

Mobility, innovation, city and region

Need to step up efforts to foster sustainability of our development through innovation

Regions and cities play a crucial role in designing and exploiting innovation systems. Innovation-led growth is increasingly place-based with regions and cities taking the lead. It is recognised that regions and cities are spaces where universities and talents, entrepreneurial spirit, attractive lifestyle and innovative funding schemes can come together. Regions and cities offer demand-driven and supply-stimulated innovative solutions to many development challenges.

They increasingly reach out to innovative solutions to the problems they face but also to the opportunities they can exploit.

For many of us innovation goes beyond technological research to innovation processes, relationships, use of resources, funds, thinking out of the box, passion, hope. Over recent years, we have built enormous amount of hopes and expectations in the context of innovation. I am worrying sometimes that if we do not start to deliver soon, we might lose or weaken the commitment to innovation.

Nine EU citizens out of ten consider that transport conditions in their city or region need to be improved (Eurobarometer). This is a good reason to make us think about what should be done and there is no doubt that innovative solutions are needed. Cities do not only have problems with mobility, they are key players in the move toward eco-efficient economy. They have exceptional potential to make progress, to move fast forward, they can indeed lead in this transformation to an eco-efficient economy. It is also clear that the eco-efficient urban agenda will enhance competitiveness of cities and metropolitan areas, improve quality of life and improve their image.

That is why EC proposed in its Action Plan a year ago 20 measures to help cities and regions develop a new culture for urban mobility. Actions at all levels of governance are needed. But what is important is that local authorities have tools at their disposal to build up sustainable mobility. Public sector can do more to encourage innovation in mobility, lead by example and solve problems.

Local and regional authorities are well placed to harness innovation for mobility. They can work with public transport operators. They can use public procurement (precommercial procurement), that can stimulate innovation to push innovative solutions. They can participate in good practise exchange. They can be innovative on funding. They can be effective in developing awareness.

They can reach out to European cohesion policy instruments. Cohesion policy should not only be seen as a financial instrument, it should be involved in revolutionising urban and regional mobility through its integrated policy making approach.