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NEWSLETTER

<http://urban-intergroup.eu>

The work of the URBAN Intergroup recognised in the Pact of Amsterdam

“The Pact of Amsterdam is a turning point in the EU’s history”, declared **Jan Olbrycht MEP** (EPP, Poland), President of the URBAN Intergroup, on 30 May in Amsterdam, just after Ministers responsible for urban policy adopted the EU Urban Agenda. Members and partners of the Intergroup are particularly satisfied with the agreed text. For years, they pledged for the recognition of the role of European towns and cities in EU legislation.

The Pact of Amsterdam “introduces very concrete set of actions which will require partnerships in all levels of governance, between European, national, regional and local authorities and other stakeholders,” explained **Jan Olbrycht**. He was especially proud that the work of members and partners of the URBAN Intergroup had been recognised for the first time in an intergovernmental document.

“We need to know who will be responsible for the implementation of the EU Urban Agenda, especially inside the European Commission,” noticed **Kerstin Westphal MEP** (S&D, Germany), rapporteur on the

urban dimension of EU policies. She was taking part to Forum on the EU Urban Agenda organised by the Committee of the Regions. She also mentioned that the inclusion of so-called “functional areas” and the cooperation between urban and rural territories was crucial to address complex challenges faced by European cities.

Lambert van Nistelrooij MEP (EPP, Netherlands), Vice-president of the URBAN Intergroup added that the Pact was not introducing new regulations, “but a commitment from cities in Europe to contribute to resolving central problems, with in return direct access to the European Funds”

The new approach of the Urban Agenda for the EU includes the development of a range of European partnerships. Within these partnerships, the European Commission, Member States and European cities will work together to ensure that the urban dimension is strengthened in EU policies. The partnerships will focus on the twelve priority themes that have been agreed on. Four pilot partnerships already started with support of the Dutch EU Presidency.

PARTNERSHIPS WHICH ALREADY STARTED



The EU Urban Agenda 12 priority themes. (© European Commission)

URBAN voice

MEETING

“Local and regional governments care for those in need”

Matthijs van Miltenburg MEP (ALDE, Netherlands), shadow rapporteur on the urban dimension of EU policies, and **Jan Olbrycht MEP** (EPP, Poland) represented the URBAN Intergroup during the fifth EU Capitals Mayors’ Meeting which took place in Amsterdam on 20-21 April. The meeting gathered together 27 Mayors from the European capital cities and **Corina Crețu**, Commissioner responsible for Regional and Urban Policy to directly discuss the future of European cities.

Mr **van Miltenburg** relates the meeting: “In April, I had the opportunity to attend the direct dialogue between the mayors of EU capital cities and the European Commission in Amsterdam. In light of the Dutch Presidency and the Urban Agenda for the EU, we discussed amongst others the challenge for European cities to manage the effects of the refugee crisis.

Capital cities and other local and regional authorities make great efforts to provide shelter and care for those in need. I was delighted to see the solidarity shown by the Mayors to accommodate refugees in their cities. It is this type of solidarity that is a crucial for our Union and one of the most important



Matthijs van Miltenburg MEP (ALDE, Netherlands) said he was delighted to see the solidarity shown by the Mayors to accommodate refugees in their cities at the fifth EU Capitals Mayors’ Meeting, in Amsterdam.

European values. I strongly regret that the willingness to cooperate between the cities in the Union is so often blocked by Member States.

Without effective European measures and commitment from the national authorities, it will become very difficult for our cities to respond to this crisis in an adequate way. I called upon Member States to assume their responsibilities. By closing the door to solidarity, we won’t shrink the numbers of refugees coming to Europe, we only shrink Europe and its core values.”

NEW STUDY

CEMR reveals the latest numbers on Europe’s towns & regions

From Sweden to Cyprus and from Portugal to Germany, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) new study gives you all the information you need on the structures and competences of towns and regions in over 40 countries in Europe. With this publication, CEMR wants to highlight the territorial diversity of European countries and strengthen mutual knowledge on how all towns, cities and regions work. The study reveals that, in recent years, the number of local entities has remained virtually unchanged in Europe. For example, in Germany, the number of towns and cities has only very slightly fallen, from 11,481 to 11,313. In the Netherlands, the number has fallen from 418 to 390, while in Poland, the number has remained exactly the same, at



2,479. The only notable change indicated in the study is the significant fall in the number of local governments recorded in Turkey. Publication of this study could not have been better timed after the adoption of the Pact of Amsterdam. CEMR believes this adoption is a remarkable step towards a system of

governance in partnership which it has been calling for. With the ink barely dry on the promises contained in the Pact, it is certainly instructive to have a detailed overview of the various components that make up the local and regional spheres.

Available in English and French, "Local and Regional Governments in Europe: Structures and Competences" is the outcome of a study

that was conducted with CEMR's member associations.

You can also take a glimpse inside the world of Local and regional Europe by watching the short video on the subject. It shows ten things you (might not) know about Europe's towns and regions:

<http://bit.ly/localgov2016Video>

URBAN events and meetings

MIGRATION

How EU towns & cities can address the refugee crisis?

The URBAN Intergroup jointly with the European Investment Bank (EIB) organised a conference "How Europe's towns and cities can address the current refugee crisis?" on 6 April.

In the welcoming speech, **Mikołaj Dowgielewicz**, Permanent Representative of the EIB to the EU, stressed that the EIB's aim is to try to help Member States and cities to handle in the most appropriate way investments needed to respond to the unprecedented refugee crisis. **Jan Olbrycht MEP** (EPP, Poland), President of the URBAN Intergroup, stressed the need "to reflect about the current situation EU cities are facing, but also about the evolution of the whole migration process in the future." He also said there is a need to think about the instruments to solve immediately the most urgent problems, but also about what should be changed in the functioning of EU cities.

A need for coordination to better distribute refugees

The first session of the event focused on the integration of refugees from the EU institutions' perspective. Representatives of the European Commission DG Migration and Home Affairs and of DG Regional and Urban Policy presented the available instruments to tackle the crisis and possibilities to use them. They underlined that from the beginning of the refugee crisis, European cities showed great generosity to welcome migrants.

The aim of the second session was to present the issue of refugees' integration from the European towns and cities perspective. The moderator **Lambert van Nistelrooij MEP** (EPP, Netherlands), Vice-president of the



Lambert van Nistelrooij MEP (EPP, Netherlands) stressed during the discussion that mayors are at the political lead in hosting refugees all over Europe.

URBAN Intergroup, stressed that mayors are at the political lead in hosting refugees. CEMR representative drew attention to the fact that the EU institutions and Member States need coordination to better distribute refugees in the whole territory, between big but also small and medium size European cities. He added that local and regional authorities do not receive enough support when hosting refugees.

EUROCITIES representative spoke about "a two-fold challenge of providing for the immediate needs of asylum seekers and refugees, whilst also having to organise the more long-term integration process of all newcomers, essential for ensuring social cohesion over the years to come". He presented the main points of EUROCITIES recent report on refugees' perception and their integration in cities, as well as the city network statement on asylum in cities.

At the end of the meeting, the representative of the city of Amsterdam focused on the inclusion of migrants and refugees in the EU Urban Agenda partnership. "We are just observing the beginning of a long-term migration process in the European Union", concluded **Jan Olbrycht**.

Urban Financial Instruments to support towns & cities' development

On 14 April, the URBAN Intergroup met with **Frank Lee**, Head of Financial Instruments Advisory Division from the European Investment Bank, who made a presentation on Financial instruments.

Financial instruments offer innovative means by which the public sector can help to address some of the market failures inhibiting the development of towns and cities. Financial instruments, with the support of a private sector financial intermediary or fund manager, can "transform" traditional grants into repayable and more sustainable forms of investment. This investment may then be targeted towards a pre-agreed investment strategy funding eligible urban projects, by way of loans, equity or guarantees. Once repaid, such funding is available to be reused to further invest in projects, again on a repayable basis, further multiplying the impact of the original grant resources.

Financial instruments combined with private sector investment

Financial instruments can thus provide the public sector with an additional set of intervention tools to support the development of towns and cities. Depending on the market failures in question, financial instruments can be combined with private sector investment to stimulate development which is otherwise perceived as too risky for the private sector alone (for example through the development of speculative employment space). They can also be used to help address project viability issues, for example on brownfield sites, by combining them with grant programmes to offer more integrated financing solutions. In addition, grant programmes can be useful for supporting pipeline development activities, increasing the number of investment ready projects available for financial instrument support and therefore helping to accelerate delivery timetables.

Through its investment and project structuring experience of financial intermediaries/fund managers, financial instruments offer opportunities for unlocking and channelling private investment to urban development. This may be initially achieved through sharing and reducing the risk faced by the pri-

vate sector on a case by case basis. It can also be achieved on a wider basis through the generation of new market activity to increase investor confidence, which enables certain market failure issues to be better addressed.

A number of different financial instrument delivery models were developed and tested in the 2007-13 Structural Fund programming period. These ranged from financial instruments focused on cities to larger scale national approaches. Thematic approaches represent further options, such as urban regeneration or low carbon sectors (including energy efficiency and renewables). There were also a range of different governance and management structure examples, which provide options in relation to the degree of private and public sector input in the delivery structure. To be targeted and effective, there should be a strong link between the underlying market failure and demand and the proposed investment focus and strategy. Strong working relationships between the private sector financial intermediary/fund manager and wider public sector stakeholders are also crucial in ensuring the financial instrument is integrated into the urban development delivery infrastructure of the locality in question.

The 2014-2020 programming period, envisages a much greater use of financial instruments across a broader range of thematic objectives. A strong platform of experience has already been developed in urban based financial instruments and in developing new financial instruments it is important to build on the experiences gained and lessons learnt to date. To this end, the Commission has also recently adopted a so-called "off the shelf" financial instrument for urban development that provides a "pre-approved" blueprint for how this can be done. The Commission and EIB have also developed "fi-compass" – an information and advisory platform dedicated to financial instruments co-financed by the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF). This aims to provide guidance and support the exchange of best practice to facilitate the implementation of ESIF financial instruments.

Applying the Right to City to older persons

The number of people in the EU aged 65 or over is set to nearly double, from 85 million in 2008 to 151 million in 2060. At the same time, 80% of older people in developed countries already live in urban areas. Both demographic shift and urbanisation are major changes our societies are facing. This means that the most of us will grow old in cities. These changes imply major socio-economical, technological and environmental challenges to be addressed to ensure and further improve the quality of life of all generations while reducing inequalities and combating social exclusion. This is what the "Right to the City" means.

In other words, all citizens, regardless of their age, must benefit from a decent life from a social, political, cultural, economic and environmental point of view, says AGE Platform Europe, a European network of more than 150 organisations of and for people aged 50+ representing over 40 million older people in Europe.

Cities play a key role in fighting discrimination against older persons

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), the urban physical and social environments are key determinants of whether people can remain healthy, independent and autonomous long into their old age. Badly designed environments can indeed exacerbate or compensate for physical and social changes associated with ageing. Cities therefore directly influence how active and healthy we age and play a key role in fighting such discrimination against older persons. They are the best placed to answer challenges the growing number of older urban dwellers are facing, and to provide them with opportunities for ageing well.

This is what WHO calls "age-friendly environments" in its Global Guide for Age-Friendly Cities covering eight domains: outdoor spaces and buildings; transportation; housing; social participation; respect and social inclusion; civic participation and employment; communication and information; and community support and health services. The WHO model is based on the participation of citizens, notably older dwellers, to carry out



Each domain is linked to challenges for ageing well, and is interdependent with at least another.

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urban audits, to develop an action plan and monitor its implementation.

Demographic change has been rightly recognised a cross-cutting issue for the Urban Agenda's themes. This approach is fully in line with the WHO which calls on mainstreaming ageing in all policies. AGE therefore welcomes this choice and invites European Cities to take the opportunity offered by the EU Urban Agenda to design their environments in a way that allow us to benefit from our Right to the City all along our life course.

To help them to do so, AGE has prepared a position paper listing key calls for action in 8 out of the 12 Agenda's themes: inclusion of migrants and refugees, jobs and skills in the local economy, urban poverty, housing, air quality, urban mobility, digital transition and public procurement, while underlying how key meaningful participation of citizens is.

AGE will also work on these issues together with the members of the Covenant on Demographic Change, which has been launched in December 2015 to connect local and regional authorities together with all interested stakeholders that are ready to move forward on age-friendly environments.

For more information:
www.age-platform.eu

TOWARDS THE NEW URBAN AGENDA

European institutions announce their full support to local governments

Each national delegation has to include a local or regional government representative during Habitat III's final conference in Quito this autumn. Together, the representatives of the future Slovak presidency, the European Parliament and the Commission have aligned with CEMR and PLATFORMA's position, presented during the seminar co-organised with the URBAN intergroup on 21 June at the European Parliament.

While the seminar was taking place, preparations were already under way for the final conference in Quito (Ecuador), where the new Global Urban Agenda should be adopted. The European Commission representative (DG REGIO) **Judit Torokne Rozsa** supported the idea of having a local government representative in each national delegation. This idea was strongly endorsed by the Member of the European Parliament and President of the URBAN intergroup **Jan Olbrycht** (EPP, Poland), who stated: "Let's fight together for a greater role for local governments." "We do not want one level to decide for everyone. Local and regional governments have to show the way", confirmed **Elena Szolgayová**, representing the future Slovak presidency of the Council of the EU. "It is our ambition to support you". As such, the Deputy Mayor of Cologne, **Andreas Wolter**, stated: "The European Union needs to support the demands of the Global Taskforce for local and regional governments (GTF) for the recognition of a special status for local governments within the governing bodies of the United Nations and UN Habitat.



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The Quito conference is a good thing, but what comes next?

"The Quito conference will not be limited to a simple approval of the agreement by States", explained the representative of Habitat III, **Tobias Kettner**. "If it's true that it will lay the foundations for a new Global Urban Agenda, Quito will also be the opportunity to focus on the action and implementation of the Agenda." To which CEMR Secretary General, **Frédéric Vallier**, replied: "With only a few months to go before the conference, our concerns are not only to know who will be responsible for what, but to see how national governments, towns, cities and civil society can work together once the agreement is signed."

The representative from the NGO Habitat for Humanity, **Deepali Sood**, pointed out the importance of including citizens and stressed the need to assess the results throughout the process.

Speaking from the floor, **Ernest Maragall MEP** (Greens/EFA, Spain), member of the URBAN Intergroup, expressed his fears that the agreement might be "kidnapped by national governments". These words were echoed by another member of the Intergroup **Joachim Zeller MEP** (EPP, Germany), who stated: "We do not need yet another agreement written by national governments. The risk we run is that that the whole point of the agreement could be lost; it's an agreement that concerns urban life, which means towns and cities."

All eyes are now turned to national governments, as they will be the ones to decide on the final agreement.



Joachim Zeller MEP (EPP, Germany) said: "it's an agreement that concerns urban life, which means towns and cities."

Looking ahead

Launch of the new partnerships



One of the tasks of the Slovak presidency of the Council, which starts its work from 1st July, will be the launch of the new partnerships in the framework of the EU Urban Agenda. The outgoing Dutch presidency will back the Slovaks and work closely with Malta in the framework of the current trio of Council Presidencies.

The European Week of Regions and Cities 2016

The European Week of Regions and Cities (formerly Open Days) will take place from 10 to 13 October. Sustainable urban development will be one of the key elements of this year event.

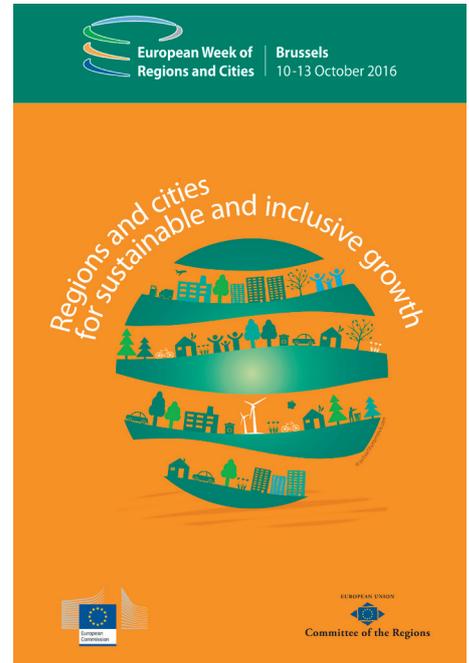
The cooperation between the European

Commission, the Committee of the Regions, Brussels Capital Region and other European cities will lead urban practitioners to attend interesting workshops, projects visits and specific interactive sessions.

The political event on the Urban Agenda will take place on 12 October in the afternoon in Brussels (Charlemagne building).

Registrations for participation in seminars and workshops will open in July.

More information about the program:
http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/regions-and-cities/2016/index.cfm



Others about us

METREX is defending the benefits of metropolitan areas

METREX 20 years

The network of European Metropolitan Regions and Areas



METREX, the network of European metropolitan regions and areas, considers the URBAN Intergroup of the European Parliament as a longstanding partner for metropolitan policy in Europe. METREX has repeatedly presented the benefits of metropolitan regions and areas: metropolitan collaboration results in a higher quality of life for citizens,

higher productivity, low carbon accessibility and sustainability.

We are now very happy with the establishment of the Urban Agenda for the EU and the partnerships with their clear references to the metropolitan dimension! When the partnerships start to work, METREX will contribute the practitioners' knowledge gained during 20 years of working with themes like integrated development of land-use and mobility, urban-rural partnerships and European spatial strategies.

In the future, we will need to continue working on integrated and collaborative solutions at the metropolitan scale by EU instruments and in broad territorial partnerships.



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