



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2014 - 2019

Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

2014/2213(INI)

8.5.2015

OPINION

of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

for the Committee on Regional Development

on the urban dimension of EU policies
(2014/2213(INI))

Rapporteur: Evelyn Regner

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs calls on the Committee on Regional Development, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

1. Observes that towns and cities have an important role to play in achieving the EU 2020 employment targets and goals of the cohesion policies and must therefore be involved in the whole process of formulating policies at EU level, which can be achieved, inter alia, by means of including representatives of towns and cities in groups of experts, who should also consult civil society actors and social partners; welcomes in this regard an EU urban agenda, which would ensure a better coordination of policies and the involvement of relevant stakeholders from European urban areas and must be taken in the wider context of Article 4 TEU;
2. Welcomes also multi-disciplinary consultations with bodies representing civil society, such as the European Economic and Social Committee, and similar bodies in the Member States, and associations of citizens and their elected representatives, with a view to optimising the outcome of EU policies and, in particular, employment policies;
3. Considers that in order to ensure that the views of all urban stakeholders are better taken into consideration, the existing tools and EU structures should be explored more efficiently through consultation, evaluation, impact assessment and exchange of best practices and experiences, especially in drawing up operational programmes;
4. Encourages the Commission to further support the development of locally administered city-wide investment programmes;
5. Points out that growth, job creation and research and development are concentrated in Europe's towns, cities and urban regions, and that many European towns and cities, particularly those which are expanding rapidly and those which are in demographic decline, are facing major social challenges; points out that towns and cities contain the highest concentrations of both great wealth and exclusion in their most extreme forms;
6. Calls on the Commission to support towns, cities and urban regions together with the Member States and to propose European guidelines for overcoming these challenges, which include high unemployment, rising social inequality, security, globalisation, changes in production patterns, migration and poverty, and the need to promote integration and provide public infrastructure and social housing;
7. Points out that measures in the areas of employment, social, economic and environmental policy have a greater and more rapid impact on conurbations than elsewhere; calls on the Commission to take this into account in devising and implementing its policies;
8. Considers that, by supporting innovative, smart and sustainable projects, towns and cities can make a strong contribution to economic growth, increasing the employment rate and improving social cohesion, and that the development of a 'knowledge-based'

economy requires adequate funding in order to improve digital infrastructure and the ICT skills of its citizens in urban areas;

9. Asks the Commission to strengthen links between city centres and the urban periphery, and between urban and rural areas;
10. Considers that, in the operations of the European Fund for Strategic Investment, special attention should be given to projects in urban areas in order to promote socially and ecologically sustainable financing and investment with great potential for job creation; stresses that the Fund's Investment Committee, which will examine projects, should pay particular attention to projects related to social housing, renovation of public areas and buildings, strategic public transport, education, health and care; stresses that investments should also focus on the creation of high-quality, sustainable employment in order to prevent in-work poverty; calls for citizens and stakeholders to be involved in drawing up the requisite policies and related projects;
11. Notes that to increase the attractiveness of towns and cities as places to invest, and thereby contribute to inclusive economic growth and to boosting employment, it is necessary to invest more in urban public spaces, rehabilitate abandoned territories and address problems which limit the development of trade, particularly in services, such as poorly developed urban centres, deserted or abandoned public spaces, unsafe or unattractive urban areas and a low level of involvement by residents;
12. Calls on the Commission to study the possibility of major budgetary flexibility within the rules of the economic governance framework for public expenditure on combating unemployment and poverty and for the purpose of promoting social investment in order to facilitate greater productive investment by towns and cities, the reduction of various forms of inequality and the promotion of a balanced social mix; stresses that, in line with the urban agenda, a solution must be found to the problem of integrating poorly-trained young people into the labour market, by providing barrier-free, accessible and quality vocational and in-work training to help them acquire skills, bearing in mind that a lack of qualifications can increase the risk of unemployment, which in turn increases the risk of poverty and presents a multitude of social challenges linked to exclusion, alienation and failed efforts in building an independent life; stresses that it is crucial for towns and cities to help more young people to stay in school and acquire the appropriate qualifications needed for a job and career and to ensure wider access to high-quality education, with special projects for children from disadvantaged groups and minorities;
13. Draws attention to the issue of the overpopulation of the biggest cities, which, in the absence of appropriate infrastructure, can lead to mobility problems and insufficient or poor-quality housing; is concerned about the problems with traffic and a lack of smooth traffic flow in cities, which significantly increase commuting time and reduce the quality of life of many Europeans; stresses that a lack of appropriate infrastructure can cause psychological pressure and stress on workers, thereby hindering a healthy work-life balance;
14. Calls on the Commission to explore whether, and to what extent, unused Youth Employment Initiative resources can be allocated directly to towns and cities with particularly high rates of youth unemployment, with the proviso that the monies in

question are earmarked for specific projects aimed at combating youth unemployment;

15. Draws attention to the fact that urban design and services addressing gender discrimination and promoting equal opportunities contribute to achieving a greater social and economic benefit; calls therefore on the Commission to actively promote exchanges of best practices in gender budgeting;
16. Emphasises the concepts of accessible towns and cities, of budgeting for universal design¹ and of planning accessible towns and cities; calls on towns, cities and urban regions to respect EU commitments on accessibility; calls on the Commission to monitor the implementation of the related measures; urges for the systematic involvement of citizens, including people with disabilities, and their representatives, and experts in the universal design of urban development;
17. Calls on the Commission to take into consideration, when allocating funds, the effects of the financial crisis, which have weakened the ability of urban regions to deal with major issues such as demographic, environmental, economic and social challenges and the provision of public services;
18. Asks the Commission, as part of its urban programme, to set ambitious targets to ensure that towns, cities and regions implement the Europe 2020 strategy while accounting for the specific characteristics of each region, and points out that, in line with this strategy, the priorities of the urban programme should include combating poverty, social exclusion and homelessness by encouraging in particular more sustainable social housing;
19. Underlines that towns and cities are a part of a broader functional area and cannot be treated in isolation; calls on the Commission to respect the principle of sustainable regional development also with a view to achieving more efficient and sustainable urban development in developing its urban agenda, especially in the sectors of infrastructure, public services (especially in education), health and care, together with coordinated, integrated, strategic and sustainable public transport networks which help to strengthen social cohesion and improve workers' mobility and a good work-life balance; encourages the development of these transport networks in cross-border conurbations as urban areas should be logistically interconnected not only at regional or national level, but also at cross-border level;
20. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to help urban areas to modernise their economic, social and environmental characteristics through smart investments and better coordination; considers it necessary to also promote a high-quality and safe living environment;
21. Points out that towns, cities and urban regions are structurally very different and face a wide range of challenges; concludes therefore that a one-size-fits-all approach should be rejected; calls on the Commission to find new ways to enhance the exchange of information and best practices and to take into account the specific needs of urban

¹ As defined in Article 2 of the Council Decision (2010/48/EC).

regions when drafting legislation, as towns and larger urban areas are important centres of economic activity and have, owing to their culture, size, infrastructure and economic structure, specific social problems and are in need of tailored solutions;

22. Notes that cooperation between Member States on urban development currently takes place on an intergovernmental basis; believes that the development of an EU urban agenda must demonstrate clear EU added value.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	7.5.2015
Result of final vote	+: 44 -: 4 0: 2
Members present for the final vote	Guillaume Balas, Tiziana Beghin, Brando Benifei, Vilija Blinkevičiūtė, Enrique Calvet Chambon, Martina Dlabajová, Lampros Fountoulis, Elena Gentile, Arne Gericke, Marian Harkin, Danuta Jazłowiecka, Agnes Jongerius, Rina Ronja Kari, Ádám Kósa, Agnieszka Kozłowska-Rajewicz, Zdzisław Krasnodębski, Kostadinka Kuneva, Jérôme Lavrilleux, Patrick Le Hyaric, Verónica Lope Fontagné, Javi López, Thomas Mann, Dominique Martin, Elisabeth Morin-Chartier, Emilian Pavel, Georgi Pirinski, Terry Reintke, Sofia Ribeiro, Claude Rolin, Anne Sander, Sven Schulze, Jutta Steinruck, Romana Tomc, Ulla Tørnæs, Marita Ulvskog, Renate Weber, Tatjana Ždanoka, Jana Žitňanská, Inês Cristina Zuber
Substitutes present for the final vote	Georges Bach, Heinz K. Becker, Karima Delli, Tania González Peñas, Marju Lauristin, Helga Stevens, Ivo Vajgl, Tom Vandenkendelaere
Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote	Andrea Cozzolino, Rosa D'Amato, Jens Nilsson