

# Establishing the EU Urban Agenda

## **Pact of Amsterdam**

DRAFT VERSION 2.0 / 2-3-2016

*On 30 May 2016, in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, upon the invitation by the Netherlands Presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU), the session of the Informal Meeting of Ministers responsible for Urban Matters was held.*

*The meeting was also attended by the European Commissioner for Regional Policy and representatives from the European Parliament (EP), European Committee of the Regions (CoR), European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), European Investment Bank (EIB), relevant stakeholder organisations such as EURO CITIES and Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), URBACT and ESPON.*

### **Preamble**

Europe is one of the most urbanised continents in the world. Today, more than 70% of Europe's citizens live in Urban Areas, while by 2050 this percentage is expected to reach 80%<sup>1</sup>. The development of Urban Areas will determine the future economic, social and territorial development of the European Union and its citizens.

Urban Areas are engines of the economy that boost growth, create jobs for their citizens and enhance the competitiveness of Europe in a globalised economy. At present, 77% of all jobs in the EU are based in European cities and greater cities<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, 53% of all companies are located in European cities and greater cities<sup>3</sup>. Urban Areas are, however, also places where challenges such as segregation, unemployment and poverty are concentrated.

Considering the above, Urban Areas<sup>4</sup> play a key role in pursuing the EU 2020 objectives and in solving many of its most pressing challenges, such as the current refugee and asylum crisis.

### *The need for an EU Urban Agenda*

In order to address the increasingly complex challenges in Urban Areas, it is important that Urban authorities cooperate with civil society and business, since they are the main drivers in shaping the future economic, social, cultural and environmental quality of Urban Areas. EU and national policies should set the necessary framework within which citizens, business and urban authorities can tackle their most pressing challenges.

In order to realize the full potential of the European Union, the EU Urban Agenda strives to involve Urban Areas in achieving Better Regulation, Better Access to existing EU Funding and a Better Sharing of Knowledge:

- EU legislation is to a large extent implemented in Urban Areas. Urban Areas indicate that EU legislation sometimes have conflicting impacts on cities and that its implementation at local level can be difficult, hampering urban development.
- Urban Areas are among the beneficiaries of EU funding. Access to existing funding can sometimes be burdensome. The EU Urban Agenda strives to improve accessibility.

<sup>1</sup> "Evidence for a European Urban Agenda", ESPON (2014)

<sup>2</sup> "The growth potential of an integrated EU Urban Agenda", Herta Tödtling-Schönhofer, Alexandra Frangenheim, Christine Hamža, Jürgen Pucher, Wolfgang Schausberger (METIS GmbH) (2016)

<sup>3</sup> "The growth potential of an integrated EU Urban Agenda", Herta Tödtling-Schönhofer, Alexandra Frangenheim, Christine Hamža, Jürgen Pucher, Wolfgang Schausberger (METIS GmbH) (2016)

<sup>4</sup> The precise definition of 'city' and 'urban area' differs from one country to another. In this document the terms are used interchangeably to denote all forms of urban settlement.

- Knowledge on how European Urban Areas evolve is fragmented and successful experience can be better exploited. The EU Urban Agenda therefore intends to enhance the exchange of knowledge.

The EU Urban Agenda will make the EU 'Urban Proof'.

The EU Urban Agenda acknowledges the role of Urban Areas of all sizes in the further development of the European Union. Urban Areas should cooperate with their surrounding regions. Territorial and urban policies and challenges are interconnected and these policies should be mutually reinforcing.

Fulfilling the full potential of Urban Areas of all sizes requires cooperation and coordination between different levels of government and stakeholders. The EU Urban Agenda offers a new form of multilevel cooperation. The EU Urban Agenda fully respects the subsidiarity principle and is in line with the competences of each level of government<sup>5</sup>.

### *Establishing the EU Urban Agenda*

Along the road towards the EU Urban Agenda many milestones have been passed, as is reflected in the list of declarations from the Ministers responsible for Urban Matters (See annex A). Today, Member States have reached consensus about the establishment of an EU Urban Agenda as laid down in the 'Pact of Amsterdam'. The 'Pact of Amsterdam' describes the main features of the EU Urban Agenda. The development of the EU Urban Agenda is ongoing. The EU Urban Agenda will be further developed by Member States together with the European Commission, the European Parliament, the EU Advisory Bodies (CoR and EESC), representatives of European Urban Areas and other stakeholders.

---

## **I Objectives and scope of the EU Urban Agenda**

*The Ministers affirm that:*

### Objectives

1. The EU Urban Agenda aims to realise the full potential and contribution of Urban Areas towards achieving the objectives of the Union and related national objectives in full respect of subsidiarity and proportionality. This includes Urban Areas of all sizes. It will contribute to the Europe 2020 objectives and the priorities of the Juncker Commission, while also addressing the most pressing challenges of the EU, including the refugee crisis and the 2030 energy and climate change objectives.
2. The EU Urban Agenda strives to establish a more integrated approach to EU and national policies and legislation with a clear impact on Urban Areas. A balanced and integrated approach towards urban challenges should focus on all major aspects of urban development (economic, social, cultural and environmental) in order to ensure sound urban governance. The complexity of urban challenges requires integrating these aspects in policy to avoid contradictory consequences and make interventions in Urban Areas more effective.
3. The EU Urban Agenda strives to involve Urban Areas in the design of policy and mobilise Urban Areas for the implementation of national and EU policies to strengthen the urban dimension in these policies. By identifying and removing unnecessary obstacles in EU policy the EU Urban Agenda will enable Urban Areas to work in a more systematic and coherent way towards overarching goals – be they at the EU or national level – and secondly, it will help make EU policy more effective and efficient. The EU Urban Agenda does not aim to create new EU funding sources and does not aim to transfer competences to the EU level.

---

<sup>5</sup> 3347th Council meeting, General Affairs, (15578/14)

## Scope

4. The EU Urban Agenda focuses specifically on three EU policy instruments:

### 4.1. Better regulation:

The EU Urban Agenda aims for a better focus on the urban dimension when drafting new and revising existing legislation, in order to make EU legislation better reflect urban needs, practices and responsibilities and avoid potential bottlenecks and unnecessary burdens for urban authorities. The EU Urban Agenda focuses on the more effective implementation of existing policies and instruments at EU and Member State level. It is not intended to create new regulation.

### 4.2. Better Funding<sup>6</sup>:

The EU Urban Agenda will contribute to identifying, supporting, improving and integrating traditional, innovative and user-friendly sources of funding for Urban Areas at the local, national and EU levels in order to improve the implementation of interventions on the ground in Urban Areas.

### 4.3. Better knowledge base and knowledge exchange:

Finding comparable and reliable data is crucial for evidence-based urban policy making as well as to provide solutions to major challenges facing European Urban Areas. Without such data, it is difficult to exchange knowledge or to engage in an informed public debate on policy initiatives. In addition, knowledge on how European Urban Areas evolve is fragmented and successful experience can be better exploited. In this context, the relevant EU data protection legislation should be taken into account.

5. The EU Urban Agenda will make use of existing European platforms and programmes. In particular, it will make full use of the "smart cities and regions" initiative which allows to effectively combine different technologies and tools (infrastructures, financial instruments, etc.) to offer urban areas the opportunity to transform. The EU intervention in this respect should be well targeted, well coordinated, while respecting the subsidiarity principle.
6. The EU Urban Agenda will foster coherence between urban and territorial issues, as set out in the Territorial Agenda 2020, where deemed relevant.
7. The EU Urban Agenda will contribute to the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, notably Goal 11 "Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable" and related global 'New Urban Agenda'.
8. *[Reference to the Council Conclusions about the EU-position for Habitat III and New Urban Agenda TBC]*
9. The EU Urban Agenda should be implemented in full transparency. All interested parties should have access to the information regarding the state of play and should have the possibility to contribute to the EU Urban Agenda.

## **II Priority Themes of the EU Urban Agenda**

### *The Ministers agree:*

10. Taking into account the EU 2020 priorities of the European Council and President Juncker's priorities for smart, sustainable and inclusive development, and with special attention for the priorities aimed at jobs and growth, on the initial list of Priority Themes for the EU Urban Agenda (see Annex B):
  - 9.1. Inclusion of migrants and refugees;
  - 9.2. Jobs and skills in the local economy;
  - 9.3. Urban poverty;

<sup>6</sup> Funding is defined here as the provision of financial resources and/or instruments to finance a need, program or project.

- 9.4. Housing;
  - 9.5. Circular economy;
  - 9.6. Air quality;
  - 9.7. Climate adaptation (including sustainable water solutions);
  - 9.8. Energy transition
  - 9.9. Sustainable use of land and Nature-Based solutions;
  - 9.10. Urban mobility;
  - 9.11. Digital transition;
  - 9.12. Innovative and responsible public procurement;
11. That the first partnerships will focus on the following themes: inclusion of migrants and refugees, urban poverty, housing, and air quality.
  12. That these Priority Themes will guide the actions of the EU Urban Agenda as listed under 11.
  13. That the initial list of Priority Themes may be revised by Ministers responsible for urban development in consultation with the European Commission, the European Parliament, the EU's Advisory Bodies (CoR and EESC), representatives of European Urban Areas and other stakeholders during future ministerial meetings upon advice of the EU Urban Agenda Board.

### III The operational framework of the EU Urban Agenda:

#### *The Ministers agree:*

14. That the EU Urban Agenda is a coherent set of actions of key European actors. It is a new form of genuine multilevel cooperation where Member States, representatives of Urban Areas, the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Union's Advisory Bodies (CoR, EESC) and other stakeholders work in partnership.
15. The EU Urban Agenda will be implemented through a coherent set of actions. In Annex C the current actions are described. These fall under the following categories:
  - a. Themes** – The EU Urban Agenda will focus on a limited number of Priority Themes which have been identified through a consultation of Member States, regional urban authorities, stakeholders and urban experts. The Themes are described in Part II.
  - b. Horizontal and Vertical Coordination** – To support an integrated approach at the level of Urban Areas, it is important to strengthen horizontal coordination of policies and actors related to urban development at the national, regional (where relevant) and EU level. Thematic Partnerships are a new instrument for multilevel and cross-sectoral (horizontal and vertical) cooperation to deliver more effective solutions to urban challenges.
  - c. Impact Assessments** – Stakeholders have indicated that EU legislation can have conflicting impacts on Urban Areas, and that implementation at local level can sometimes be difficult. Therefore it should be explored if impact assessments can be improved on issues relevant for Urban Areas by taking impact on Urban Areas into account more.
  - d. Knowledge** – Monitoring and comparing results in Urban Areas will be central to assessing the progress of putting the EU Urban Agenda into place and the particular value EU actions can add to the priority themes. Therefore more comparable and reliable data on European Urban Areas is needed and should be exchanged. In this context, the need to minimise administrative burdens and relevant EU data protection legislation should be taken into account.

The set of actions can be extended or amended in the future.

16. Governance of the EU Urban Agenda  
 The activities of the EU Urban Agenda will be coordinated by the EU Urban Agenda Board. This is an informal forum, which will give guidance on the different actions under the umbrella of the EU Urban Agenda. The EU Urban Agenda Board will:
  1. ensure that the actions are organised in such a way that they are transparent, supported by (representatives of) Urban Areas, mutually reinforcing and have the most impact on EU-policy;

2. report to the Informal meeting of Ministers responsible for Urban Matters.
3. monitor progress;
4. provide feedback on the Action Plans;
5. give informal guidelines for future developments of the EU Urban Agenda;
6. evaluate the set of actions of the EU Urban Agenda at the latest by 2020.

In Annex D the working method of the EU Urban Agenda Board is described in more detail.

#### **IV Partnerships**

*The Ministers agree:*

17. Partnerships are a key delivery mechanism within the EU Urban Agenda.
18. That the aim of the Partnerships is to develop a multilevel and cross-sectoral governance approach in an open and transparent way. The working method of the Partnerships is specified in Annex E.
19. To ensure focus and real impact on the ground, Partnerships should have a bottom-up approach focusing on concrete cases in Urban Areas which exemplify bottlenecks and potentials.
20. Each Partnership will formulate an Action Plan with concrete proposals for Better Regulation, Better Funding and Better Exchange of Knowledge.
21. Concrete proposals of the Partnerships can help shape Council Conclusions concerning the EU Urban Agenda and can be regarded as input in the design of future and the revision of existing EU legislation, instruments and initiatives, including, *inter alia*, the future URBACT Programme, the future ESPON programme, INTERREG Programmes related to cross-border and transnational cooperation and other relevant EU instruments and funds.

#### **V Member States**

*The Ministers agree:*

22. To involve Urban Areas, or representative bodies thereof, closely in national and EU policy making.
23. To strive to integrate, where appropriate, the objectives and principles of the EU Urban Agenda in national policy making and implementation;
24. To engage all relevant governmental bodies at all levels of government in the implementation of the EU Urban Agenda;
25. On the need for better involvement of key stakeholders, including urban and regional networks, in the preparation as well as the evaluation of EU policy through existing opportunities for consultation and feedback available to Member States;
26. To strive to integrate, where appropriate, the urban dimension in the preparation and implementation of council proceedings and informal council meetings;
27. That the proposals of the Partnerships with regard to the development of new and evaluation of existing regulation will be submitted, after endorsement by the EU Urban Agenda Board, for inclusion in the European Commission's Better Regulation program, through the appropriate opportunities for consultation and feedback, such as the Regulatory Fitness and Performance (REFIT) Programme and Platform and proportionally applied urban impact assessments.
28. To promote the improvement of the knowledge base and the collection of data on urban development issues, referring to different types of urban units, at EU level, taking into account the need to minimise administrative burdens as much as possible.

29. To strengthen dialogue with the European Commission about how to improve data exchange on Urban Areas at the EU level, including the urban audit, taking into account the need to minimise administrative burdens as much as possible.
30. To engage with Urban Areas, the European Commission, the European Parliament, the CoR and the European Investment Bank in the debate on improving existing instruments in Cohesion Policy aimed at urban development, the more wide-spread and effective use of financial instruments by Urban Areas, and the deployment of the European Fund for Strategic Investments in relation to urban funding.

## **VI Urban Areas**

### *The Ministers agree:*

31. That Urban Areas play a central role in the EU Urban Agenda, since they not only know their needs best, but can also provide expertise and knowledge to tackle the challenges they face.
32. To thank the CoR, EUROCITIES and CEMR for their active contribution to the development of the EU Urban Agenda.
33. To call upon the CoR, as an important voice of Urban Areas at EU level, to provide input for the further development of the EU Urban Agenda from Europe's Urban Areas and regions, in close cooperation with national and territorial associations;
34. To suggest to the CoR to promote the exchange of good practices in implementing the EU Urban Agenda.
35. To recognise organisations such as EUROCITIES and CEMR as important coordinating and representative organisations for Urban Areas, providing both technical expertise and an important voice of Urban Areas at EU level.
36. To invite Urban Areas to take an active role in the EU Urban Agenda and provide the required expertise for all actions within the framework of the EU Urban Agenda aimed at Better Regulation, Better Funding and Better Knowledge Exchange, especially in the Partnerships.
37. To encourage Urban Areas to stimulate community-based initiatives and cooperate with civic urban developers (City Makers), who play an important role in creating innovative, resilient, inclusive, economically stable and inspiring neighbourhoods and Urban Areas.
38. To call upon CoR, EUROCITIES and CEMR to disseminate the outcome of the actions under the umbrella of the EU Urban Agenda, especially the work of the Partnerships.
39. To call upon the CoR, EUROCITIES and CEMR to make use of the proposals of the Partnerships for their input for the development of new and evaluation of existing regulation.
40. To welcome the support of the EU Capital Mayors for the EU Urban Agenda and their Annual Direct Dialogue with the European Commission to discuss their contribution.

## **VII European Commission**

### *The Ministers agree:*

41. To welcome the actions and the progress of the European Commission as set forth in the Staff Working Document on the Results of the Public Consultation on the Key Features of an EU Urban Agenda.
42. To ask the European Commission to focus its actions on strengthening the urban dimension of EU policy on the 12 Priority Themes as listed in Part II.

43. To call upon the European Commission to strengthen its coordination of policies directly or indirectly impacting on Urban Areas in a transparent way.
44. To call upon the European Commission to ensure continuity and cohesion of the EU Urban Agenda by facilitating the different actions in the framework of the EU Urban Agenda, particularly the work of the Partnerships.
45. To call upon the European Commission to take into account the results and recommendations of the Partnerships when drafting and reviewing EU legislation, instruments and initiatives.
46. To ask the European Commission to confirm its long term political commitment to the EU Urban Agenda and to provide appropriate resources for its implementation.
47. To call upon the European Commission to implement a one-stop-shop for matters regarding the EU Urban Agenda. This one-stop-shop would become a single entry point for Urban Areas and stakeholders to find complete, reliable and customised information.
48. To call upon the European Commission to provide technical assistance to the Partnerships from 1 January 2017 onwards.
49. To call upon the European Commission to systematically work with Urban Areas through the various existing channels when developing new initiatives and evaluating existing legislation.
50. To call upon the European Commission to explore improved assessments of urban impacts, as part of the impact assessments, using available tools and including stronger stakeholder involvement. These improved impact assessments, if applied proportionally, can be important instruments to better incorporate the urban and regional dimension in new EU initiatives.
51. To call upon the European Commission to regularly report on the state of play of the EU Urban Agenda.
52. To call upon the European Commission to use the biannual CITIES conference as a forum to engage in a dialogue on a regular basis about the situation of Urban Areas in Europe and the progress in implementing the EU Urban Agenda.

## **VIII European Parliament**

### *The Ministers agree:*

53. To thank the European Parliament for its active contribution to the EU Urban Agenda and to encourage future cooperation in this field, especially with the Committee on Regional Development (REGI) and the URBAN Intergroup.
54. To welcome the emphasis of the European Parliament on the use of better regulation in relation to the strengthening of the urban dimension in EU policy.
55. To invite the European Parliament, as co-legislator, for a dialogue about the results and recommendations of the Partnerships, in order for the Parliament to consider the recommendations for the agenda of relevant Commissions when discussing relevant new and existing EU legislation.

## **IX Stakeholders**

### *The Ministers agree:*

56. To thank the EESC for their active contribution to the development of the EU Urban Agenda.
57. To welcome the EESC, civil society, non-public NGOs and businesses, to provide the required expertise for all actions within the framework of the EU Urban Agenda aimed at Better Regulation, Better Funding and Better Knowledge Exchange.