



Speech by the Mayor of Sala (Sweden) Carola Gunnarsson at the informal meeting of Ministers responsible for cohesion policy, territorial cohesion and urban matters, on 10 June 2015 in Riga (Latvia). This ministerial meeting took place during the Latvian presidency of the EU.

On the Declaration of Ministers towards the EU Urban Agenda

On behalf of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, CEMR, I would like to thank the Latvian Presidency for the preparation of this Declaration.

We welcome in particular that the Declaration acknowledges the important role of the Committee of the Regions, CEMR and EUROCITIES as representatives of the local and regional level in the debate about the EU Urban Agenda.

We also appreciate that it refers to the different types of urban settlements, in particular the reference to small and medium sized urban areas, their diversity and their contribution to achieve common EU objectives.

European cities want to provide a high quality of life for their citizens. The integrated approach of sustainable urban development is a very good way to achieve this objective. Therefore, CEMR continues to promote the Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities, which provides a tool to cities that want to follow that path, and we are pleased that the RFSC has been included in the Declaration.

The main priorities of the future EU Urban Agenda, the challenges and opportunities of European urban areas on a global scale

The future EU Urban Agenda should provide an operational framework and effective instruments to better take into account the urban dimension in the EU policies and legislation.

We are convinced that only real partnership between the European, national, regional and local level and further partners from the private sector and civil society can lead to successfully handle the challenges that we face. CEMR has been promoting this 'governance in partnership' concept over the past years and is very pleased that it found its way in the new structural funds general regulation.

This approach deserves to be further explored for other policies with an urban or territorial impact.

In addition to that, territorial impact assessments should be made for relevant EU policies and legislation, in order to better anticipate the potential impact on the local level. This could lead to more differentiated policies and take into account the differences of our cities and towns.

Here, we see a clear link to the Better Regulation Package that the European Commission published recently that pursues the objective to improve the European legislation.

CEMR is the European section of our world organisation 'United cities and local government', UCLG, and as such we are also involved in the preparation of HABITAT III through the Task Force that has been established. We are very committed to contribute with our experience and knowledge to the global debate.

In order to find out how an EU Urban Agenda could serve the purpose of better regulation, the idea of pilots as suggested by the upcoming Dutch Presidency and the Commission Staff Working Paper, appear to be an interesting method. This should help us to find out whether territorial impact assessments and a partnership between all levels of governance and relevant partners will lead to better policies and legislation on the one hand, and to help the cities to provide a good quality of life to their citizens and businesses.

I wish to conclude from my perspective as a mayor speaking on behalf of other local politicians: while we treasure the diversity of our cities, we all face the same challenges and are interested in getting inspiration and learning from each other. An EU Urban Agenda recognising the role of cities, providing a framework for better integration of their needs in EU policies and supporting exchange of knowledge and experience would be a real added value. The CEMR is keen to contribute to the further actions.

Thank you for your attention.