

## CEMR Statement on the EU Urban Agenda

In 2014, the European Commission launched a **consultation** on an EU Urban Agenda. The Commission has published a Staff Working Document on the issue at the end of May 2015, and CEMR is mentioned in different parts of the document. The Commission has also invited CEMR to take part in the high-level panel on "**who should do what for the EU urban agenda?**" of the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the European Commission's Forum (2 June) to discuss the urban dimension of EU policies and the results of the consultation.

CEMR is actively involved at EU level in the construction of an EU Urban Agenda. In this context, CEMR takes part in the intergovernmental discussions organised by each EU Presidency, and also works with the European Commission and in particular Directorate General Regional and Urban Policies, with the Committee of the Regions, and with Members of the European Parliament.

We hope that the EU Urban Agenda will raise awareness in the EU institutions about the importance of local areas in their diversity, that it will provide a working method of partnership with cities and municipalities, and finally, that it will ensure systematic ex-ante territorial impact assessments of EU initiatives and legislation. The role and expertise of the local level in the policy-making process must definitely be recognised and taken into account.

**Based on previous discussion papers shared with CEMR members, the CEMR Secretariat is now developing a position paper where we call for:**

1. Continued action by the European Commission and Member States for the development of an EU Urban Agenda, that **recognises local and urban authorities as crucial partners** when developing legislation and initiatives in relevant policy areas;
2. EU policy when there is a clear, assessed, added value for cities and municipalities, respecting the subsidiarity and proportionality principles. There is a clear link to the EU Better Regulation package. Ahead of developing any new legislative proposal, the Commission should conduct **systematic ex-ante territorial impact assessments**;
3. The set-up of a coherent **non-binding framework** which ensures that EU initiatives and funding for local and urban authorities more comprehensible, respecting decisions on urban development made locally in line with local conditions;
4. An EU Urban Agenda **shall reflect Europe's diversity** at local level: Europe is characterised by a high number of small and medium-sized cities; therefore, 'urban' in a future EU Urban Agenda must relate to cities, towns and municipalities of all sizes: small, medium-sized and big cities. We should not keep thinking the city in its traditional way, in its administrative borders. A future EU urban agenda has to take into account the interdependencies of cities and their surroundings. This is key if we want to **ensure economic, social and territorial cohesion in Europe**;
5. Developing a **working method of partnership** with local and urban authorities and their national and European associations, similar to the partnership principle that was introduced in the EU cohesion policy; this should be applied to all EU legislation and initiatives with a direct or indirect impact on territories, beyond regional policy;

6. The European Commission to support **exchange of experiences on innovative, technological and social innovation-driven solutions** like the Smart Cities and Communities initiative. The involvement of local and urban authorities provides an added value to the development of instruments and services that will be used by the cities and the users at local level.
7. Support for **exchanges on sustainable integrated urban development**, and the use of voluntary instruments such as the Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities that has been developed by the Member States as a tool to implement the *Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities*, which they had adopted in 2007.
8. Restraint as **concerns the development of binding “urban” indicators** for cities to qualify for being “smart”. The setting of standards in this area has a political dimension and therefore should be done on the basis of a democratic mandate and in a transparent way. In any case, indicators should only be developed in close cooperation with local authorities and provide a tool for self-assessment on a voluntary basis.
9. More **cooperation with local authorities when building the EU report for Habitat III** and the new Global Urban Agenda as outcome of the Conference. It should not only be an intergovernmental process; mayors are at the leading edge to achieve the objectives and directly reach their citizens. On the other hand, while a stand-alone goal on sustainable cities and territories is to form part of the post-2015 agenda to be approved in September 2015, we must make sure the upcoming sustainable development goals are “localised” with means and resources for local governments to achieve the SDGs within their territory.

Finally CEMR **welcomes:**

10. the intergovernmental discussions conducted by the upcoming Dutch Presidency (2016) to develop some **pilots on topics shared by all Member States**, such as innovation, SMEs, low carbon economy and employment, keeping in mind the importance of an integrated place-based approach. The idea is that these pilots are done through a partnership between cities/municipalities, Member states and European Commission’s services, in order to show the latter where cities and municipalities need more, less or another European approach for their development. It is crucial that decisions at EU level be based on evidences about what happens, what policies are already working, and what obstacles cities and municipalities meet on the ground. Many organisational and governance issues still need to be discussed but it is already a step forward.
11. the **Declaration** prepared by the Latvian Presidency of the EU **on the European Urban Agenda and small and medium sized urban areas**, adopted on 10 June at the informal ministerial meeting in Riga. We encourage Member States and the European Commission to take action to concretely implement the Declaration in all the dimensions and areas that are addressed.