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NEWSLETTER

<http://urban-intergroup.eu>

"The Urban Agenda for the EU is a shared responsibility"

The Urban Agenda for the EU is a policy tool to work more on urban matters and therefore to work more with cities. Its framework has been defined by the Member States through the Pact of Amsterdam. The Urban Agenda is the umbrella of the many EU urban policies and instruments.

Its objective is to come up with proposals for an improved legislation (more effective, more efficient and implemented at a lower cost), improved funding instruments (more adapted to the needs, simpler access, more integrated) and shared the knowledge (data, studies, good practices/projects, exchange of experiences). Concretely, working groups - called 'Partnerships' - have been set-up to identify problems and recommend solutions through Action Plans (addressed to the EU, Member States and cities. These actions are non-binding and their implementation is hence voluntary.

The Urban Agenda is developed in partnership, using multi-level governance and according to an integrated approach. All partners are on an equal footing: the European Union (European Commission, European Parliament, Euro-



pean Committee of the Regions, European Economic and Social Committee), Member States, cities (and their representative organisations such as Eurocities and CEMR) and stakeholders (NGOs, businesses, researchers, etc.). Therefore: it is not led by the Commission! The Commis-

sion does its share of the work but is not the sole responsible for the Urban Agenda. Development and implementation of the urban agenda is a shared responsibility. The quality of the actions depends on the work of all!

12 Priority Themes have been identified on which the work will focus: 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 Innovative and responsible public procurement. Cross-cutting themes such as small and medium-sized cities, urban-rural linkages or innovative approaches need to be taken into account in all the partnerships.

The Commission plays an active role in the Urban Agenda:

- The Commission facilitates the process

(provides a Secretariat; provides advice, templates, guidance; organises bi-annual coordinators meetings; establishes the website of the Urban Agenda ('Futurium'); etc.);

- The Commission provides expertise for the Action Plans through its policy DGs which cooperate together (several DGs on the same topic).
- The Commission makes the link with Member States (especially through the EU Presidencies), cities (individual cities, Eurocities, CEMR), EU Institutions and Consultative Bodies.
- The Commission monitors and reports on the progress (e.g. report to the Council by the end of the year).
- The Commission will consider the recommendations of the action plan which are addressed to the Commission and examine how to address them.

The state of play of the Partnerships is as follows:

- The first four partnerships (on urban poverty, inclusion of migrants and refugees, housing and air quality) will present a draft Action Plan by Summer 2017 (a public consultation will follow during the Summer so that the final Action Plans can be presented in November).
- The next four ones (circular economy, digital transition, mobility and jobs & skills in the local economy) have started to work in February/ March 2017 and should present their draft Action Plans Early 2018.
- The last four ones (energy transition, sustainable use of land and nature-based solutions, climate adaptation and public procurement) will start to work in June/ July 2017 with draft Action Plans presented in Summer 2018.

It is very important to underline that **the Urban Agenda is an inclusive process** and is not limited to the participants

to the Partnerships. A dedicated website for the Urban Agenda (called 'Futurium') provides information on the Partnerships (meetings, events, studies, etc.) and also enables all those interested to contribute (e.g. through a discussion forum). It will be used to have a public consultation on the proposed actions.

In the Pact of Amsterdam, **the European Parliament is mentioned as a key actor**. As such it is expected to work on the Urban Agenda in the following way:

- To steer the Urban Agenda through a regular participation and contribution to the Urban Development Groups and Directors General groups on Urban Matters. These groups include the EU Institutions and consultative bodies, all Member States and organisations representing cities (such as Eurocities and CEMR). They give the key orientations on the Urban Agenda;
- To contribute to the work of the Partnerships by providing policy inputs (e.g. through the Committees or rapporteurs working on the topics of the Urban Agenda);
- To comment on the draft Action Plans;
- To discuss the recommendations proposed in the Action Plans in its relevant Committees when discussing EU legislation. This is very important as many recommendations will concern EU legislation and as co-legislator it is crucial that the EP works on these.

Finally, in November, the Commission will report back to the Council. This report will cover the progress on the Urban Agenda and will present the first provisional actions.

More information:

- Discover the website of the Urban Agenda <https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/urban-agenda>
- Follow @EUUrbanAgenda on Twitter

Key figures about the Urban Agenda for the EU:

- **12 Partnerships** are currently working
- All the Member States participate (as Member State or through cities), except one
- **86 cities** participate
- Eurocities participates in **11 Partnerships** and CEMR in **8**
- **12 DGs** participate in the Partnerships
- The Twitter account is followed by **1,300** persons
- In total, **more than 200** persons are working daily on the Urban Agenda!

URBAN voice

FUTURE OF EUROPE

Eurocities “Mayors summit” focused on populism and euroscepticism

Mayors of major cities in Europe met with EU and national leaders on 7 March at an event organised by Eurocities to discuss the future of Europe and especially the ways to tackle rising populism and euroscepticism. The discussion aimed at underlying the urgent need for changing the way politics is done.

Jan Olbrycht (EPP, Poland), President of the URBAN Intergroup, stressed: “we should be afraid of populists who have made false promises to be in power”. He insisted that “fear [was] the source of populism”. “The worst are the ‘elites’ that use it”, he added.

He also reminded participants that the European Union is an international organisation, gathering Member States which have strong partners at regional and local level. “Cities’ authorities have the right to criticize governments, but cannot replace them,” he said. He also paid attention to the need to fully respect the principle of subsidiarity.

The message expressed by cities’ representatives was very clear: a renewed Eu-



“Fear is the source of populism”, said **Jan Olbrycht** (EPP, Poland), President of the URBAN Intergroup at Eurocities “Mayors summit”.

rope needs genuine partnership between the cities and their citizens, EU institutions and Member States. This is the only way to overcome the disconnect between Europe and its citizens.

The “Mayors summit” gathered high level European, national and city leaders. The event followed the publication of Eurocities open letter on “rethinking Europe” in which mayors urged the EU and Member States to refocus the debate on Europe’s future and design a new governance model from the bottom up.

URBAN events and meetings

STATE OF PLAY

Urban Innovative Actions on good track

An extraordinary meeting of the URBAN Intergroup took place at the European Parliament in Brussels on 10 January to discuss the state of play of the Urban Innovative Actions (UIA).

Jan Olbrycht (EPP, Poland), President of the URBAN Intergroup, opened the meeting by reminding participants the origins of this initiative during the preparation of the European Regional Development Fund regulation for 2014-2020.



The representative from the Hauts-de-France region – an “Entrusted Entity” to directly manage the UIA Initiative – explained how the European Commission leads this initiative granted of €372 Mln in partnership with the region.

The representative of the European Commission thanked the Hauts-de-France region and the UIA Secretariat based in Lille for an “excellent cooperation” with the EU executive. It has been stressed that it is “still too early to

see if big expectations regarding the UIA are met". Moreover, he pointed out that after the first UIA call, "some problems with geographical coverage of the initiative can be seen".

Tim Caulfield, Director of the UIA Secretariat, presented the state of play of the UIA. After setting up of the UIA Initiative, he described the outcome of the first call of proposals. This call was oriented on 4 topics: Energy transition, Jobs and skills in the local economy, Inclusion of migrants and refugees and Urban poverty. After submission of 378 applications forms from 24 Member States, 18 projects have been selected during a transparent selection process.

Moreover, the timeline of the second call for proposal was announced. This call is focusing on 3 topics: circular economy, inclusion of migrants and refugees, and urban mobility. It started on 15 December 2016 and ended on 14 April 2017. An overall budget of €50 mil-

lion of ERDF was allocated to this call. Winners will be announced by the end of September 2017.

During the discussion moderated by **Mattijs van Miltenburg** (ALDE, Netherlands), an MEP from the URBAN Intergroup, the good geographical coverage of the initiative was mentioned. The weaknesses in the applications from Eastern European countries are currently analysed but, for the moment, it is too early to think about introducing any quotas.

Moreover, capacities of participation of smaller towns were discussed. One proposal consisted in providing grants in the future for technical assistance from national authorities to smaller cities, in order to increase their participation and effectiveness in the future calls of proposals.

More information: www.uia-initiative.eu

PUBLICATION

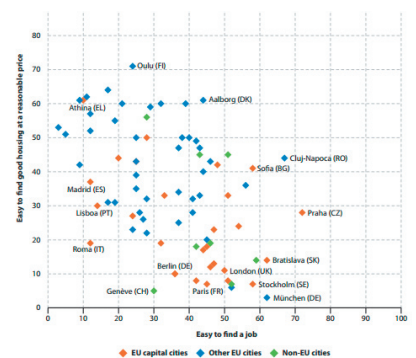
Eurostat released key data on cities

Representatives from Eurostat were in Strasbourg on 19 January to present to members and partners of the URBAN Intergroup the new publication entitled "Urban Europe – statistics on cities, towns and suburbs".

During their in-depth presentation, Eurostat officials underlined that this flagship publication on cities is not a "regular" Eurostat's publication. The policy relevance of having statistics on cities linked to the growing attention given to EU Urban Agenda reinforces the role of this report to enable policy makers to take appropriate policy choices on urban areas in Europe.

Eurostat's statistics presented in the report cover about 900 cities and towns in Europe, based on 70 indicators on demography, social and economical aspects, environment, travel, transport and culture. However, data collection on cities is made on a voluntary basis (there is no legal basis for data collection or methodological details).

The report is split in two main parts: "City and urban development" and "People and life in cities", covered by 13 chapters including



introduction. One of the chapters explains the urban paradox. It shows that cities are often characterised by high concentration of economic activity, employment and wealth. But at the same time they are also cumulating a range of social inequalities.

In conclusion, it has been stressed that Eurostat works on the city definition and collection of data with the UN and the Worldbank. Moreover, there is a room for developing in the near future new data sources and methodologies. During the debate, mainly issues of micro and aggregated data were discussed.

Link to the report: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3217494/7596823/KS-01-16-691-EN-N.pdf/0abf140c-ccc7-4a7f-b236-682effcde10f>

Long-term investments: Barriers and opportunities for regions and cities

The URBAN Intergroup and the Long-Term Investment and Reindustrialisation Intergroup hosted on 8 March a joint workshop led by Polis and co-organised by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) and Eurocities on "Long-term investments: barriers and opportunities for regional and local authorities".

The purpose of the event was to address the challenges that municipalities, cities, regions and the private sectors face when making long-term investments. The Stability and Growth Pact (SGP), the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance (TSCG) and the European Accounting Standards (ESA 2010) have a strong impact on the regional and local public investments in several sectors such as transport, social housing and waste management.

At the opening of the seminar **Jan Olbrycht** (EPP, Poland) declared: "When we are discussing long-term investments at local level we discuss the future of Europe!" Moreover, the President of the URBAN Intergroup added that "We need a clear answer what we want from the EU. Do we want to have a European Commission as a kind of agency for private investments or a strong actor in the field of public investments in Europe?"

More flexibility in budget

Municipalities, cities and regions together called for more flexibility in budget and financial accounting rules in order to boost local investments delivering long-term benefits. Bearing in mind the upcoming second iteration of the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), the future negotiations for the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) post 2020 as well as the revision of the European Monetary Union within the



The Presidents of the two intergroups co-organising the workshop: **Jan Olbrycht** (EPP, Poland) (left) and **Dominique Riquet** (ALDE, France) (right).

next two years, long-term investment will be key to continue supporting growth, employment and efficiency across Europe.

Some key solutions have been suggested during the debate. In that perspective, EU organisations of local and regional authorities are committed to the following actions:

- Seek together with EU institutions how to have **some leeway for future local/regional public investments** within the Stability and Growth Pact and/or specific funding mechanism such as the EFSI 2.0, also distinguishing investments from operational spending and allowing depreciation over time
- Ensure that **a written question is submitted towards the European Commission and the Council** in order to seek clarification over PPP treatment under Eurostat rules as well as flexibility when it comes to strategic investments with public funding resources
- Invite Eurostat to explore **how to address the impact of local public investments on the debt and deficit of governments** for strategic investment such as transport, considered as backbone of the EU economy, as indicated in fall 2016 for efficiency in buildings.



If you wish to take a look at how the event performed live on Twitter, you can find a summary under the hashtags #Invest4Future and #UrbanIntergroup

ICT based solutions to address public issues



Participants of the meeting got a clear view how different DGs of the European Commission deal with different initiatives in smart cities. Furthermore, part of the discussion focused on urban platforms as architectural solutions aimed to integrated different technological aspects of smart cities. It has been stressed that unfortunately there is a lack of compatibility between different platforms in different cities. The issues of open standards and connectivity were discussed as well in this context.

European cities will be the first beneficiaries of 5G implementation plan

During a lively debate, Members of the European Parliament pointed out that European cities will be the first beneficiaries of 5G implementation plan. In consequence, the reflection should be focused on how to use in the future better connectivity to improve smart cities. Moreover, they underlined intergenerational gaps linked to the use of ICT technologies in cities and the need to develop e-skills by all citizens. Finally, the question of access to data and open data were mentioned.

In conclusion, **Jan Olbrycht** (EPP, Poland), President of the URBAN Intergroup, underlined that the concept of smart city must be "horizontal" and linked to different policies and EU, national and local level.

A representative of DG CONNECT, European Commission, made a presentation on smart cities in Europe during 6 April meeting of the URBAN Intergroup in Strasbourg.

"A smart city is a city seeking to address public issues via ICT-based solutions on the basis of a multi-stakeholder, municipality-based partnership," he reminded participants at the beginning of the meeting. Moreover, different EU pillars on smart cities such as the Urban Agenda for the EU and the European Innovation Partnership (EIP) on Smart Cities and Communities were mentioned. Among the different EU sources for funding smart cities' solutions are: the European Regional Development Fund and Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme.

Looking ahead

• European Cohesion Forum

The 7th edition will take place on 26 and 27 June in Brussels in the European Commission Charlemagne building. It is one of the largest political event held every three years to

focus on challenges of cohesion policy. This year edition will be a milestone in the preparations for the post-2020 cohesion policy.

• Study visit in Strasbourg

Roland Ries, Mayor of Strasbourg, and the URBAN Intergroup at the European Parliament, have the pleasure to invite you to a study visit in Strasbourg which will take place on Thursday 6 July from 8.50 to 11.30. You will have possibility to learn more about



Strasbourg urban development strategy and to see two very interesting projects:

- *Deux-Rives*: one the biggest urban project in France consisting in the development of a 3 km-long crossborder sector between Strasbourg and the German neighbour city of Kehl recently connected by a tramway line

- *Wacken area*: an ambitious district dedicated to business, high-quality housing and functional activities covering about 200,000 m² with a particular emphasis on the European scale.

The visit will finish at 11.30 in front of the European Parliament.



Deux-Rives project at the border between France and Germany.

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Others about us

Housing Europe insists on the need for reliable data



As anybody who has been reading the last 20 editions of the URBAN Intergroup newsletter has surely noticed, housing is on the European agenda. Understanding the impact of EU policies on housing requires us at Housing Europe and the Intergroup to adopt a pretty broad approach...

At DG Energy, housing is seen through the lens of the potential to increase efficiency, with rooftops becoming the new power plants. At DG Regio, housing is considered through the funding streams of social inclusion and low carbon economy. Within DG Competition, housing practices are analysed as to whether the public support they may receive is in line with state aid rules.

At DG ECFIN, since the sub-prime crisis, housing markets are monitored as a source of macro-economic imbalance. DG Employment focuses on when housing systems fail, exchanging best practices to prevent evictions and address homelessness. DG Grow considers the competitiveness of those companies constructing housing while Eurostat

rules determine where expenditure on housing is on or off balance sheet.

As regards Housing, we have welcomed the role of the URBAN Intergroup and of the European Parliament in bringing coherence to the EU approach to housing, notably through the 2014 **Karima Delli** (Greens/EFA, France) own-initiative report on housing. Through its on-going events and outreach, the Intergroup helps to ensure that this approach is informed by the reality on the ground, the concerns of citizens and by the concerns of those providing access to decent housing at local level.

One of the key ways to produce coherent policies is to work with reliable data. In this vein, we are very happy that the Intergroup will host the 2017 edition of the State of Housing report this Autumn. We can be sure that this report will reveal a need for action on housing affordability across Europe with a clear role for the European Parliament and the Intergroup to play...

More information:

2015 State of Housing report

<http://www.housingeurope.eu/resource-468/the-state-of-housing-in-the-eu-2015>



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