

The urban dimension in the context of enlargement

European Parliament resolution on the urban dimension in the context of enlargement (2004/2258(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the draft Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, and more specifically Articles I-3, I-14, II-96, III-220, III-365(3) thereof and Article 8 of the Protocol on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality,
- having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Community, and more specifically Articles 158 and 159 thereof,
- having regard to its resolution of 22 April 2004 on the third report on economic and social cohesion¹,
- having regard to the proposal for a Council Regulation laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund (COM(2004)0492),
- having regard to the proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Regional Development Fund (COM(2004)0495),
- having regard to the proposal for a Council Regulation establishing a Cohesion Fund (COM(2004)0494),
- having regard to the proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Social Fund (COM(2004)0493),
- having regard to the Commission Communication: ‘Towards an urban agenda in the European Union’ (COM(1997)0197),
- having regard to the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) adopted in 1999 in Potsdam by the informal Council of EU Ministers for Spatial Planning,
- having regard to the study of October 2004 entitled National Urban Policies in the European Union commissioned by the Netherlands Presidency,
- having regard to the Presidency conclusions of 29 November 2004 of the informal EU-ministerial meeting on territorial cohesion held in Rotterdam,
- having regard to the Presidency conclusions of the informal EU-ministerial meeting on territorial cohesion held on 20 and 21 May 2005 and the plan to draw up, by 2007, a document entitled The Territorial State and Perspectives of the European Union,

¹ OJ C 104 E, 30.4.2004, p. 1000.

- having regard to the European Urban Charter adopted by the Council of Europe on 18 March 1992 and the New Charter of Athens adopted by the European Council of Town Planners in Lisbon on 20 November 2003,
 - having regard to Rule 45 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Regional Development and the opinion of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (A6-0272/2005),
- A. whereas towns and cities and urban agglomerations or areas, where 78% of the European Union population is concentrated, are:
- the place where both the most complex and the most common problems are concentrated (social exclusion, spatial and ethnic segregation, housing shortages, insecurity, drugs, pollution, contaminated former industrial sites, traffic, unemployment, lack of competitiveness, poverty, demographic changes, and so on)
 - the place where the future is built: universities, research centres, and so on,
- B. whereas towns and cities and urban agglomerations or areas, including small and medium-sized ones, are key players in regional and local development and in achieving the revised Lisbon and Gothenburg objectives,
- C. having regard to the great disparities in terms of urban policy between the 25 Member States, particularly as a result of the enlargement to include 10 new Member States, which often have no clear and comprehensive urban policy at national or regional level,
- D. whereas urban policy does not fall within the direct remit of the European Union; whereas, however, the European Union is responsible for policies which directly influence sustainable urban development: regional and cohesion policy, transport, the environment, employment and social affairs, research, the single market, competitiveness, and so on,
- E. whereas towns and cities and urban agglomerations or areas form part of regional territory, and hence sustainable urban development must be pursued in harmony with neighbouring suburban and rural areas,
- F. whereas the problems of towns and cities and urban agglomerations or areas simultaneously involve political decision-makers, civil society, economic and social actors and regional interest groups, including associations of towns and municipalities,
- G. whereas an end must be put to resources being spread in an unsustainable way by the implementation of a clear and comprehensive approach which takes account of all the issues involved,
- H. whereas the concept of sustainable urban development is defined as the contribution of towns and cities and urban agglomerations or areas to growth, innovation and economic, social and territorial cohesion, which includes urban revitalisation, for example the renovation of urban transport infrastructure and urban housing with particular attention on revitalisation of prefabricated slab housing estates,
1. Is convinced that towns and cities and urban agglomerations or areas, including small and

medium-sized ones, have a central role to play in achieving the revised Lisbon and Gothenburg objectives;

2. Calls for recognition of urban policy in general and calls on its Conference of Presidents of the European Parliament to propose an amendment to Annex VI to the Rules of Procedure on the subject of the areas of competence of the Committee on Regional Development with a view to incorporating the urban dimension specifically, in addition to regional and cohesion policy, in its objectives and competencies, taking account of the work of the other committees concerned (transport, environment, research, employment and social affairs, internal market, culture, and so on) in a horizontal approach;
3. Calls on the Commission to move towards a horizontal application of the urban dimension and towards coordination between the departments of the Commission which are directly or indirectly concerned with urban issues, such as the Regional Policy, Enterprise and Industry, Competition, Energy and Transport, Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Research, Environment, Education and Culture Directorates-General, adopting an approach based on identifying specific problems of the urban situation in each field of action and at the same time highlighting the positive impacts of those policies on local contexts, and therefore proposes the setting up of an interdepartmental task force along the lines of the Urban-housing intergroup in the European Parliament;
4. Calls on the Council to hold an annual meeting of the ministers of the Member States with responsibility for urban policy;
5. Calls on the Commission and Member States to announce the setting up, in parallel with the social dialogue and the civil dialogue, a 'spatial dialogue' which would enable regional and local authorities and their associations to take part in negotiations and decision-making relating to policies and measures in the urban sphere, particularly in the framework of cohesion policy and the management of the Structural Funds; calls in parallel for a high-level meeting to be held before each Spring Summit, in which, as well as the participants in the spatial dialogue, senior political representatives of the Council Presidency, the Commission, the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions (representing towns and cities and urban agglomerations) would participate;
6. Calls on the Commission to develop and propose models and tools for sustainable urban development which would be accessible to all towns and cities and urban agglomerations or areas:
 - (i) calls for development that respects the complexity of life-realities in the urban areas, regular updating and dissemination of data allowing better evaluation of the situation in towns and cities and urban agglomerations or areas, as well as major support for the URBAN AUDIT programme;
 - (ii) underlines the importance of promoting cooperation between towns and cities and urban agglomerations or areas by expanding virtual and physical partnership networks for the exchange of best practice and experience, as well as through shared projects which would reinforce the cross-border, interregional and transnational dimension;
 - (iii) calls for effective, efficient communication by means of promotional activities such

as symposiums;

- (iv) calls for support for existing networks established by towns and cities, such as the European Urban Knowledge Network and Eurocities as well as for the continuation of those initiated by the Community, such as URBACT;
- 7. Recalls that urban policy development priorities must continue to be reinforced at Member State and regional level after enlargement, to include housing and revitalisation of urban areas, infrastructure, transport, tourism, the environment, waste disposal, water supply, culture, training, education, social care and health;
- 8. Therefore calls on national governments of Member States to deepen and formalise the dialogue with towns and their associations and assert the strategic and consultative approach to urban policy-making;
- 9. Stresses the importance of developing an integrated spatial and thematic urban policy on a human scale, with the drafting of a reference document containing guidelines for 'European urban models' such as indicated in the European Urban Charter of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe;
- 10. Calls for measures for greater involvement of the public in drafting the revitalisation and development plans for urban areas, given that a number of problems are caused by insufficient dialogue between the public and political representatives;
- 11. Recognises the need to strengthen the partnership between urban and rural areas, taking account of the emerging periurban areas between towns or cities and the countryside, in order ultimately to achieve territorial cohesion and balanced regional development;
- 12. Stresses that the urban perspective of Objective 2 should receive more attention in financial and territorial terms; considers that an important part of this perspective is the sound development of urban areas with problems associated with economic growth, social cohesion and environmental pollution;
- 13. Advocates the idea that the Structural and Cohesion Funds should be involved in sustainable urban development, and welcomes the incorporation of the urban dimension into the Structural and Cohesion Funds; calls, nevertheless, on the Commission to ensure that intervention in towns and cities and urban agglomerations or areas is strengthened by comparison with that provided for in the current rules by clearly identifying the urban dimension in the framework of the strategic follow-up report (as provided for in Articles 27 and 28 of the proposal for a Council Regulation laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund) and the establishment of monitoring; calls on the Commission to pay specific attention to the role of towns and cities in drawing up the reports on the impact of cohesion policy on the achievement of the revised goals of the Lisbon agenda;
- 14. Takes the view that urban planning should take account of the specific nature of European cities in demographic and quality-of-life terms, incorporating a wide spectrum of policies and opportunities involving citizens and, in particular, young people and women, with a view to ensuring people-friendly cities in terms of transport, economic activity, the environment, planning, social policy, public health, migration policy, social integration, housing, more nursery facilities and health centres for the elderly, higher safety standards,

and so on and to encouraging solidarity between generations; considers that the development of this strategy should be accompanied by systematic gender mainstreaming throughout;

15. Calls on local authorities in urban areas to encourage the participation of women in civic life;
16. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and Commission.