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Area 3 - Responsible Design / WG Urban Issues

ACE response to the consultation on the urban dimension of EU policies

Public Consultation - ACE response

Final

1. What are the main rationales for an EU urban agenda? Where can EU action bring most added value? What elements of urban development would benefit from a more concerted approach between different sectors and levels of governance?

The EU urban agenda should bring cities back among the priorities of EU policy making, providing cities more influence and self determining power as it has been so far. Urban Agenda should be drafted, agreed and implemented primarily by cities. Member states and central governments have to step back and share strategies for urban development with cities and regions. As long as there will be conflict among these levels of government there is no chance of having an effective EU urban development policy framework. The Urban Agenda should allow for more bottom-up, participatory planning structures that allow for greater social inclusion, even if these are worked in parallel with more traditional top-down governance structures.

2. Should an EU urban agenda focus on a limited number of urban challenges? Or, should an EU urban agenda 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?

EU urban agenda shall set and promote an overarching framework of priorities to be addressed by all EU cities, identifying social, economic and environmental targets, on the basis of documents such as the Urban Aquis, the Bristol Accord and the Leipzig Charter. Incentives and support should be provided to the cities lagging behind, awards and dissemination tools for the cities in the forefront, following the methodology successfully worked out in 15 years of Urbact program. The tools to monitor urban development policies such as the Urban Audit and the Urban Quality Perception Survey should be upgraded in order to make it more transparent, useful and influential for policy makers and citizens at local level.The EU shall facilitate horizontal and vertical governance dialogue - intersectoral and multilevel - to enable integrated urban development policies.At the same time, the urban agenda should equally identify a number of key targets in the short- and medium-term that may be achieved, fitting within this broad overarching (longer-term) framework. This is important with regard to issues in relation to the sustainability dimension.

3. Is the European model of urban development as expressed in "Cities of Tomorrow" a sufficient basis to take the work on the EU urban agenda further?

The academic or political debate about the European urban model has not brought any relevant result to policy making. Since decades the EU is speaking about the European compact city model. In the meanwhile cities are sprawling. Much talk about social cities and cohesive communities hasn't avoided cities to become more and more terrain of conflict where richness and deprivation are growing next to each other, following economic concentration processes. More progress has been achieved in sustainable public transport networks, there where more effectively common goals have been identified between public and private stakeholders. This is a useful model to be implemented. When more defined targets have been identified, these have been more successful in terms of tangible, visible

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results on the ground – the sustainable public transport networks are an illustration of this success.

4. How can urban stakeholders better contribute to the policy development and implementation processes at EU level? Do cities need to be more involved in policymaking at regional, national and EU level? How?

The EU can have a great impact on urban development policies with very reasonable means. It is no time for huge urban projects: it is time for good maintenance and upgrade of the existing infrastructure, urban space and the whole built environment. Retrofitting Cities is a powerful tool to foster economic development, social cohesion, energy efficiency. In this way the EU will promote the European cities as a place to live and work, making them attractive for investments and talented people from all over the world. Cities have to do it themselves, National and Regional governments have largely proven not to be in the position to help cities the way they need. The focus for cities should increasingly be on sustainable rehabilitation initiatives.

5. What are the best ways to support a stronger urban and territorial knowledge base and exchange of experience? What specific elements of the knowledge base need to be strengthened in order to better support policymaking?

Disseminating and promoting good examples. Creating and strengthening an urban culture fostering dialogue across sectors and governance levels. Experimenting and testing on site: learning by doing. Building upon and developing the existing knowledge involving citizens with manufacturers, liberal professions and schools. Encouraging more public-private-community partnerships, with the inclusion of community participatory planning programmes.

6. What should be the roles of the local, regional, national and EU levels in the definition, development and implementation of an EU urban agenda?

Every level should be responsible for implementation of the targets of the EU urban agenda at its own scale. The EU for the overarching framework, dissemination and incentives, awards, monitoring etc. Member States to harmonise legislation, provide the infrastructural framework, fiscal and economic policy and make it simple for cities to access funding and implement their schemes in a fairly competitive system. Regions will have to manage the urban rural relationship alongside with regional infrastructural networks. Cities will have to draft and implement urban development plans, activating all possible stakeholders.