underlined that "it is crucial that the EU Urban Agenda goes beyond the intergovernmental level and is closely linked to the European Commission Better regulation Agenda." He said that it should include within its framework the use of the Territorial and Urban Impact Assessment.

This first REGI-COTER hearing was a follow-up of the joint statement "Towards the Pact of Amsterdam" signed by the chairs of both committees on 13 October at the occasion of the 2015 Open Days.

URBAN events and meetings

COP21

Sustainable urban mobility is now a topic on everyone's lips

Karima Delli MEP (Greens/EFA) report on Sustainable urban mobility aims to redirect urban mobility towards sustainable modes of transport with the goal of facing up to the challenges of the XXIst century: protecting the climate, health and the environment, as well as promoting everyone's access to mobility.

She explains: "At a time when the fight against global warming is a worldwide challenge, the fact that our journeys are organised around cars is preventing the Euro-

pean Union from playing its full part. Whilst some sectors such as agriculture and industry have reduced their greenhouse gas emissions, transport sector emissions have increased by 30% since 1990. Transports alone are responsible for a fifth of greenhouse gas emissions in the European Union, most of which come from road traffic. To achieve its emissions' targets by 2030, the European Union must reverse this trend, mostly in cities, where, by 2050, 80% of the world population will live.

Giving space and infrastructure back to all citizens and improving accessibility

There is a social emergency! Mobility is the prerequisite for people's participation in the life of the city. But it has become a factor of inequality. In 2016, too many European citizens need to spend a large share of their time and income to transportation. Some of them don't even have access to it, due to their lack of resources.

It is crucial to involve in the provision of information, and the consultation in urban mobility, EU citizens, freight transport operators and other stakeholders in order to make planning, development, and decision-making more transparent and affordable to all.

The Parliament has considered that the development of sustainable urban mobility plans (SUMPs) should be an important element in the consideration of funding EU projects in the area of urban transport. They have an essential goal to play, in achieving EU targets regarding CO2 emissions, noise, air pollution and accident reduction.

Improving the environment, quality of life and health

There is also a health emergency! According to the UN, by 2050 pollution will be the leading cause of death worldwide. Major European cities are now used to pollution peaks, and every year about 430,000 premature deaths are due to fine particles, mainly emitted by diesel engines.

To prevent from this scourge, the EU must adopt ambitious targets at all decision-making levels. Hence, priority must be given to SUMPs based on clean transports such as tramways, cable cars, bikes and car sharing, while actively working in modal shift and inter-modality. That is why we propose to double the mesh and use of public transport in 2030.

We also urge for an ambitious target regarding the rates of bicycle use in urban areas by 2030 and one Sunday free of cars every year in the UE.

We have to guarantee that pollutant concentrations do not exceed the levels set in the World Health Organization guidelines.

The Parliament points out that there is a need for a holistic approach to air pollution in European cities. We call the Commission



Karima Delli MEP (Greens/EFA, France) is the author of a report which aims to redirect urban mobility towards sustainable modes of transport.

to put effective measures to comply with the Ambient Air Quality Directive, notably by setting a clear timeframe for the implementation of Real-World Driving Emission Testing for private vehicles!

Saving energy and protecting the climate

Then, there is a climate emergency. In order to achieve the EU target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 60% by 2050, the report urges the Commission, the Member States and local authorities to act for a gradual reduction by half of conventional petrol cars in cities by 2030 and for their disappearance in 2050. Alternative fuels are a solution, we need new technologies like second- and third-generation biofuels, hydrogen based on renewables for example.

Making urban mobility more sustainable, safe and secure

In my report we highlight the importance of Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) which are an opportunity to make mobility safer, more efficient, environmentally friendly and fluid.

There is urgency for the lives of road users! By remaining focused on cars, the current model of urban mobility puts lives in danger: nearly 42,000 deaths per year are caused by road accident in Europe at an estimated cost of €45 billion.

I therefore call on Member States and local authorities to review safe speed manage-

ment before 2020 and to set up low emissions zones.

Let's not forget goods, whose transport leads to congestion and environmental problems. It is time to launch a European freight recovery plan.

Minimising external costs and making better-quality investments

Whereas sustainable urban mobility requires investments for the sake of public interest, I propose to allocate a significant share of revenues from the Eurovignette to the improvement of urban mobility, according to the 'polluter pays' principle.

Eventually, we count on the Commission to

invest in research projects and innovation related to urban transport, through its research framework programs and its European Strategic Investment Fund (EFIS).

Let's face reality : an alternative mobility is not only possible but it is indispensable. We need every transport systems to be seen through the prism of sustainable development. This means a constant search of balance between social, environmental and economic impacts of transport and between the needs of present generations and those of future generations.

This report is a first step to rethink mobility towards a better life in the cities of tomorrow."

AWARD

The EU Prize for contemporary architecture presented to MEPs

On 4 February in Strasbourg, members of the URBAN Intergroup had a chance to learn more about the European Union Prize for contemporary architecture – Mies van der Rohe Award, granted every two years to acknowledge and reward quality architectural production in Europe.

The presentation of the EU Prize for contemporary architecture and its potential contribution to EU policies was made by European Commission representative **Monica Urian**, DG Education and Culture, Creative Europe Program. Meeting participants learned about the huge developments of the Prize since its creation. The role of the unique archive with all nominated projects was underlined in the presentation, as well as the whole organizational network. Indeed, candidates for the Award are put forward by a broad group of independent experts from all over Europe, as well as from the architects' associations that form part of the European Council of Architects and other European national architects' associations.



The new Philharmonic Hall of Szczecin (Poland) received the European Union Prize for contemporary architecture – Mies van der Rohe Award 2015.

During the discussion, MEPs particularly appreciated the collected data base on contemporary architectural trends. They also welcomed the analyses which show, among others, typologies of recently constructed buildings in Europe. In conclusion, meeting participants discussed how to further develop this unique EU Prize and link it to policy making.

The European Union Prize for contemporary architecture – Mies van der Rohe Awards was created in 1988 jointly by the European Commission and the Mies van der Rohe Foundation in Barcelona. It is currently supported by the Creative Europe Programme. It is the most prestigious architecture prize for finished constructions in Europe.

At 2015 Prize edition, 420 nominated projects were selected from which members of the jury shortlisted 40. Five finalist works competed for the Prize and one "Emerging Architect" was chosen to receive a special mention. The winner of the 2015 edition is the new Philharmonic Hall of Szczecin (Poland).

The Young Talent Architecture Prize (YTAP) was launched in September 2015. This special prize will recognise the best master degree projects in architecture in Europe.

Looking ahead

URBAN event

The URBAN Intergroup will organise with the EIB a joint conference **"How Europe's towns and cities can address the current refugee crises?"** This conference will take place on Wednesday 6 April from 14.00 to 17.00 at the EIB Brussels Office, Rond Point Schuman 6.

EU 2016 In April and May, the city of Amsterdam will host important events in the framework of the **Dutch Presidency:**

- 14 April: Urban innovation event 2016
- 21 April: EU Capital Mayors Summit
- 30 May: Manifestation of European City-makers
- 30 May: Conference of Cities and Regions (CoR)
- 30 May: Informal meeting of ministers responsible for urban matters (approval of the Pact of Amsterdam)



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You can join local and regional elected representatives from across the continent and beyond, at the occasion of **CEMR Congress** in Nicosia, Cyprus. This big urban event will be held from 20 to 22 April under the motto **"Tomorrow starts today! A Local & Regional Vision of Europe 2030"**.

30 sessions will be organised on 7 themes that affect citizens' daily life and local public policy.

For more information: www.cemr2016.eu

Others about us

Energy cities wants a place for local authorities in the Energy Union governance



energycities

WHERE ACTION & VISION MEET

2016 is Pact of Amsterdam year, but not only! Between now and December, fundamental legislation in the field of energy will be reviewed, providing numerous opportunities for urban areas. At the occasion of the Energy Union "birthday speech", Commissioner **Sefčovič** himself noted that existing urban infrastructure needed to be better connected to favour "environmental and social impacts" the "development of new skills" and "local job creation".

If we take him at his word, this should translate into a rebalancing of power dynamics, whereby local authorities' role is better

taken into account at national level, and especially in the governance of the Energy Union, through which Member States are expected to produce National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs).

With some 5,000 Covenant of Mayors cities all across Europe having adopted a Sustainable Energy Action Plan (SEAP) of their own, Energy Cities will be looking very closely to what extent NECPs and SEAPs talk a similar language! In line with the Urban Agenda, Energy Cities' 3D vision for the energy future foresees power DEVOLVED to local authorities. As the URBAN Intergroup is a long-time advocate of the Covenant of Mayors movement, we look forwards to a busy programme of reinforced cooperation!



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