



European Parliament
Committee on Regional Development

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***"Europe 2020 Strategy and the future urban challenges for
urban development in Europe - the perspective of the
European Parliament"***

Informal meeting of urban development ministers

Tuesday, 22 June 2010

Toledo, Spain

All major challenges Europe faces: mounting debts and deficits, innovation deficit, lack of competitiveness, weakening social cohesion, globalisation and increased competition, demographic change, migration and immigration, climate change, energy security and efficiency - are of direct concern to our cities. Europe's challenges are the challenges of the cities.

But cities also take active part in globalisation. Global urbanisation is today of an unprecedented scale and speed. Of course European urban areas are unique but they face the same global challenges as American and Asian cities and strive to remain major players in the globalised

world. They have to find the right responses and they need to be fast. Europe as a whole will benefit from their success.

Our duty as policy makers is to identify how to create an environment that fosters sustainable urban development. And I read your Toledo Declaration as aiming at stepping up efforts to create the right environment for urban development. It stresses the need of more continuity and coordination in moving towards a "European Urban Agenda". It also highlights the role the European Institutions play and can play in the future, acknowledging, first of all the continuous efforts and contributions to the urban agenda made by the European Commission, particularly through the urban dimension of cohesion policy but also through the coordination of urban dimension of other European policies.

The European Parliament strongly supports your position as expressed in Toledo Declaration. We are ready to increase our cooperation with other institutions and organisations working in this field, in particular those representing cities and towns, both through the work of the Committee on Regional Development and the work of the Intergroup on urban development chaired by Jan Olbrycht.

With regard to Europe 2020 strategy, the European Parliament has urged for an improved governance system in line with the principles of multi-level governance and partnership that have proved their added value in cohesion policy.

Regional and local levels of European governance have the capacity to translate European strategic goals into their own territorial specificities

and they can effectively pursue common European objectives, exploiting the competencies and policy tools that you have delegated to them.

A city or a town is often a place where all elements of a solution to a major European challenge and all partners needed to find and implement the solution can be brought together. That is why the EP has pointed at the key role of cities in achieving the EU2020 goals; urged that their experience and contribution be taken into account in implementing the EU2020 priorities. A real partnership with cities during implementation can facilitate bringing on board universities, key partners for a better future.

It is true that the European Union does not have clear direct competence in urban affairs, but many of its policies have a significant impact on cities and their capacity to deal with the current global challenges and the post-crisis growth strategies. Union cannot be a witness of urban development, it must be involved. That is why the EP strongly supports strengthening of the urban dimension in Cohesion Policy.

I am confident that the Commission will propose an enhanced urban development policy post-2013, based on sustainable urban development and good urban governance. I am also confident that the URBACT II, JESSICA, URBAN AUDIT, URBAN ATLAS will continue their contribution to improving efficiency and effectiveness of urban policy.

We consider urban development a high priority in cohesion policy. We see also the need of a clear role for urban areas as intermediary structures in the next programming period. We will encourage involvement of local authorities and cities in policy design and implementation. We will also

support integrated approach to sustainable urban development, based on territorial and social cohesion in the framework of a simplified delivery system. All European funds should work together.

We see the great value of future expansion of financial engineering tools and the involvement of the European Investment Bank in facilitating access to funding urban change. We agree with you that an effort is needed to enhance a common understanding of what is integrated approach in urban development as the challenges evolve. In this context let me emphasize that separating European Social Fund from cohesion policy would seriously undermine this approach.

We will support your efforts and those of the European Commission to reinforce administrative capacity of urban governance and to use more efficiently existing financial, human and organisational resources. In the post-crisis time, also in urban development more will have to be done with most likely less resources.

Many members of the REGI Committee are actively involved in the Urban Intergroup. But the Urban Intergroup is a proof of the emerging importance of the urban dimension as a horizontal theme inside the European Parliament.

We, in the REGI Committee of the European Parliament are strongly convinced that in the future cohesion policy should remain an essential part of the EU economic policy framework, targeting also territorial factors of competitiveness. This policy has developed capacity of mobilising regional and local actors to pursue European priorities.

However, as other EU policy areas also provide support to urban areas, linkages between different policies need to be improved and the implementation of the integrated approach needs to be secured.

In the post-crisis era, more than ever, the European Union must back cities in their efforts to transform their economies into sustainable and competitive ones. The Toledo Declaration is an important milestone in the pursuit of addressing urban challenges of today and tomorrow. I would like to assure you that Committee on Regional Development will deliver a clear voice on sustainable urban development and European Urban Agenda during the reflection on the post 2013 policy priorities.