

FOCUS ON: CITIES, URBAN AGENDA AND THE COHESION POLICY



Today, approximately 359 million people - 72 % of the total EU population - live in cities, towns and suburbs. Most of the European challenges related to the economy, the climate, the environment and society at large have a strong urban dimension. They either manifest themselves mainly in and around cities e.g., poverty; social and spatial segregation; environmental degradation, or can be solved in and through cities e.g.; resource efficiency and CO2 neutral economy; economic development and innovation; social innovation and integration.

Background

Although cities' role for economic, social and cultural development and their potential for a more resource efficient habitat have long been recognised, the policy response at European and national level has been limited, with many but poorly integrated sectoral initiatives. It is visible that the majority of EU policies have an urban dimension, directly or indirectly. Thus, a growing number of voices argue that **cities need to be adequately involved in the conception and implementation of EU policies**, and that EU policies need to be better adapted to the urban realities where they will be implemented. This is expressed by calls for an EU urban agenda.

EU urban agenda

On 18 July 2014 the European Commission published a Communication on "The urban dimension of EU policies - key Features of an EU Urban Agenda" COM(2014) 490. With this document, the Commission launched a **public consultation on a future EU urban agenda** – what form it should take and how it should be put into action.

An EU urban agenda should be fully in line with the EU's overall objectives and strategy, particularly the revised Europe 2020 strategy. It should **integrate the urban dimension into EU policy and legislation**. An EU urban agenda could serve to enhance the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of policies through better coordination of policies, actors and governance levels and a better understanding of urban development contexts in the conception and implementation of policies.

Study on 'The role of cities in the Cohesion Policy 2014-2020'

This study has as an objective the analysis of the proposed increased role of cities in the EU Cohesion Policy in the period 2014-2020. It provides advice on how cities can best prepare for their new role in the preparation and implementation of the current and the future Cohesion Policy and how the national and European legislators can help them in this process.

This study compares the involvement of the city and urban authorities in the past (2007-2013) and the current Cohesion Policy. It also presents the achieved results and the potential future improvements.

As the territorial administration in Europe is very diverse, the study analyses a representative number of Member States, in order to evaluate various challenges and solutions for the urban areas with different administrative structures and competences. It identifies different administrative approaches of EU Member States regarding the involvement of cities in the implementation of the Cohesion Policy.

Recommended actions to support the role of cities in Cohesion policy

The study 'The role of cities in the Cohesion Policy 2014-2020' proposes a set of recommendations for a better future involvement of cities in the preparation and implementation of the EU Cohesion Policy. These concentrate on short-term and medium-term activities. The proposed measures relate to the agglomeration and urban policy development for the future programming period, the better involvement of urban representatives and the better cross-sectoral interaction at European, national and regional levels.

Recommended actions:

European Commission

Definition of an urban agenda at European level taking into account the European model of urban development

Development of instruments for implementation of the urban agenda

Acknowledgement of agglomeration issues as an indicator for project assessment

Definition of ex-ante conditionalities in terms of urban concepts and strategies

European Commission – European Parliament

Involvement of cities in policy development (EU and MS) with the EC actively identifying cities to participate

Reinforce cross-sectoral coordination of policies

Better and more systematic interaction between different European Commission DGs regarding the understanding of the role of cities and the definition of smart cities

Opening up the smart-city approach beyond energy and ICT topics

European agencies and European Commission

Coordination of different urban-related initiatives, networks and programmes at European level

Development of a cluster platform for urban topics joining different urban initiatives

National Administrative level

Nomination of urban policy representatives participating in European urban policy development

Implementation of agglomeration policy in regional development policy

Definition of different types of regions with different needs for financial allocation and different thematic orientations

Enhancement of agglomeration interaction involving Structural Funds

Development of agglomeration strategies including not only the cities but also the hinterland

Empowerment of agglomeration management

Cross-sectoral coordination of city-relevant topics

Regional level

Cooperation networks across administrative borders

Positioning urban agendas on project and programme levels

Interaction between sectoral administrations for interdisciplinary exchange of urban agendas

Source: 'The role of cities in the Cohesion Policy 2014-2020', Dr Christine Hamza, Alexandra Frangenheim, David Charles, Stephen Miller, 2014

Source This "At a glance" is based on the European Commission Communication 'The urban dimension of EU policies' COM(2014)490 and the study on the 'The role of cities in the Cohesion Policy 2014-2020', Dr Christine Hamza, Alexandra Frangenheim, David Charles, Stephen Miller, 2014

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