

CECICN CONTRIBUTION TO: AN EU URBAN AGENDA?

March 2014

QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED

The following answers are given by CECICN (Conference of European Cross-border and Interregional City Networks), representing more the 600 cities all over Europe. CECICN offers the vision and position of cities involved in Territorial Cooperation in Europe.

1- WHO ARE YOU? Please chose one of the options below

- City or local administration
- Regional administration
- National administration
- EU institution
- Business
- Public sector organisation or company
- International/European Association or programme
- Academia, research
- NGO, non-profit organisation
- Media
- Other

2 - WHY do we need an EU urban agenda - what is it that needs to be made to work better?

- a. Do we need an EU urban agenda to facilitate the participation of cities in EU policy development and implementation, for example, of the Europe 2020 strategy?
- b. Do we need an EU urban agenda to ensure that urban needs are better reflected in EU sectoral policies, and to improve co-ordination between sectors by pursuing an integrated approach? Do we need it to raise awareness on cities' needs and potential beyond urban stakeholders?
- c. Do we need an EU urban agenda to improve articulation between cities, their MS and the European level on policy making?

Please share your views on the three questions

It is noted that, among other policies, **Europe 2020 strategy lacks a specific urban dimension**. This is a quite worrying issue because cities and citizens are the final users of many of the EU policies. So, to guarantee the success of the implementation of those policies, it is very important to take into account the real cities needs.

The **inclusion of urban policy into the DG Regional and urban Policy in 2012 goes into the right direction** but it is not enough. All levels of governance are concerned, the European, national, regional and local, so all of them should take urban issues into account, without forgetting the necessary enhancement of local authorities' role. **A multilevel governance approach is needed**. In fact, cities and the urban dimension also play an important role within macro-regional processes. In this context, CECICN seeks to develop a more open, efficient and ambitious cooperation for cities (see also CECICN position paper on this topic)

CECICN is favourable to an EU Urban Agenda as it will allow having **clear objectives and targets on the urban topic**, as well as a clear framework to support specific instruments and initiatives.

From CECICN point of view, an EU Urban Agenda should:

- ≡ **Help to raise awareness on urban issues**. Up to now the urban level is often neglected at European level, even if the role of the urban level is particularly important in the development and implementation of EU policies. The Agenda should ensure that urban needs are better reflected in EU sectoral policies.
- ≡ **Facilitate the participation of cities in EU policy development and implementation** (e.g. Europe 2020 Strategy)
- ≡ **Bear in mind the disparity among the European cities**. Urban issues should be focused in an integrated way facing strategic urban development. The Urban Agenda has to be considered as a tool to improve articulation between cities not as a tool for centralisation.
- ≡ Help to **promote urban needs and ensure that urban needs are better reflected in EU sectoral policies**.

Urban issues are cross-cutting issues to all EU sectoral policies. **Integrated territorial approaches** are therefore necessary to treat urban stakes. CECICN welcomes the reinforced and new integrated territorial approaches of the programming period 2014-2020 and encourages especially operations of Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI), Community Led Local Development (CLLD) and Joint Action Plans (JAP) (see also CECICN position paper on this topic). In addition, CECICN also supports integrated territorial approaches as important tools to fully exploit the potential of **cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation** involving cities. Now the challenge is to ensure that these new tools offer real and clear opportunities to cities to implement policies on the ground.

The territorial cross-cutting approaches are especially needed when **cross-border urban territories** are concerned. The document "Cities of tomorrow" of the DG REGIO (http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/studies/pdf/citiesoftomorrow/citiesof_tomorrow_final.pdf) well identifies urban challenges, which also concern cross-border cities and agglomerations (see points 4.3.2 and 4.6).

Finally, it is also need to raise awareness on cities' needs and potential beyond urban stakeholders as **sectorial competencies often depend on different levels** (European, national, regional, local). In this sense, an urban agenda will definitely help to improve articulation between cities, Member States and the European level.

The **urban dimension will have to be better taken into account** concerning future decisions at national or EU level. Cities and their networks should be more involved in public policies, but contrary to what was said by some stakeholders during the conference “Cities of Tomorrow” on 17-18 February 2014, it shouldn’t be a zero sum game with national and regional levels. These levels should also remain involved in the matter of urban policies, in a win-win game between different levels. For instance, the national level remains generally competent in the field of legislation, that has to be coordinated across borders to face urban cooperation issues, and this requires the active involvement of Member States. National and regional funding is often needed to support cross-border investments in various policy fields (transport, health, education, research, culture, etc.) that impact cities.

The **voice of urban stakeholders** is often not enough heard at the moment, especially concerning cross-border urban territories. In this context, **CECICN is ready to be more deeply involved in EU consultations:** in the inter-service group about urban issues and territorial cohesion within the European Commission monitored by DG REGIO, so as sectorial DGs take a better account of the needs of cooperating cities (for example management of cross-border agglomerations or macro-regional city networks, in the field of public transport, economic development, environment, etc.); with the Committee of the Regions; in EU meetings of national Directors in charge of urban affairs, Urban Development Group (UDG) meetings etc.

2 - WHAT should an EU urban agenda be?

- d. Should an EU urban agenda define priorities to work on? Should it limit itself to tackling certain specific challenges?
- e. Should an EU urban agenda be a vision or a concrete strategy? Should it have priorities, tasks and timescales?
- f. Should it provide a new working method between EU, MS and city actors?

Please share your views on the three questions

Since urban areas are the engines of the growth of European economy, centers of knowledge, innovation and functions necessary for daily life, the planned urban agenda is not needed to concentrate on a few questions but should tackle urban issues as generally and exhaustively as possible.

An EU Urban Agenda should be a **concrete strategy**, complementary to the existing strategies like the Europe 2020 strategy. It should define an **integrated approach** involving **common challenges** as environment, transport, energy, etc., **defining priorities** to work on, as well as **tasks** and fixing **timescales**. Nevertheless, in the opinion of CECICN, these priorities should **not be too narrow** but focus on a cross-cutting support of urban issues within EU policies. We cannot forget that **Europe includes cities with extremely different conditions**, needs, givens and prospects and that an EU Urban Agenda should give answer to all of them.

It should provide a **more balanced working method** between EU, Member States and city actors. This would first of all mean the **recognition** of these last, and the possibility of city actors to have **their voice heard**, e.g. in the programming processes etc. **Representative organizations like CECICN** may play an active role in linking urban stakeholders and the European level.

In addition, an EU Urban Agenda should also act as a support to improve existing initiatives and programmes like the **URBACT** programme. In fact, one important suggestion is to **allow city networks or EGTCs or equivalent bodies take part in this programme as full lead partners or partners**. In fact, public organizations such as the CECICN members also should be able to take part in URBACT projects, as it has been the case in the past. This point is especially important in order to ensure best practice transfer and exchange and also to capitalize already existing city networks, providing for a multiplier effect that is out of reach for EU institutions. URBACT program should focus more on **best practice transfer and exchange** between similar URBACT projects and **increase the synergies with the other network-programs**: INTERREG Europe (which should address the territorial dimension of the cohesion policy and not only the thematic dimension), ESPON and INTERACT. All these 4 programmes should take more account of urban cooperation, notably ESPON, which should develop its studies about functional approaches, cross-border and macro-regional flows between cities, so as to provide tools to manage cross-border agglomerations or city networks. As a lesson learned from 2007-2013, ESPON programme should provide for more direct participation of the territories, so they can progress from study objects to project leaders.

3 -HOW should an EU urban agenda be implemented?

- g. What steps are needed to develop an EU urban agenda?
- h. What should be the roles of the EU Member States, the Commission, and regional and local authorities?
- i. How should the implementation of an EU urban agenda be monitored and steered?

Please share your views on the three questions

The working method for an EU urban agenda should be defined upon two questions: what do cities have and what do they need. Furthermore, sharing experiences among cities would bring EU a vision to establish a common model to set up prior tasks.

Development and implementation of an EU urban agenda needs close interaction between Member States, EU institutions and regional and local authorities. Among the steps needed to develop an EU urban Agenda the first one is **to ensure the participation of urban stakeholders or their representative networks like CECICN within the process**. In addition, regular consultations and/or permanent workshops on different topics of the stakeholders concerned should also be foreseen. In this context, **CECICN welcomes the present consultation**.

The **role of European Commission** in this process is to **assure that urban stakeholders and their representative networks are able to fully participate in the developing process and also in the follow-up process**, for example involving them in the inter-service groups. In addition to the European Commission, it would be desirable an **in deep involvement of the Committee of the Regions**, as the representative of the voice of Regional and Local Authorities at EU level. The EU Member States, Regional and Local Authorities, by its side, should also be involved in all the process in order to reflect the diversity of situations within Europe.

Finally, concerning the monitoring and steering of the EU Urban Agenda, CECICN considers that it should be done in direct link with the urban stakeholders and their representative networks, including CECICN, through a specific task force, also participated by CoR.