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FUTURE PERSPECTIVES OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EU URBAN AGENDA

ABSTRACT: This article is an overview of opinions and recommendations adopted in the European Union *vis-à-vis* urban policy. The author analyses the Pact of Amsterdam and future perspectives of the implementation of EU Urban Agenda.

KEYWORDS: Urban Agenda for the EU, Pact of Amsterdam.

Preface

Urban policy has become an increasingly important issue in European policy. It is the effect of a long-term work of urban experts, as well as the activity of urban networks and urban areas. The issue of urban policy is important not only for the European level, but also important for most city centres, urban and metropolitan areas in the EU Member States. The cities aspire to become centres of innovation, research and development, as well as cultural centres. Generally speaking, cities tend to become the engines of regional development in the twenty-first century.

The review of milestones in the context of EU urban policy

The first document related to urban and territorial development was the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities, adopted in 2007. The document was created by the Member States with active

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involvement of the European stakeholders who agreed on common principles and strategies for urban development policy. Importantly, recommendation II focuses especially on deprived neighbourhoods within the context of a city as a whole and highlights strategies for action, embedded in an integrated urban development policy (*Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities. Final DRAFT, 2 May 2007*).

During the Informal Ministerial Meeting on Urban Development Declaration, which took place in Toledo in 2010, the need to promote a smarter, more sustainable and socially inclusive urban development in European urban areas, cities, and towns was emphasised. In order to fulfill those goals, the Ministers reaffirmed the validity of the agreed upon commitments and principles established during previous ministerial meetings. They also highlighted an integrated approach in urban policies as one of the main tools to advance the direction set out in the Europe 2020 Strategy. What is more, the Ministers acknowledged the role that cities can play in achieving these objectives and called for a real partnership with cities in the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy. The most important features of the integrated approach in urban development are described in the “Toledo Reference Document on integrated urban regeneration and its strategic potential for a smarter, more sustainable and socially inclusive urban development in Europe” (*Toledo Informal Ministerial Meeting on Urban Development Declaration. Toledo, 22 June 2010*).

The year 2011 witnessed an important event: the launching of a cooperation platform by European institutions. The platform provides inspiration for policymakers and practitioners involved in urban development at the local, regional, national and European levels. A shared vision of the European City of tomorrow is one in which all dimensions of sustainable urban development are taken into account in an integrated way. Among the list of criteria, we can find the following: “strong social justice, protection, welfare and social services; no poverty, social exclusion or discrimination, and a decent existence for all; good access to general services, preventive health care and medical treatment” (*European Union. Regional Policy, Cities of tomorrow. Challenges, visions, ways forward, 10*). In 2011, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on strengthening the urban dimension of European policies and intergovernmental cooperation in shaping the policies of urban development, calling for the development of a common program or the Urban Agenda for the EU. In November 2013, a preliminary draft

of the Framework for Municipal Agenda (Proposal for a framework of the Urban Agenda) was created. The project was presented at the meeting of Directors General and CITIES conference. In the first half of 2015, the work on the Riga Declaration started. It was a step towards the development of the EU Urban Agenda within the framework of informal intergovernmental cooperation (UDG). The Declaration expressed support for the development of the Urban Agenda and highlighted the role of small and medium-sized cities in development processes.¹

In June 2015, the Second Cities Forum on the Agenda of the City took place in Brussels. During the Forum, representatives of the European Commission presented a report with the results of consultations with the Communication Commission and next steps for the development of Urban Agenda; parallel work on the Agenda is conducted within the framework of the intergovernmental process – informal cooperation between the Member States (*2nd European CITIES Forum*). Between July and November 2015, the Dutch Presidency launched a survey among the Member States, the European Commission and organisations representing cities at the EU level on Agenda priorities for the EU City (*Urban Agenda for the EU. Pact of Amsterdam*).

The Pact of Amsterdam

Consultations on the draft Pact of Amsterdam started in the early 2016. The process involved the following: Member States, European Commission, EESC, CEMR, CoR, EIB, EUKN, EUROCITIES URBACT and ESPON. On the 30th of May 2016, the Pact of Amsterdam was adopted during the informal meeting of EU ministers responsible for urban development (*Urban Agenda for the EU. Pact of Amsterdam*). The Dutch Presidency launched the Pact of Amsterdam, a political document, agreed during an informal meeting of the Ministers responsible for urban issues. The document is a map delineating directions of the urban policy. It provides objectives, thematic priorities, actions, and operational frameworks. The Pact of Amsterdam creates a new model of multilevel and multidimensional cooperation for urban policy

¹ Joint Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit (Riga, 21–22 May 2015), http://eeas.europa.eu/eastern/docs/riga-declaration-220515-final_en.pdf (access on: 21.12.2016).

stakeholders, whose aim is to strengthen the urban dimension in European Union policies (*Urban Agenda for the EU. Pact of Amsterdam*). The document was created in direct cooperation with the European Commission, EESC, CEMR, the Committee of the Regions, the European Investment Bank, EUKN, EUROCITIES, URBACT and ESPON. It was based on previous declarations connected with urban development, such as the Leipzig Charter and Toledo Declaration. The Pact emphasises the need for complementary policies, which have an impact on urban matters and the need to strengthen the urban dimension (*Urban Agenda for the EU. Pact of Amsterdam*). Actions undertaken within the Urban Agenda will be coordinated by the DG meeting on Urban Matters. The goal of it is to ensure transparency and effectiveness of actions, monitoring progress, ensuring the provision of feedback regarding Action Plans for Partnerships, preparations of informal guidelines for the future development of Urban Agenda, and the evaluation of thematic priorities.

The Pact highlights 12 thematic priorities (*Urban Agenda for the EU. Pact of Amsterdam*). In the document, we can find actions dedicated to the implementation of Urban Agenda; for example, cooperation among Partnerships connected with initiatives and cooperation programmes: Urban Innovative Actions, Urban Development Network, URBACT and ESPON 2020 (*Urban Agenda for the EU. Pact of Amsterdam*).

The key implementation mechanism of the Agenda will consist of cooperation between representatives of the Member States, DGs of the European Commission, cities, organisations and experts specialising in urban development in the European Union working within Partnerships (*Urban Agenda for the EU. Pact of Amsterdam*). The goal of partnerships, created on a voluntary basis, will be a multilevel and multidimensional approach and analysis of the priorities of Urban Agenda in the context of strengthening the urban dimensions of the EU policies in three areas: better regulation, better funding, and better exchange of knowledge. Each priority area will be delivered within a Partnership, whose task will be to prepare and implement an Action Plan in two to three years. While implementing the Action Plan, concrete new proposals will be submitted in the field of legislation, funding and knowledge, related to subjects specific for individual partnerships, which will make a non-mandatory contribution to the process of shaping future and the revision of existing EU laws, instruments and initiatives.

During the Dutch presidency, four pilot partnerships were launched focused on the following issues: air pollution, urban poverty, housing and migrants, and refugees. Partnerships have also elaborated guidelines for the Member States, urban authorities, European Commission, European Parliament, European Investment Bank and other social organisations, which were mobilised to interact with actions designed to strengthen and implement the Urban Agenda.

The twelve priorities of the Urban Agenda for the European Union are:

1. Inclusion of migrants and refugees;
2. Air quality;
3. Urban poverty;
4. Housing;
5. Circular economy;
6. Jobs and skills in the local economy;
7. Climate adaptation (including green infrastructure solutions);
8. Energy transition;
9. Sustainable use of land and Nature-Based solutions;
10. Urban mobility;
11. Digital transition;
12. Innovative and responsible public procurement (*Urban Agenda for the EU. Pact of Amsterdam*).

The areas of interventions among Partnerships are one of the most important issues in the European Union. Each partnership may bring together between 15 and 20 members: five representatives of cities, five representatives from Member States, representatives of the Direction General of the European Commission, representatives of the EBI, the European Social and Economic Committee, the Committee of the Regions, ESPON, URNACT, EUKN, organisations representing the cities at the the European Union level: CEMR, Eurocities, and experts (*Presentation by the Secretary of State (Poland) Mr Jerzy Kwieciński*). The management of Partnerships depends on the Urban Development Group (UDG) – Member States, the European Commission, the Committee of the Regions, CEMR and Eurocities, Directors General from the Member States responsible for urban development – Member States, EC, CEMR and Eurocities, and through the Ministries of the Member States taking care of urban development. A Member States recommendation is required to constitute a new Partnership in the Urban Agenda.

One of four pilot partnerships is focused on air quality and coordinated by the Netherlands, the other are:

Member States:

- Croatia;
- Poland;
- The Czech Republic.

Urban areas:

- Helsinki;
- London;
- Utrecht;
- Milan;
- Constanta.

Other partners:

- DG REGIO, DG ENER, DG RESEARCH, DG AGRI, DG GROWTH, DG MOVE, DG ENVIRONMENT, DG CONNECT, JRC;
- Consortium Healthy Air Ruhr Area (Arnhem & Nijmegen (NL));
- Duisburg;
- Dusseldorf;
- Moers (DE), represented by the city of Duisburg;
- Eurocities;
- Urbact;
- Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL).

“The main objective of this partnership is to improve air quality in cities and to bring the ‘healthy city’ higher on the EU agenda as part of the Urban Agenda. The identification of gaps, overlaps, and contradictions regarding regulations and funding possibilities (indirectly) related to air quality, specifically in urban areas and exchange of knowledge and best practices will be needed to reach the objectives of this partnership” (Urban Agenda for the EU. *Air Quality*, 6 October 2010).

Actions planned to be implemented between mid-2016 and mid-2017 are to prepare the modeling of city-specific situations based on firm data regarding the improvement of air quality and public health. The second planned action is: MAPPING REGULATORY INSTRUMENTS AND FUNDING (Urban Agenda for the EU. *Air Quality*, 6 October 2010).

These actions are aimed to improve air quality in connection with planning and environmental analysis if there is a need for innovative regulatory concepts; e.g., in finance and funding of such revised concepts and possible difficulties for cities and member states to gain access to the right funding schemes (Urban Agenda for the EU. *Air Quality*, 6 October 2010). The third planned action is to prepare RECOMMENDATIONS ON AIR QUALITY BEST PRACTICES. Best practices have already been

identified in the previous two actions, possibly complemented as a result of a desk study of international examples and they will recommend potential pilot or demonstration projects in the participating cities. The fourth action is: GUIDELINE FOR CITIES AIR QUALITY ACTION PLANS, based on the results of actions 1, 2 and 3. Currently, many cities develop their own air quality action plans not knowing what has already been developed in other cities (Urban Agenda for the EU. *Air Quality*, 6 October 2010). The objectives are to have affordable housing of good quality. The focus will be on public affordable housing, state aid rules, and general housing policy.

The Partnership on Housing has been established among the following partners Member States:

- Slovakia as a Coordinator;
- Latvia;
- Luxembourg;
- the Netherlands.

Urban areas:

- Vienna as a Coordinator;
- Riga;
- Scottish Cities Alliance;
- Poznań;
- Lisbon.

Other participants:

- European Commission (DG REGIO, DG ENER, DG EMPL, AEDES);
- Eurocities;
- European Investment Bank;
- Housing Europe;
- International Union of Tenants (IUT), URBACT (Urban Agenda for the EU. *Partnerships*, 10 November 2010).

The third pilot partnership is the Partnership on Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees with Amsterdam as a coordinator and the following urban areas as partners:

- Barcelona Metropolitan Area;
- Berlin, Athens, Helsinki.

Partners from Member States:

- Denmark;
- Italy;
- Greece;
- Portugal.

Other participants:

- European Commission: DG HOME as Coordinator, DG REGIO, DG EMPL;
- CEMR;
- EIB;
- Eurocities;
- European Council for Refugees and Exiles, Migration Policy Group and URBACT.

The objectives are to manage the integration of incoming migrants and refugees (extra-EU) and to provide a framework for their inclusion, considering actions related to the provision of public services, housing, integration, education, and labour market measures, social inclusion (Urban Agenda for the UE. *Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees*, 24 August 2016).

The Urban Poverty Partnership has 18 permanent members: Member States: France, Belgium, Germany, Spain, Greece; Urban areas: Łódź, Lille, Kortrijk, Birmingham, Timisoara, Daugavpils, Keratsini; Representatives of regions: Brussels-Capital Region a Île-de-France. Other members are: URBACT, EUKN, EAPN, UN Habitat, FEANTSA, Eurochild; European Commission: the Directorate General of Regional and Urban Policy and DG Employment.

The partnership operates under two approaches:

- People-oriented: the socioeconomic integration, with a particular emphasis on poverty, women, children and the elderly;
- Place-oriented: Revitalisation of the poorest neighbourhoods;
- Focus on territories: urban areas of all sizes (Metropolitan and suburban areas) (Presentation by Aleksandra Olejnik on behalf of the coordinators of the partnership, 27.10.2016).

The partnership, as we can see on the map, is well-balanced in the context of geographic and multilevel dimension.

The first steps of the partnership were focused on the mapping of policies, funds, networks and other useful EU instruments; their identification was based on the combination of URBAN and POVERTY related criteria (Presentation by Aleksandra Olejnik on behalf of the coordinators of the partnership, 27.10.2016).

The theoretical background of the partnership is explained in the scoping paper in which experts concentrate on the problem statement, bottlenecks, and opportunities. The main objective was to put down on paper the understanding and perception of urban poverty common for all members of the partnership and to identify the key building blocks for the action plan, whose draft should

be ready by the end of 2016 (Presentation by Aleksandra Olejnik on behalf of the coordinators of the partnership, 27.10.2016).

The main challenge for the urban poverty partnership is to act on causes and effects of poverty. The partnership adopted a multi-factor approach due to the fact that people in poverty situation usually experience several needs at the same time, e.g., in the area of education, housing, culture, and public services. People in poverty situation have to face and overcome multiple difficulties, such as e.g., low income, unemployment, family fragilities, and difficulties in access to health care. The partnership will work on the basis of integrated strategies for the benefit of deprived neighbourhoods and vulnerable groups, such as children, lone parent families, young people, the unemployed and migrants (Presentation by Aleksandra Olejnik on behalf of the coordinators of the partnership, 27.10.2016).

The actions of the partnership are planned to be based upon 3 pillars: social, economic and urban regeneration. The process in the partnership is about the participation of people and wide-range cooperation (Presentation by Aleksandra Olejnik on behalf of the coordinators of the partnership, 27.10.2016).

The issue of urban regeneration is one of the two priorities of the urban poverty partnership due to the fact that urban regeneration is a process that in the last years was implemented by many cities as a solution to many urban problems. Through urban regeneration, it is possible to bring life back to degenerated urban districts.

Through regeneration, the public and private sector should not only renovate buildings, but also plan and implement actions aimed at bringing new functions to degenerated parts of cities, especially in the context of social interventions. Social actions are necessary in the context of improving the quality of a multi-faceted urban tissue. The action has to be focused on long-term improvement, not only on short-term actions, as in many places in the city the deprivation of urban areas which are now subject to regeneration have faced the problem of poverty for decades.

Łódź involvement in Urban Poverty partnership

As a leader in urban regeneration programs, Łódź was selected by the Polish government to take part in the Urban Poverty Partnership. Łódź is the third largest city in Poland

with a post-industrial history. It was a famous textile centre but, unfortunately for the city, the textile industry collapsed.

In recent years, the city has developed and implemented solutions that have boosted the development of the city centre, which significantly differs from other city centres in Poland. Historical and legal problems in previous years produced housing problems there. The effect of multiple and complex issues is visible in the city centre, where there are islands of poverty with poverty-related homelessness and pathologies that pass on from generation to generation. Łódź applies for the EU funds in the financial perspective 2014–2020.

Regeneration plans are described and outlined in the Municipal Program of Revitalisation, which was created by experts and consulted with citizens. The priorities of the program are:

– renovation of the *Strefa Wielkowiejska* [strict city centre], in which the main spatial, social and economic problems are located;

- protection of historical structure of the city and its monuments;
- education and promotion of cultural heritage through improving citizens' awareness and creating local identity;
- active integrated approach toward the governance of the cultural heritage of the city.²

The program is linked with that of the New City Centre, as well as with the plans of the Metropolitan Area.

Another very important fact highlighted in the Municipal Regeneration Program is that Łódź is a Polish candidate to bid for hosting the International Expo Exhibition in 2022. The theme of Łódź application is urban regeneration. The subject matter of the application was selected because Łódź is one among Polish cities which specialises in urban regeneration and therefore it had the opportunity to implement pilot solutions in regeneration projects with financial support from the central budget.

Łódź has not only received support from the national level but also an impressive support from European funds – through the Regional Operational Program of Łódzkie Voivodeship and from Integrated Territorial Investments. This level of support was and still is offered to Łódź to help the city solve several difficult problems, such as demographic challenges, poverty islands in the city centre and the collapse of the textile industry. Łódź is a city in close geographic proximity to Warsaw (130 km), which was also

² Municipal Regeneration Program, the City of Łódź, 13–15.

a challenge for local authorities – to be a dormitory town for the capital city. Another challenge for Łódź is to be competitive *vis-à-vis* the capital city. One of the options for the city was to develop as a centre of creative industries, conferences, outsourcing with well-developed academic centres. The crucial condition to achieve all of these goals was and still is to be an attractive city for students, investors and citizens.

Regarding the National Urban Policy, the problem of urban degradation is an issue in most urban centres in Poland. Cities with islands of poverty and social exclusion, with substandard living conditions have no chance to be attractive and dynamic. Their potential of development could be wasted. The negative impact of degradation is mostly social and economic phenomenon, which results in social segregation and the issue of inheriting, along with poverty, also negative spatial infrastructure changes (decapitalisation of poor spatial infrastructure) (Municipal Regeneration Program, 3).

Łódź is no exception to the rule; the city centre is in crisis. But the scale of problems is exceptional. The city has the most significant regeneration challenges among all Polish cities. A degenerated city centre which impacts the quality of life and decreases the attractiveness of the city to citizens, and is also a source of the poor image of the city (Municipal Regeneration Program, 3). The solution is not only to renovate buildings but also to mobilise residents and reduce social exclusion by creating specialised training and rehabilitation centres, including actions related to active labour market measures or helping disabled citizens. Local authorities declare that actions will be aimed at helping elderly people, education, and facilitating access to health care. The plans also include actions in the field of prevention and fighting against social exclusion by supporting innovative solutions, training and education.

The development of local communities should take place with the support of educational programs and promoting pro-citizens, pro-social and pro-ecological attitudes; the involvement of NGOs and supporting them by training volunteers, elaborating long-term programs in cooperation with representatives of NGOs; and with local support, and creating the basis for the development of self-financing (Municipal Regeneration Program, 20). The program strongly highlights issues connected with the development and improvement of the education sector (Municipal Regeneration Program, 21). It also stresses access to culture, sport, tourism and

leisure, also through the development of basic institutions and through the building and modernisation of these sectors (Municipal Regeneration Program, 21–22).

Regeneration should not only correct mistakes and problems from the past, but it should also focus around solutions for the future to prevent analogical problems in the future (Municipal Regeneration Program, 22). Social regeneration should influence future trends in preventing economic poverty. By taking part in the Urban Poverty Partnership, Łódź has an opportunity to exert an impact on what European policies would look like after 2020, and hopefully Łódź, thanks to its experience in regeneration, will be able to act more effectively.

Conclusions

Europe in 2016 faced two major crises: the refugee crisis and an economic crisis. Both have made the work of two partnerships – the Partnership on Migrants and Refugees, and the Urban Poverty Partnership extremely difficult. In the world where everything is about money, as well as smart and sustainable development, all efforts are focused on becoming more and more effective in business and research. Nowadays, when modern cities and regions develop smart strategies in cooperation with academic centres, it seems that the problem of poverty, it being not an “interesting” or “sellable” issue, is actually one of the most important, and should be a crucial area of intervention for Member States. This is why recommendations elaborated within this partnership might be very significant.

Partnerships were one of the main themes in the agenda of the European Week of Regions and Cities in 2016 organised in Brussels by EU institutions. The fact that the European Commission has set up a special secretariat within its structure to help the partnerships shows that the EU truly wants to help cities become partners in the post-2020 perspective.

It seems a logical option, especially taking into consideration the situation, in which the EU faces cohesion and a regional policy crisis. In the opinions presented by Jean Claude Juncker – President of the European Commission, we can trace a sceptical attitude towards these policies, which are simply expensive and bureaucratic. The most important problem is that the evaluation

of results in the context of improving the EU policy is also not performed in a direct manner. In EU institutions, especially in the EC, we can find the idea that the period post-2020 should be more focused on implementing fast solutions for the rapidly changing EU reality and should not consider long-term funding with rules that are so strict and bureaucratic that it is impossible to use them. It was, and remains, visible in migrant-related humanitarian crises.

The creation of Partnerships can be an extremely smart solution: the EU is not imposing new rules, but supports multilevel groups, working under voluntary arrangement, which can actually impact the post-2020 perspective. Experts working in the partnership will make recommendations with regard to better funding, better regulation and better knowledge in 12 thematic areas. If these recommendations are good, it is quite likely that the EU will work on them. The only question left unanswered at this moment is whether the partnership can handle very complex and broad issues and find optimal solutions of satisfactory quality to implement them at the EU level. The answer to this question depends on the role of urban areas in the post-2020 perspective.

The second call for proposals was very popular among Polish cities. Many Polish cities submitted their applications to partnerships within the framework of the second call for proposals. Probably urban areas in Poland understood that they would like to take part in the process.

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