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# NEWSLETTER

<http://urban-intergroup.eu>

## CITIES FORUM IN ROTTERDAM

### Taking stock on the Urban Agenda for the EU

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Cities Forum organised by the European Commission in Rotterdam on 27 and 28 November 2017 brought together key stakeholders from local, national and European levels to debate the state of play of the Urban Agenda for the EU and the urban dimension of the cohesion policy. Participants looked into the EU response to the urban dimension of the 2030 Agenda and the New Urban Agenda.

Worth mentioning, the official opening of the Forum took place on board of a former ocean liner, the SS Rotterdam.

During the first day of the Forum, the partnerships of the Urban Agenda for the EU organised different seminars around the city of Rotterdam in order to discuss progress made and ways to go forward with their work. One additional workshop was dedicated to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): the aim was to discuss with stakeholders how cities can contribute to achieve these United Nations' global goals.

During the second day, **Matthijs van Miltenburg** (ALDE, Netherlands), member of the URBAN Intergroup, took part into discussions on the New Urban Agenda and the urban dimension of the 2030 Agenda. "The Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda are of course linked to the EU Urban Agenda be-



**Matthijs van Miltenburg** (ALDE, Netherlands) (right) took part into discussions on the New Urban Agenda and the urban dimension of the 2030 Agenda. (© EU Regional)

cause societal challenges are present all over the world, especially in cities. But when it comes to practice, you have to put your money where your mouth is. That's why I endorse the Urban Innovative Actions," he stated.

**Jan Olbrycht** (EPP, Poland), President of the URBAN Intergroup, reflected on the urban dimension of cohesion policy. "We can't forget that urban elements are not only present in the cohesion policy. The urban dimension is present in different European policies and that is why we should think horizontally how to strength in the future the urban dimension in all policies of the EU and make them complementary," underlined **Jan Olbrycht**.

Moreover, during the event URBIS, a new advisory and investment platform assisting cities in improving their investment capacities has been launched.

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# URBAN voice

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## EXHIBITION

### Rewarding the recovery of the heritage and the environment

On 17 October 2017, **Jordi Solé** (Greens/EFA, Spain), member of the URBAN Intergroup, hosted a lecture on “The Future of the European City” delivered by prof. **Hans Ibelings**. This conference was organised in the framework of the Exhibition “Polis: 7 Lessons from the European Prize for Urban Public Space”, which is awarded in Barcelona on a biannual basis by the Centre for Contemporary Culture of Barcelona (CCCB) and six other European institutions.

The exhibition shared the accumulated knowledge during all the different editions of the Prize, not only because of its evident European dimension, but also because the reflections on the use of public space and the future of the European cities are crucial for building a more sustainable, fair, resilient and democratic Europe.

#### Social cohesion, sustainability and collective memories

The Catalan city where MEP **Jordi Solé** is mayor, Caldes de Montbui, was awarded in the last edition of the prize ex aequo with the Polish city of Szczecin. With that prize, which awarded the small-scale recovery of the very unique irrigation System at the Thermal Orchards, the city saw recognized the efforts made during the last years to recover the heritage and the environment around the fluvial space, but also to socialize and open it to the city.

Public space and its uses is a cornerstone of the New Urban Agenda adopted a year ago in Quito, and will also be of central importance for the European Urban Agenda that



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is being developed in a way that tries to ensure maximum use of the growth potential of cities and to successfully tackle major social challenges.

In enhancing the social function and the attractiveness of the public spaces, of the spaces that belong to all of us as citizens, cities and towns can make a significant contribution towards social cohesion, sustainability and collective memories. By improving urban environments, by making them greener, more sustainable, open and accessible, we improve the quality of life of our fellow citizens and we foster social cohesion. By bringing urban design and planning closer to the citizen's needs, by involving them in this planning, we make our places not only more liveable, but also more democratic, and more “owned” by the people. And by recovering and rehabilitating public spaces with significance to the past, we are building on our collective memories, so important to be conscious of where do we come from but also where are we heading to.

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## URBAN events and meetings

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### EVENT

#### Funding for energy renovation, a stimulus for urban regeneration

The URBAN Intergroup and Renovate Europe organised a joint event on the topic “Funding for Energy Renovation as a Stimulus for Urban Regeneration” on 26 September 2017. The event was held in the context

of the negotiations on the review of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive, for which a political agreement was reached in December 2017. The event sought to draw a link with available funding and opportuni-



ties to help Member States implement buildings-related legislation, through the Juncker Fund, the EIB and the current and possibly the next Multi-Annual Financial Framework, but also raising awareness about successful local initiatives.

“Energy renovation projects in urban areas is like inviting a whole city to go on an Easter egg hunt, to uncover the hidden treasures and multiple benefits that can be unlocked”, said **Claire Roumet**, Executive Director of Energy Cities. “Energy renovation can completely change the metabolism of a city – the positive impacts can be so significant that it can lead to a complete urban transformation, at all levels.”

**Jan Olbrycht** (EPP, Poland), President of the URBAN Intergroup, acknowledged the key role of energy renovation as an opportunity to roll-out a comprehensive urban strategy with the aim of tackling energy poverty, boosting social cohesion and triggering local jobs. But MEP **Olbrycht** was also keen to emphasise the need that urban regeneration be an inclusive process which preserves the patrimonial heritage and improves the quality of living for all residents involved.

“Energy renovation can and must serve as entry point to engage the local community to interact on a common discussion that goes wider than just buildings and housing, to improve quality of life for all”, agreed **Claire Roumet**.

### Public partners have a key role to play

The redistributive value of targeted renovations is well-known, delivering undeniable benefits to lower income groups through lower energy bills and improved living standards. But this urban regeneration also occurs in skyscraper-filled business quarters needing a much-needed human touch, or high density residential areas thirsty for more green spaces or community facilities.

“Energy renovation targets not only deprived areas”, said **Adrian Joyce**, “Energy renovation can be the first step to boosting social cohesion, civic pride and to improve the quality of life for all different types of neighborhoods”.

In terms of financing for urban energy renovation projects, speakers agreed that investment criteria need to go beyond simple profitability and short payback to include also the less tangible indicators such as im-

**Renovate Europe** is a political communication campaign with the ambition to reduce the energy demand of the building stock in the EU by 80% by 2050 compared to 2005 levels through legislation and ambitious renovation programmes.

This will bring the energy performance of the entire building stock in the EU to a Nearly Zero Energy (NZEB) performance level.

Renovate Europe brings together 36 partners from across the building value chain (trade associations, companies, trade unions, city networks and 14 national partners).

Almost 100 MEPs have signed the Renovate Europe Manifesto to STOP Energy Waste in Buildings.

(<http://renovate-europe.eu/themanifesto/about-themanifesto/language-versions/>)

proved quality of life and social benefits.

**Miguel Casas** from CITYnvest, emphasized the key leadership role of public partners in this respect, in order to increase the ambition and investment possibilities in energy renovation projects.

Despite the systemic challenges inherent to the energy renovation market, signals are nevertheless emerging which indicate a growing appetite for energy renovation projects on the ground. Encouraging figures from the European Investment Bank show a three-fold increase since 2012 in Energy Efficiency lending, with 75% of these funds being delivered to buildings. And minimum allocation requirements for low-carbon introduced for the EU cohesion policy funding in the 2014-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework have so far yielded a tripling of allocations for energy efficiency compared to the previous period, with overall allocations well beyond the minimum legal requirement, contributing among other things to an expected 875,000 renovated dwellings.

“The bottom-up push from empowered and motivated cities and regions, convinced about the multiple benefits that energy renovation can deliver to urban areas, is an important factor that can drive the energy renovation market”, explained **Lambert van Nistelrooij** (EPP, Netherlands), Vice-President of the URBAN Intergroup. “The role of cities and local authorities is increasingly gaining prominence, as they are the ones who witness first-hand the positive domino-effect from energy renovation projects.”

# How to adapt the New Urban Agenda to Catalonia

The meeting of the URBAN Intergroup on 26 October in Strasbourg has been dedicated to the presentation of the Catalan Urban Agenda. The idea of the meeting came from **Jordi Solé**, (Greens/EFA, Spain), member of the URBAN Intergroup.

The lecture was delivered by the Director General for Territorial and Urban Planning of the Catalan government, **Agustí Serra**, and the Deputy Director-General for Territorial Action and the Urban Habitat, **Josep Armengol**.

The Catalan Urban Agenda will serve to transpose and adapt to the reality of Catalonia the New Urban Agenda (NUA), which was approved by the UN. It aims to be a universal framework that will guide the sustainable development of cities in the coming decades. This New Urban Agenda shows the great transformative capacity of the urbanisation process at the global level; a process, in addition, irreversible given that the global urban population is expected to double by 2050.

In this sense, it emphasizes that populations, economic activities, the interactions between society and culture, as well as the environmental and humanitarian repercussions are increasingly concentrated in cities. In the case of the European Union, 70% of its inhabitants are concentrated in urban areas.

## Global challenges

This situation raises numerous problems of sustainability in the area of housing, infrastructure, basic services, food security, health, education, decent work, security and natural resources, among others, which the NUA seeks to address. The Catalan Government adhered to the NUA and announced the deployment of a Catalan Urban Agenda that specified these guidelines for Catalonia.

Some of the principles advocated by the NUA are the defense of a sustainable urban model, social and territorial cohesion, the struggle and resilience against climate change, a new production and energy model and more financing instruments for administrations.

In the case of Catalonia, the Catalan Government wants to address these challenges by



Catalan MEP **Jordi Solé** (Greens/EFA, Spain) initiated and opened the meeting.  
(© URBAN Intergroup)

elaborating an Urban Agenda with a strategic vision, from which public policies and concrete strategic plans must be based on, as well as legislation and the necessary financing.

## Consensual, strategic and binding process

The process that has been undertaken to prepare the Catalan Urban Agenda was explained during the meeting. Since it aims to be a stable framework that guides urban development in the coming years, it is conceived in a multi scale and multilevel approach, which must be connected to all government departments.

That is why the Urban Assembly of Catalonia will be created, an advisory body, attached to the Department of Territory and Sustainability of the Catalan government, which will advise on the drafting of the Agenda through the deployment of thematic areas. The Assembly will be composed of representatives of all the departments of the government, municipalities, provinces, members of citizen associations and the productive sector. In order to carry out the task entrusted, the Assembly will set up the appropriate thematic working groups to analyse and specify the objectives that must be collected in the Urban Agenda. The major working areas will be economic prosperity, social cohesion and well-being, city construction, ecological footprint, and administration and government. The Catalan government is the first sub-national government that deploys its own Urban Agenda.

# Improving and safeguarding European water resources



The subject of the last meeting of the URBAN Intergroup in 2017 was the Urban Water Agenda 2030. This newly emerging European Agenda was launched on the 29<sup>th</sup> of September 2017 by the signatory of the Porto Declaration by European Mayors. Its goal is to contribute to the implementation of EU policies and legislations for improving and safeguarding European water resources and to the enhancement of quality of life in European cities. The Agenda aims to mobilise local authorities for ambitious action towards sustainable urban water management.

### Preventing pollution of water by cities

The core group of 18 cities from 18 countries decided to ensure the quality of water for urban use and prevent pollution of water by cities. Moreover, they committed to improve: efficiency of urban water system,

sustainability of urban water infrastructure, flood prevention and use of nature based solutions and citizens awareness on issues linked to water.

Other cities who would like to engage in this process are more than welcome to sign Porto Declaration on Urban Water Agenda 2030. During the discussion, MEPs underlined that different problems linked to water are present in different Member States. However, in the global context, having in mind SDG 6 (Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all) Europe has less crucial issues linked to water than other parts of the world.

The need to bring results of many research on water under the Horizon 2020 to the network of European cities has also been stressed.

### More information:

<http://urbanwateragenda2030.eu/>

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## Looking ahead

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## World Urban Forum

The 9th session of the World Urban Forum (WUF9) "Cities 2030, Cities for All: Implementing the New Urban Agenda" will take place in Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) from 7 to 13 February.

This Forum will focus on the New Urban Agenda as a tool and accelerator for achieving Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals.

**More information:** <http://wuf9.org/>



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# Others about us

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## The Association of German Cities (Deutscher Städtetag)



Today's European policy is local policy in many areas. Cities as the tier of government closest to the citizens are both recipients and deliverers of European policies to and from the citizens. Where can the internal cohesion of Europe be encouraged, if not in the cities?

As Germany's largest national federation representing cities and towns, the Association of German Cities attaches great importance to voicing the cities' interests at EU level. In the past year we have highly appreciated the possibility to discuss not only the Urban Agenda for the EU, but also more technical topics like the effects of standardisation on urban development within the URBAN Intergroup. Raising awareness for horizontal and technical topics alike underscores the great importance and value the URBAN Intergroup brings to the European Parliament outside party and committee affiliations.

Looking ahead the continued support of Members of the European Parliament will

be crucial to safeguard a strong European cohesion policy and the affiliated structural funds. It is of utmost importance to commit to this fundamental pillar of the European Union, especially in light of rising questions of European citizens about the impact of the EU on their daily lives. In order to build a truly cohesive EU within the meaning of the Treaties it must remain a policy for all regions.

In the framework of the Urban Agenda process, the Association of German Cities has published its own views on an urban agenda for the EU.

The document specifies the policy areas of the EU with a local reference and describes the role of the municipalities in achieving EU policy objectives:

[http://www.staedtetag.de/imperia/md/content/dst/veroeffentlichungen/beitraege\\_stadtpolitik/urban\\_agenda\\_for\\_eu\\_beaetraege\\_stadtpol\\_106.pdf](http://www.staedtetag.de/imperia/md/content/dst/veroeffentlichungen/beitraege_stadtpolitik/urban_agenda_for_eu_beaetraege_stadtpol_106.pdf)



### CONTACTS

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

