THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS IN THE EU URBAN AGENDA KICK-OFF STATEMENT

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The ’story’ of the Urban Agenda

Requests, needs

• cities should get more role in European decision making. The national governments do not understand enough the roles the cities could play (Vienna, 1998).

• coordination of regulations would be needed in urban areas

Answers

• cities are key for the success of EU policies... 15 bn given directly to cities in form of Article 7... EC recognized the need for better partnership... UIA as a first practical step towards innovative partnerships...

• lately some steps towards an EU Urban Agenda – due to efforts of some ambitious presidencies (e.g. Latvian, Dutch)
Some unanswered challenges: sectoral and territorial imbalances

- **Sectoral imbalances** between **economic** (smart Cities), **environmental** (carbon emmission, energy performance, air quality) and **social** aspects (no direct EU competences) in regulations. Competency problems: environmental and economic aspects have higher, while social have smaller competencies... this is in contradiction with the needs cities have.

- **Territorial imbalances** due to the efficiency oriented, „spatially blind“ allocation of large pots of EU money (Juncker investment package, UIA, H2020, Smart Cities), resulting in growing gaps between more developed and peripheral countries.
Some unanswered challenges: weak acknowledgement of the urban level

• Cities are usually **left out** from transposing EU directives into national legislation. Example: EPBD: Energy Performance for Buildings Directive
• Urban proofing, territorial impact assessments.... also **social proofing** would be needed
• Urban aspects have **no direct representation** on the highest level, no Commissioner for EU urban issues exist
• Cooperation **between DG-s** is weak
The consultation process on the EU UA

European Commission Communication July 2014: launching a public consultation on an EU Urban Agenda, to widen the debate to all relevant stakeholders, to gather their ideas, and to further clarify the rationale for an EU Urban Agenda, what its objectives should be and how it could function.

225 responses from 29 European countries, Canada and the USA. Many respondents were local authorities associations, trade and industry federations, civil society organisations. In addition, some Member States have carried out national consultations with local authorities. Main suggestions:

- Result orientation – focus on a limited number of priority areas
- Effective application of better regulation tools
- Improve coherence and coordination of EU policies with an impact on cities, align existing EU instruments with priority areas
Arnstein (1969) Ladder of citizen participation

- Citizen control
- Delegated power
- Partnership
- Placation
- Consultation
- Informing
- Therapy
- Manipulation

Degrees of citizen power

Degrees of tokenism

No power
The outcome: the priorities and partnerships

Thematic priorities

• **12 priorities**, 4 of which taken first
• **11 cross-cutting issues** („the partnerships will consider the relevance of these for the selected themes”)

Thematic partnerships

• involving **different partners**: the Commission (who facilitates the process), Member States, cities, experts, European Organisations (e.g. Eurocities, EIB, URBACT), and stakeholders (NGOs, business, etc.)
• participation is **voluntary** and **open to all** those interested; the size is about **15 persons**, chosen in a **transparent way**: balanced geographically and between Commission, Member States, cities and other stakeholders
My expert opinion: what are the conditions for good partnership work?

- not to allow any stakeholder to control the contributors and the report
- not to accept automatically the usual skewed distribution of answers
- go beyond the original question if it does not relate to the realities in some parts of Europe
- go beyond the data and accept some visions
- use the expertise from all parts of the EU
Example 1: good geographical representation?
Example 2: spatially blind selection

Statement for spatially blind selection: it is important not to mix up the **efficiency** initiatives with those which are for **creating solidarity**

Counter-argument: spatially blind initiatives, especially if based on unclear and/or technology dominated aspects, **further increase the existing inequalities**
Figure 13: Numbers of EU27 applicants and requested EU financial contribution (in € million) in retained proposals for FP7 calls concluded in 2007-2011 by country.

FP7, SSH programme

• SSH programmes: 560 mill eur allocated in 246 projects
• Hungarian institutions: only 2 project leaders.
• Only one east-central European university among the first 30 (Leuven University 26 projects, Amsterdam University 25 projects, LSE 22 projects…)

The spatially blind selection leads to extremely unequal distribution of funds and to solutions which are difficult to apply in those areas where the problems are.
Example 3: forgetting about the weaker

- **EU interest/lobby organizations**: countries, which are organized in different/special ways are usually left out (example: social housing)
- **EU good practices, innovations**: weaker and less responsive countries are usually left out (example: Dutch publication on EU Urban Agenda)
- **expertise** used in EU projects: academic reputation and language knowledge determines the selection of experts
EU level consultations: more innovation needed

The tools of the Commission should be improved:

• **background papers**: large gaps between critical scientific analysis and official EC papers

• **consultation process** is in principle good, in reality it has basic weighting problems

• **high-level EU meetings** are full with formalities instead of real debates

EESC and similar organizations have a crucial opportunity and responsibility to collect critical views from all parts and actors of urban Europe and forward these to the high political level
Partnerships: the process of the Urban Agenda

The recent compromise: **aim for little** regarding the Urban Agenda but **do it quickly**

The **Partnerhips are crucial** to achieve results, thus:

- Partnerhips should be **carefully composed**
- Partnerhips should do **critical and efficient work**
- the outcomes of the different Partnerhips should be **coordinated**
Partnerships: how to get balanced composition?

For good outcomes it is important to achieve **balanced composition** of the Partnerships

- how to represent the **usually underrepresented**: smaller organizations, Eastern countries/cities, Eastern and Southern researchers?

- how to ensure **larger representation of non-public actors** (LEADER: at least 51%!), such as businesses and social partners, universities and civil society organisations working in urban areas?
Partnerships: how to assure the conditions for critical and efficient work?

For good outcomes it is important that Partnerships do critical and efficient work

• how to ensure integrated approach despite less competencies in some issues?

• how to go beyond the usual skewed distribution of answers and cover the whole picture across Europe?

• how to assure to get all views, avoiding that Partnerships become closed discussion groups?
Towards an EU Urban Agenda: coordination across Partnerships

It is necessary to ensure that measures implemented to improve the situation in one priority area will not have an **adverse effect on another priority area**

• how to create communication between the 12 partnerships and ensure that **no one of these creates externalities** for other topics?

• how to ensure **links** between the Partnerships and UDN, UIA, H2020, URBACT...?
Questions for debate about the Partnerships for the Urban Agenda

How should Partnership formed so as to have balanced composition?

What framework is needed so that they do critical and efficient work?

How to coordinate the outcomes between the different Partnerships?
THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

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