

Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2014/2213(INI)	Procedure completed
Urban dimension of EU policies		
Subject		
4.70.02 Cohesion policy, Cohesion Fund (CF)		
4.70.04 Urban policy, cities, town and country planning		
4.70.05 Regional cooperation, cross-border cooperation		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	 Regional Development	 WESTPHAL Kerstin	22/09/2014
		Shadow rapporteur	
		 OLBRYCHT Jan	
		 LEWER Andrew	
		 VAN MILTENBURG Matthijs	
		 MICHELS Martina	
		 VANA Monika	
		 D'AMATO Rosa	
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
 Development	The committee decided not to give an opinion.		
 Employment and Social Affairs		13/01/2015	
	 REGNER Evelyn		
 Environment, Public Health and Food Safety	The committee decided not to give an opinion.		
 Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs	The committee decided not to give an opinion.		
European Commission	Commission DG Regional and Urban Policy	Commissioner CREU Corina	

Key events			
18/07/2014	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2014)0490	Summary
17/12/2014	Committee referral announced in Parliament, 1st reading/single reading		

17/06/2015	Vote in committee, 1st reading/single reading		
26/06/2015	Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading	A8-0218/2015	Summary
08/09/2015	Debate in Parliament		
09/09/2015	Results of vote in Parliament		
09/09/2015	Decision by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading	T8-0307/2015	Summary
09/09/2015	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2014/2213(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 54
Other legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 159
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	REGI/8/02016

Documentation gateway

Non-legislative basic document		COM(2014)0490	18/07/2014	EC	Summary
Committee draft report		PE549.165	06/02/2015	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE552.043	26/03/2015	EP	
Committee opinion	EMPL	PE546.619	08/05/2015	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A8-0218/2015	26/06/2015	EP	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T8-0307/2015	09/09/2015	EP	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2015)748	24/02/2016	EC	

Urban dimension of EU policies

PURPOSE: to initiate a debate on the urban dimension of European policies and on the key features of a future EU urban agenda.

BACKGROUND: today, approximately 359 million people - 72 % of the total EU population - live in cities, towns and suburbs. Although the speed of transformation has slowed down, the share of the urban population continues to grow, and is likely to reach more than 80% by 2050. 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 slow and piecemeal, with many but poorly integrated sectoral initiatives.

In 2011, the European Parliament adopted a resolution arguing for a strengthening of the urban dimension of EU policies and the intergovernmental co-operation on urban development policies, calling for a joint working programme or European Urban Agenda.

In response to calls for a EU urban agenda coming from a range of stakeholders at the EU, national and local level, the Commission organised a CITIES Forum to initiate a debate on the need for a EU urban agenda.

Following the CITIES Forum, Member States discussed the necessity to develop a EU Urban Agenda recognising the demand and expectations from the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions, city associations and cities themselves.

CONTENT: building on the results of the CITIES forum, this Communication describes the current urban situation in the EU, where Europe

stands today in terms of urban policy, the calls for a EU urban agenda and the global dimension of urban development.

The Commission proposes a set of questions for consultation aimed at further clarifying the need for a EU urban agenda, its objectives, and how it could function. A common opinion amongst the many stakeholders is that a EU urban agenda has to respect the subsidiarity principle and not be built on new legislation.

Objectives of a future agenda: the Commission states that an urban agenda at EU level could contribute to several objectives, and:

- 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 ;
- strengthen cities engagement and ownership of EU and national policymaking and implementation;
- support cities capacity for transition and structural change to ensure viable urban economies and a socially, environmentally and territorially sustainable development of urban areas;
- being linked to holistic local development objectives, it could bring EU policymaking closer to the citizens;
- be instrumental in EUs development aid policies and be a vehicle to promote global sustainability issues.

A key first step in the possible definition of an EU urban agenda will be to work out where EU action might bring most added value and the elements of urban development that would benefit from a more concerted approach between different sectors and levels of governance.

Characteristics of a EU urban agenda: those who have contributed to this debate so far have suggested that the "agenda" might rather imply a new working method to ensure coherence. Others have proposed that it should take the form of a strategy with priorities for the long-term and operational guidelines for the short term.

An EU urban agenda could focus on a limited set of major European societal challenges, such as CO2 reduction, climate adaptation, inclusion or demographic change. A more ambitious agenda could provide a general framework to focus attention on the urban dimension of EU policies across the board, strengthening coordination between sectoral policies, city, national and EU actors.

Other issues discussed in the Communication include:

- defining the scope and focus of the programme, notably through the Commission's own reflection process "Cities of Tomorrow";
- how urban stakeholders might better contribute to the policy development and implementation processes at EU level;
- the best ways to support a stronger urban and territorial knowledge base and exchange of experience to understand better the process of urban development;
- the roles of the local, regional, national and EU levels in the definition, development and implementation of a EU urban agenda.

The opinions and suggestions from stakeholders and competent authorities at the national, regional and local level will be an important input to the new Commission and the new European Parliament.

Urban dimension of EU policies

The Committee on Regional Development adopted an own-initiative report by Kerstin WESTPHAL (S&D, DE) on the urban dimension of EU policies.

Whilst welcoming the initiative of the Commission to work towards a European Urban Agenda, Members considered that EU policies should support and enable towns, cities and functional urban areas to express and attain their full potential as motors of economic growth, employment, social inclusion and sustainable development.

Towards an integrated European Urban Agenda: the report recognised that although there is no explicit EU competence on urban development, a broad range of EU initiatives impact directly/indirectly on towns, cities and functional urban areas.

Under these conditions, the Members are convinced that the European Urban Agenda should be a joint effort by the Commission, the Member States, the local authorities and other stakeholders to rationalise, coordinate and implement EU policies with an urban dimension through a practical, integrated and coordinated, yet flexible, approach, in and with the towns, cities and functional urban areas, taking account of the local territorial specificities and respecting each Member States institutional architecture.

The Commission is urged to come up with a communication detailing the features of the future European Urban Agenda, based on the urban acquis and the extensive consultation with various stakeholders, including economic and social partners and civil society organisations.

Such an Agenda should be fully in line with the EUs overall objectives and strategy, particularly Europe 2020, and the objectives of territorial cohesion.

Integrated territorial development approach: Members called on the Commission to apply a more place-based integrated territorial approach when conceptualising new policy initiatives aimed at urban areas. The Commission is asked to:

- introduce, as a general rule, a territorial impact assessment on the urban dimension in order to ensure the practical feasibility of all relevant EU policy initiatives at regional and local level, to be receptive to the input from decentralised levels of government when drawing up impact assessments and new policies (bottom up approach) and to make sure that all relevant sectoral EU policies adequately address the challenges that towns, cities and functional urban areas face; calls on the Commission to concentrate these territorial impact assessments on the following elements: balanced territorial development, territorial integration, aspects of governance, regulation, implementation at local level, and coherence with other policy objectives;
- systematise and analyse all available data to prevent duplication and inconsistencies and provide a clear definition of integrated sustainable urban development;
- work on instruments that could measure the progress and impact of an integrated urban agenda at EU level.

The urban dimension of EU policy instruments and funding: Members recalled that the EUs Cohesion Policy and its financial instruments are

better equipped to support complex integrated territorial strategies for functional urban areas through shared strategic planning and rules.

The Commission and the Member States are urged to make full use of the regulatory framework to create synergies between the [European Fund for Strategic Investment](#) (EFSI), the EU subsidised programmes (such as LIFE, Horizon 2020, Intelligent Energy Europe, etc.) and cohesion policy funds, as well as public (i.e. national) investments, private capital and financial instruments in order to obtain the greatest leverage effect of invested funds.

The report highlighted the need to exploit to a maximum extent the potential of the macro-regional strategies for successful implementation of the integrated urban approach.

A new model of multi-level governance: Members stated that the European Urban Agenda should be based on a new multi-level governance method, involving the local level more closely at all stages of the policy cycle, thus bringing the policies closer to the realities.

Members urged the Commission to suggest elements for a new model of multi-level governance based on partnerships and genuine collaboration, going beyond simple stakeholder consultations, a model combining formal governmental structures with informal flexible governance structures that correspond to the new realities of the digitalised network society, thus bringing government closer to the citizens and improving the democratic legitimacy of the European project.

Knowledge management and data sharing: Members called on the Commission to consolidate and ensure better coordination between the existing platforms (such as URBACT, the Covenant of Mayors, Mayors Adapt, Smart Cities and Communities) in order to allow local actors to better understand them and engage with them in a more efficient way.

Stressing the need to update and improve the Urban Audit Database, the report encouraged Eurostat and the Commission to provide and compile more detailed data, collected where policies are implemented in many cases at local level.

Implementing the future European Urban Agenda: in order for the European Urban Agenda to be an effective tool, Members stated that it should be a shared and regularly updated conceptual framework with a thematic focus on a limited number of challenges in the larger context of the Europe 2020 goals of smart, inclusive and sustainable growth. These challenges should respond to the following criteria: (i) are in line with the shared conceptual framework; (ii) are major urban challenges; (iii) cannot be solved by Member States unilaterally; (iv) where an EU approach has a clear added value.

The Commission is asked to:

- start working on mapping such challenges, but also identifying remaining bottlenecks, policy incoherencies or capacity and knowledge gaps, in close cooperation with all relevant stakeholders, particularly those at local level;
- appoint a political lead within the College of Commissioners to give strategic direction to the Urban Agenda of European policies and to report annually to Parliament on the Urban Agenda;
- designate a special EU urban coordinator;
- hold a regular urban summit drawing on the Cities of tomorrow forum, bringing stakeholders from all levels of governance and different sectors together;

Lastly, Members urged the Commission to regularly inform Parliament about the external dimension of the European Urban Agenda and believes that the urban agenda could become the EU contribution to the international debate on the United Nations New Urban Agenda and the Habitat III conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development in 2016.

Urban dimension of EU policies

The European Parliament adopted by 545 votes to 115, with 38 abstentions, a resolution on the urban dimension of EU policies.

Whilst welcoming the initiative of the Commission to work towards a European Urban Agenda, Members considered that EU policies should support and enable towns, cities and functional urban areas to express and attain their full potential as motors of economic growth, employment, social inclusion and sustainable development.

Functional urban areas in the EU comprise a unique polycentric structure built around large, medium-sized and small towns, cities and their surrounding areas, thus going beyond the traditional administrative borders to encompass various territories linked by their economic, social, environmental and demographic challenges. These towns, cities and functional urban areas need to be more closely associated with the entire European policymaking cycle according to Members.

Principles of Subsidiarity and Proportionality: Parliament called for ways to introduce an early warning mechanism by adapting available tools and in accordance with Article 6 of the Protocol on the Application of the Principles of Subsidiarity and Proportionality, giving the subnational government the possibility to observe whether the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality have been taken into account, allowing subnational governments to be involved in the policy processes from an early stage.

Towards an integrated European Urban Agenda: Parliament recognised that although there is no explicit EU competence on urban development, a broad range of EU initiatives impact directly/indirectly on towns, cities and functional urban areas.

Under these conditions, Members are convinced that the European Urban Agenda should be a joint effort by the Commission, the Member States, the local authorities and other stakeholders to rationalise, coordinate and implement EU policies with an urban dimension through a practical, integrated and coordinated, yet flexible, approach, in and with the towns, cities and functional urban areas, taking account of the local territorial specificities and respecting each Member States institutional architecture.

The Commission is urged to come up with a communication detailing the features of the future European Urban Agenda, based on the urban acquis and the extensive consultation with various stakeholders, including economic and social partners and civil society organisations.

Such an Agenda should be fully in line with the EUs overall objectives and strategy, particularly Europe 2020, and the objectives of territorial cohesion.

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The resolution highlighted the need to exploit to a maximum extent the potential of the macro-regional strategies for successful implementation of the integrated urban approach.

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- ensure that the urban dimension is taken into account in all relevant new initiatives;
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