

Memo
To: EXCO and GA of ECTP-CEU
From: Jan Vogelij

Ref. NTCCP and UDG

Report about the combined meetings of EU DG's of Ministries responsible for Spatial Development and for Urban Affairs,
under Italian Presidency
of 25 September 2014 in Milano.

1. Territorial Cohesion.

The *Italian Presidency* had drafted a policy paper for addressing issues of lagging-behind regions within the Member States, which they called "Inner Areas" (Despite the peripheral location of many of those areas). Main objective is addressing issues due to increased depopulation and secure a level of amenities and services within those scarcely populated areas. The envisaged policy refers to the EU ITI (Integrated Territorial Investment) funding instrument, which intends to combine the different EU funds for investments if plans are based on integrated plan approaches.

The new instrument still leaves questions about how to apply it? At the one hand countries ask for more clarity and guidance (*UK*) and at the same time they ask for flexibility. (*France* integrates rural investments in ITI) . A weakness according to *Cyprus* is that the population size, being an indicator works into the wrong direction: if population further decreases, the region will be "punished" through less funding. *Croatia* emphasised the importance of the integrated approach, which includes much more than economic development.

The Commission's (*DG Regio and Urban Affairs*) response stressed that we cannot turn the depopulation trend in those areas (40% of EU NUTS 3 regions!) Only substantial immigration would help, but that is not desired. The main purpose of the new ITI funding is to stimulate the effectiveness of integrated approaches by planning ahead, which avoids the existing fragmentation due to sectoral funding. (*Sweden* for instance organised minimal bureaucracy through appointing one authority to decide) The *Commission* asked for examples of practicing integrated funding. (A study comparing several options is organised)

Italian Presidency invites everyone to come with examples of practical solutions for effective implementation of ITI.

2. Progress in the Commission.

The representatives of *DG Regio and Urban Affairs* reported about the Cohesion Forum, held in September. The Cohesion Policy is now recognised as the central policy of the EU. The *6th Cohesion Report* has been published shortly. It depicts the (slow) but steadily increasing coherence between the EU regions. (Increased broadband coverage, less risk of poverty and inclusion, increased resource efficiency, higher density of land use, better transport in cities, etc.

(It is strongly recommended to read the report!)

The *6th Cohesion Report* concludes that without EU funding the situation would be worse in many of the European regions.

Belgium stressed that indicators should be more output related.

Luxembourg commented that the report analysed the past but missed issues of the future like functional areas and cross border regions. We should enter into a discussion about how Europe should develop: a vision is needed.

Germany welcomed that the report took the spatial perspective as basis for reflecting how the *Lisbon Agenda* worked out. Expected that experiences with the *Interreg* projects would be analysed as well.

The Netherlands asked for the global aspect: how developed Europe's position in the world?

Greece asked for more policy related recommendations: are certain policies to be corrected?

The *DG Regio and Urban affairs* response emphasised that the cohesion reports are quantitative analyses of developments; not meant as a vision.

Italian Presidency concluded the wish that more forward looking was desired.

3. Urban Affairs

Italian Presidency introduced the subject by stressing that the reactions on the initiatives for an *Urban Agenda* were all confirming the need for a common EU policy for urban affairs. So, now the What (Is the vision of *Cities of Tomorrow* of 2011 a good starting point?) and the How (how can it work?) are to be decided.

DG Regio and Urban Affairs reported that many confirming responses were received: there is a need for a framework agreement, which is comprehensive. But the *Cities of Tomorrow* vision is not sufficient: much more has to be studied and analysed. How can stakeholders better contribute? How to use and share existing knowledge? All levels must be involved, specially the cities.

(My Comment: Why more analysis and how much analysis they want is not clear. A vision is needed. The impression is that the Commission feels forced in this initiative and is insecure about how to continue in the widening context of multi-level policy making)

The Netherlands (took the initiative of an *Urban Agenda* in NTCCP and UDG meetings) reported about progress in the intergovernmental cooperation towards the EU *Urban Agenda*. A vision (synthesis of several existing policy papers) is to be agreed and must result in next steps, being actions. The initiatives are more or less in line: A common *Urban Agenda* is needed, extra regulations, procedures and bureaucracy must be excluded as much as possible. Next steps should include clarity about deliverables, the cooperation of Member States and the Commission, defining who does what, a time frame and the rolling agenda addressing themes of the Member States.

They request for input to formulate a shared approach.

Latvia (incoming Presidency) emphasises the importance of working together with the Commission. They want that the vision of the *Urban Agenda* includes also small and medium sized cities, and:

1. To be linked to the EU space as a whole and being considered as a part of an EU territorial development perspective. *(they want a new, refreshed ESDP!)*
2. Respect the territorial diversity (including rural areas)(no standard definitions on EU level, but accept national definitions)
3. Coordinate sector policies, operational also on lower levels.
4. Facilitate all aspects of sustainable development, providing integrated views on urban challenges.

Next 8 October there is a workshop in Brussels in the *Latvian Representation*. They ask for shared views in writing.

Belgium supports the NL proposals for next steps; now the Commission must become clear and invest money in the Urban Agenda.

DG Regio and Urban Affairs of the Commission: analyses population on a grid system with JRC and proposes three city categories.

Comment of *European Investment Bank*: we combine agricultural funds in the cases for small cities.

Denmark is against; These initiatives go too far and will bring more regulations. Not clear about what they are against.

(My comment in the meeting on confusing discussion about the way forward included next proposal for pragmatically fostering place-based diversity:

1. *Agree on a synthesized vision on European cities built from existing agreed building blocks of policy objective. This does not require large efforts if a degree of globality is accepted, allowing flexibility because:*
2. *Each Member State formulates its national interpretation of the vision, bringing EU objectives in accordance with national reality, by describing how that national interpretation contributes to the shared EU objectives of the Urban Vision.*
3. *Local and regional interventions for development (by definition based on local/regional realities), applying for ITI or other EU support, are required to demonstrate how the plans or projects contribute to the national and EU policy objectives for spatial development.)*

Soest,

29/09/2014

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