

**Written response of the European Union (except Germany and Portugal) and Norway Directors General for Urban Development on the Consultation about the “GREEN PAPER From Challenges to Opportunities: Towards a Common Strategic Framework for EU Research and Innovation funding”. COM(2011) 48**

This written response participates in the European debate initiated by the European Commission (EC) with the publication of the “GREEN PAPER From Challenges to Opportunities: Towards a Common Strategic Framework for EU Research and Innovation funding” COM (2011) 48. This written response of the Directors General for urban development does not address all of the issues discussed in the Green Paper, preferring to concentrate just on issues of particular significance to urban development, which is recognised as determining the development of the entire EU. Therefore, this written response is without prejudice to Member States’ and Norway positions on the next legislative package for Structural Funds, and on the future Strategic Framework for EU Research and Innovation (R&I) funding.

In line with the general provisions of the *Toledo Declaration* agreed on June 22<sup>nd</sup> 2010 at the Informal Ministerial Meeting of the EU Ministers responsible for urban development policies, the Directors General for Urban Development from EU Member States (except Germany and Portugal) and Norway present the following position:

**Importance of the urban dimension in Europe 2020 goals implementation.**

- Directors General acknowledge that the major societal grand challenges identified by Europe 2020 are not abstract, but have a territorial dimension, that is to say: take place in the space. Taking into account that 80% of Europe’s population is already living in cities, towns and urban areas, which can be considered as the European hubs for creativity, innovation and development, Directors General stress their important contribution these areas provide implementing the Europe 2020 Strategy, and more particularly in the achievement of its concrete objectives and headline targets. Only a high and sustained level of innovation can achieve these goals, and cities are in the best position to deliver on these.
- According to this importance of urban issues, Directors General ask for a specific consideration of the urban dimension in the thematic scope of the new EU Framework for Research and Innovation, and acknowledge that investing on research about the urban dimension of the grand challenges and the implications for local policy of the Europe 2020 objectives would pay off substantially in the long term.
- Directors General welcome the proposal of the EC in its Communication “*Conclusions of the fifth report on economic, social and territorial cohesion: the future of cohesion policy*” COM (2010) 642 final, for preparing an ambitious urban agenda within the framework of cohesion policy where financial resources would be identified more clearly to address urban issues and urban authorities would play a stronger role in designing and implementing urban development strategies. Moreover, they stress that a European Urban Agenda should comprise on the one hand the urban dimension of EU policies -in particular cohesion policy, but also research policy-, and on the other hand the results of intergovernmental cooperation between Member States regarding urban development policies. Therefore, they ask the EC to establish the necessary linkage of this urban agenda with the future Strategic Framework for EU Research and Innovation funding.

**Complex nature of urban issues: the need of a truly integrated and holistic approach.**

- Taking into account that urban issues have a complex nature, which can be better understood and addressed through a truly integrated and holistic approach, Directors General consider that the guiding principles for urban focused research – targeted on a multidimensional and integrated concept of urban sustainability – should include the following:
  - Long term orientation, and forward-thinking;
  - Holistic, integrated, interdisciplinary and cross-cutting character, including the social, environmental, economic and governance perspectives that are characteristic of urban issues;
  - Promoting ‘*transversal coordination*’ to make sector or one-dimensional approaches converge; ‘*vertical coordination*’ between all administrative levels, by means of new arrangements for ‘multilevel governance’; and ‘*horizontal coordination*’ between all the actors involved in urban development, promoting intensive interactions between researchers, policy makers, business and civil society;

- Combining top-down and bottom-up approaches, as appropriate;
- Seeking the right way to organise all ‘timescales’ (short/medium/long term) and all ‘spatial scales’ (region/metropolitan area/small, medium sized and large cities and towns/neighbourhood, urban and rural linkages, etc.) and, finally, attending to the conjunction between both of them;
- Identify and take advantage of “economies of cooperation” between core cities and their surrounding communities in metropolitan regions (functional urban regions);
- Analyse urban externalities and transaction spillovers and exploit the positive effects of applying the “real cost principle” in goods and services in cities, as well as new models that foster a more sustainable behaviour;
- Looking for innovation and impact-orientation, putting expertise into practice, serving society by raising public awareness and acceptance, and providing evidence for urban policy decision making;
- Considering the importance of a functioning chain from R&I to demonstration projects, with the possibility of systematic follow-up and feedback of experience over longer periods of time;
- Striving for integration of education, research and innovation in a functioning knowledge triangle, including mobility across discipline boundaries and between academia and practice.

**Synergies and coordination between EU and intergovernmental research and innovation initiatives: Joint Programming Initiative (JPI) Urban Europe.**

- Directors General call the European Commission and the different policy makers in Member States to pursue the creation of synergies between intergovernmental and EU programmes and instruments, leading to minimizing the risks of inefficiency, fragmentation, lack of coordination and overlapping. In this regard, it seems especially important that synergies and coordination between the new Framework for EU Research and Innovation and the JPI Urban Europe are guaranteed, contributing to the creation of a true European Research Area (ERA) in the field of urban development.

**Coordination, synergies and complementarities between the future Framework for EU Research and Innovation funding and the future cohesion policy.**

- Directors General ask the European Commission to ensure that upcoming EU Research and Innovation Framework is drafted with a view to strengthening its links, coordination, synergies and complementarities with the future cohesion policy and the upcoming framework for Structural Funds.
- Within these two frameworks, they also underline the advantages of harmonising the rules, procedures and practices (eligibility rules, etc) governing the different upcoming instruments, and to ensure better coordination (of schedules of call of proposals, themes and types of calls, etc) between them. Access to calls and information for cities, regions, and other potential beneficiaries of funding for urban research and knowledge, experience exchange or networking related activities, either through the upcoming R&I Framework or through Structural Funds, should be more coordinated. The dissemination and networking of R&I outputs with a territorial or urban dimension should also be much more integrated.
- In their common position to the *Conclusions of the Fifth Cohesion Report on economic, social and territorial cohesion: the future of cohesion policy*, the Directors General have opted for continuing an instrument for city/town networking – such as URBACT – in the future financial perspective. Depending on the final shape of the urban dimension of cohesion policy it may be necessary to continue supporting cooperation between metropolitan regions, cities and towns, for example by supporting the networking of cities/towns involved in the implementation of global grants and/or innovative projects funded under cohesion policy. Furthermore, the possibility of introducing a mechanism for disseminating the results of the Programme at a national level should also be considered.
- Directors General also stress the need to frame urban issues from a broader multiscale perspective, specifically considering the territorial dimension. In this regard, and without pre-empting the decision on the future financial framework, they ask the EC to continue supporting regional and urban networks in developing and spreading those best territorial and urban practices linked with Europe 2020 objectives. They also asked the EC and the national authorities involved to strengthen the analysis of the territorial dimension of urban dynamics within the future ESPON Programme. Results from the research-oriented networks like ESPON should be taken into account by the other (regional and urban) networks. Needs

and challenges from regional and urban networks should be taken into account by the research networks, including the Urban-Audit.

#### **The Urban dimension in Flagship Innovation Union potential European Innovation Partnerships.**

- Directors General stress the need to consider the urban dimension, and thus, the importance of a truly integrated and cross-cutting approach as described above in the potential European Innovation Partnership “*Smart cities and communities*” mentioned in the EC Communication *Europe 2020 Flagship Initiative Innovation Union* COM(2010) 546 final, and –as far as possible- in all the other ones (like “*Water-Efficient Europe*” or “*Smart mobility for Europe’s citizens and business*”) that are directly related with urban issues.

#### **Clarifying the future European Research and Innovation landscape.**

- Directors General consider that the proliferation of instruments and schemes for EU funded research are generating some adverse effects, like introducing a certain confusion to participants, National Contact Points and programme managers involved, and even a certain overlapping. In this regard, the future R&I Framework should encourage cities, regions and Member States to develop sustainable urban policies successfully and reduce and streamline the already too large portfolio of policy objectives and related instruments at EU level, harmonizing and providing coherence to the rules and procedures across all funding mechanisms, balancing at the same time the need to unify the set of rules and simplification with the necessity to keep a certain degree of flexibility and diversity provided by the existence of a broad set of different instruments covering the needs of the different potential beneficiaries.

#### **Strengthening links between urban research and urban policy.**

- Directors General explicitly confirm that data and evidence from urban research are important inputs for urban policy decision making, and thus, urban research can notably contribute to increasing the efficiency, effectiveness and comprehensiveness of urban policy in Europe. In this regard, they agree on supporting and strengthening the participation of public local authorities in research activities funded by the next Framework for EU Research and Innovation, specially through strategic partnerships with other actors from the ‘formal research community’ (Universities, researchers, etc) or from the local ‘urban community’ (practitioners, SMEs, etc).
- Furthermore, they consider that new initiatives structuring the dialogue and strengthening a closer cooperation between the ‘research community’ and the local ‘urban policy community’ would be extremely helpful to close the gap between research and urban policy making.

#### **Continuing to support demonstration actions in urban areas, cities and towns.**

- Directors General acknowledge that demonstration projects and pilot actions in cities funded by the current 7th Framework Programme have proved to be very successful in supporting pioneering projects and actions, making breakthroughs and innovation visible for citizens. In this regard, current existing initiatives for cities like CIVITAS and CONCERTO should continue to be supported at EU level, strengthening the integrated and cross-cutting approach which is characteristic to urban issues. Furthermore, this type of initiatives should be encouraged and its scope extended to a more holistic perspective supporting a multidimensional concept of urban sustainability (including the social, environmental and economic perspective).

#### **Improvement of knowledge capitalization and linkages with existing knowledge dissemination structures.**

- Directors General highlight the need to continue improving knowledge capitalization and recall the Ministers’ request at Marseille Informal Ministerial Meeting 2008, asking the European Commission to support the efforts done to capitalise on the results and data gathered as part of the Urban Audit, the activity of the ESPON observatory, the URBACT programme, the data and analysis of the European Environmental Agency and the European Research and Innovation Programmes.
- More particularly, they also stress the potential benefit that could be achieved by using existing urban knowledge dissemination networks, such as URBACT and EUKN, to contribute to the dissemination of EU funded research results that have an urban thematic scope.

**Benchlearning. The importance of statistics and knowledge exchange for comparative urban studies.**

- Urban Development Directors General stress the importance of having a good urban statistical database for comparative urban studies, and recall the Ministers invitation included in *Urban Acquis* 2004 to invite the EC to undertake an Urban Audit on a regular basis, in close cooperation with Member States, as the foundation of a European Urban Statistics, which will assist cities, MS and the EC in developing appropriate policy responses to urgent problems. Comparative studies on European cities should be further promoted, in order to fill the existing gaps at European level. An urban thematic priority axis could be helpful realising a true response and commitment from cities and the larger “urban community”.
- Moreover, they highlight the benefits of benchlearning between cities and encourage the potential possibilities of benchlearning in existing or developing instruments such as the European Urban Knowledge Network (EUKN) and the European Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities (RFSC).

**This written response on the Consultation about the “*GREEN PAPER From Challenges to Opportunities: Towards a Common Strategic Framework for EU Research and Innovation funding*” COM(2011) is supported by the Directors General for Urban Development from Norway and all EU Member States except for Germany (which instead refers to the German Government’s official response to the consultation) and Portugal.**

## **ANNEX. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION ON URBAN DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF URBAN RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE.**

Within the framework of intergovernmental cooperation, the Presidency of the EU Council takes on leadership within the area of urban policy and development, coordinating the work of the Urban Development Group (UDG), which is composed of the representatives of ministries in individual Member States. The UDG is tasked with preparing meetings of the Directors General and, potentially, meetings of the Ministers for Urban Development. The outcome of intergovernmental cooperation in this area consists principally of documents adopted during informal Ministerial meetings; these provide guidance for the activities of individual EU Member States within the scope of urban development, as well as affecting EU policy.

In the context of urban development policies, the most important documents adopted during the last informal Ministerial meetings include:

- The *Urban Acquis*<sup>1</sup> of 2004, recognizing “*the importance of the contribution that cities can and do make to the economic, environmental and social success of Europe*”;
- The 2005 *Bristol Accord*<sup>2</sup>, highlighting the importance of sustainable communities for Europe’s further development and setting out the characteristics of a sustainable community;
- The *Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities*<sup>3</sup> of 2007, highlighting the importance of “*making greater use of integrated urban development policy approaches*”, and the need “*to pay special attention to deprived neighbourhoods within the city as a whole*”;
- The 2007 *Territorial Agenda*, placing the issues faced by cities, towns and urban areas into the context of territorial cohesion;
- The 2008 *Marseille Statement*<sup>4</sup>, asking for the implementation of the Leipzig Charter principles by developing a common European Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities,;
- The 2010 *Toledo Declaration*<sup>5</sup>, acknowledging the role that European urban areas, cities and towns can play in achieving the aim of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth as pursued in the *Europe 2020 Strategy*; emphasising the significance of integrated urban development as a tool for achieving the *Europe 2020 Strategy* objectives; and calling for a real partnership with European urban areas, cities and towns in its implementation, with the aim to empower them to tackle future challenges and to unlock their potential, continuing to strengthen public support for sustainable urban policies across the EU.

Although urban research policies in EU Member States are not usually direct competence of the Ministers responsible for urban development policies, they have been considered of extraordinary importance in all the Ministerial documents afore mentioned, as urban research and knowledge constitute one of the basic inputs for a good decision making in urban development policies.

Therefore, every Ministerial document has included several direct references and recommendations about urban research and knowledge:

In the *Acquis Urban* of 2004, the “*Ministers stress the need to exchange knowledge and practical experience of urban policies between cities, regions, member states and European institutions*”, considering that “*such knowledge will help to develop policies that encourage economic growth, social inclusion and environmental quality*”. In this regard, the Ministers agreed to create an intergovernmental “*pilot project for a European Knowledge Network, for connecting European databases on urban policy and the extension to a European knowledge network which will link existing local, regional, national and European networks*”

<sup>1</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/urban2/pdf/112004\\_rotterdam\\_conclusion.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/urban2/pdf/112004_rotterdam_conclusion.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.rfsustainablecities.eu/IMG/pdf/Bristol\\_accord\\_cle55c32d.pdf](http://www.rfsustainablecities.eu/IMG/pdf/Bristol_accord_cle55c32d.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.rfsustainablecities.eu/rubrique.php3?id\\_rubrique=107](http://www.rfsustainablecities.eu/rubrique.php3?id_rubrique=107)

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.rfsustainablecities.eu/rubrique.php3?id\\_rubrique=108](http://www.rfsustainablecities.eu/rubrique.php3?id_rubrique=108)

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.rfsustainablecities.eu/rubrique.php3?id\\_rubrique=138](http://www.rfsustainablecities.eu/rubrique.php3?id_rubrique=138)

*and support member states in developing national networks*". This was the starting point of the European Urban Knowledge Network (EUKN)<sup>6</sup> in which 15 MS are participating today.

Moreover, the *"Ministers welcome the results of the Urban Audit, which provides a picture of the quality of life in large and medium-size cities across the European Union. It is the foundation of European Urban Statistics which will assist cities, member states and the Commission in developing appropriate policy responses to urgent problems. Ministers invite the European Commission to undertake an Urban Audit on a regular basis in future, in close cooperation with Member States"*.

In the 2005 *Bristol Accord*, the Ministers *"agreed on the importance of fostering skills for successful place-making"* and to *"encourage Good Practice, Policy Learning and Capacity [building]"*, and *"recognised the importance of investing in generic 'place-making' (technical, administrative governance and other) skills - such as territorial leadership, community engagement, partnership working, project management, community governance and cross occupational working - in order to build and maintain better cities, towns and regions for their citizens. European cities will benefit from improved joint learning and good practice"*.

The *Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities 2007*, *"emphasized the importance of systematic and structured exchange of experience and knowledge in the field of sustainable urban development"*, and the need to continue promoting and intensifying *"the exchange of knowledge and experience between policy makers, practitioners and researchers at local, regional, national and European level in the future"*.

In the *Marseille Statement 2008*, the Ministers asked *"the European Commission to support the efforts to capitalise on the results and data gathered as part of the Urban Audit, the activity of the ESPON observatory, the Urbact programme, the data and analysis of the European Environmental Agency and European research programmes"*.

Finally, in the *Toledo Declaration of 2010*, *"the Ministers considered it to be key to continue to promote research, comparative studies and statistics on urban topics, in addition to exchanging best practices and dissemination of knowledge. To do this will require coordination and driving research programmes more vigorously on a national scale and transnational projects on a European scale. In this regard, the European Commission is thanked for driving the European Research Area on urban topics by supporting urban research through the Framework Programmes for RTD in a considerable way and especially by funding the URBAN-NET network"*. They also considered that *"it would be extremely useful to continue beyond 2010 on the path begun by URBAN-NET to coordinate transnational research programmes on urban topics and the intergovernmental funding of calls for transnational projects, and also extend the number of participating countries"*. In this regard, it has to be highlighted that this path is now envisaged to be continued and further explored by the JPI Urban Europe<sup>7</sup>. *"The Ministers also asked the Commission to consider the urban dimension within the Seventh Framework Programme currently in effect, and stressed the importance to continue supporting it in the future"*, being this the main political statement in which this paper builds upon.

Ministers *"also asked the EC and national authorities involved to strengthen the analysis of the territorial dimension of urban dynamics within the ESPON Programme"*. Without pre-empting the decision on the financial framework and the future of Structural Funds, this idea has now the opportunity to be considered in the ongoing process of developing the proposal for ESPON post 2013 that is being drafted.

They also *"took note of the progress that has been made in the cooperation between the European urban networks, and also between intergovernmental and Commission initiatives, particularly welcoming the envisaged creation of a Common Search Engine between EUKN and URBACT Programme. The Ministers also welcomed the commitment of several Member States to continue their participation in EUKN for the 2011-2015 period and valued their efforts to establish EUKN as an EGTC."*

Finally, the Ministers stressed the need to reinforcing all these initiatives and welcomed Sweden, Spain and Belgium's initiative to set up a working group associated with the UDG to look into the possibilities and define the strategies to foster coordination and reflection on these topics related to urban research and knowledge".

---

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.eukn.org/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.jpi-urbaneurope.eu/>