



# EUROCITIES & EU 2020

## EUROCITIES response to consultation on EU 2020

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### Introduction

1. EU 2020, the vision that should take us into the next decade, is being discussed at a critical juncture for Europe. The first signs of economic recovery are only beginning to emerge, public budgets are expected to get even tighter in the years ahead, and the social impacts of the recession are increasingly being felt particularly in our large cities. Coupled with this is the stark imperative of the climate challenge, the need to address demographic pressures, and to deal effectively with migration to Europe and the arrival of newcomers to our cities.
2. These represent an extensive and complex set of challenges for all stakeholders and levels of governance. The situation cannot be compared to the one we faced in 2000 or in 2005, and the strategy should therefore be different. Business as usual will secure neither sustainable recovery, nor widespread prosperity. Here we fully support the conclusions of the European Council from 10-11 December 2009, which state "In view of the economic and social impact of the crisis, in view also of the challenges posed by ageing populations, increasing inequalities and climate change, a new approach is needed more than ever".
3. It is crucial we take the opportunity to develop a vision based on truly integrated solutions to common challenges. The unnecessarily short timescale imposed for consultation undermines this ambition, and EUROCITIES believes that political decisions should be delayed until the 2010 Summer Council, allowing more time for constructive debate with a range of relevant stakeholders, including local and regional authorities.
4. The Commission's consultation paper remains broadly 'economic-centric'. Social and environmental concerns appear as factors of growth. Given the real challenges we are facing as cities - for example environmental degradation, pollution, global warming, health inequalities and the pressures on social cohesion - we do not believe that a piecemeal strategy will lead to a wholly integrated and sustainable strategy for Europe's future.
5. The role of local government is also overlooked. The consultation paper refers to the importance of the interdependence of different levels of governance, yet fails to mention the local level. Strategic issues can only be effectively addressed if all those with territorial responsibilities are contributing to the same shared goals in their own distinct manner.
6. Coherence between policy and delivery can only be assured through the active participation

of local authorities at all stages in the preparation of EU policies and national strategies, due to their implementation role on the ground. Local authorities cannot deliver interventions effectively if policies are imposed on them and are not based on their knowledge of local circumstances.

7. Here we strongly support the conclusions of the European Council from 10-11 December 2009, which call for the strategy to "enhance national ownership through more active involvement of social partners as well as of regional and local authorities". With the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, we hope that the implementation of the 'territorial cohesion' principle will set a new framework for EU policy-making and implementation, one where the EU will partner with local authorities and their stakeholders to deliver solutions appropriate to the challenges and potential of their area.
8. The ambition to work towards greater economic, social and territorial cohesion must be supported, in particular, by a strong cohesion policy, acknowledging the diversity of territories across Europe, unlocking their respective potentials, and with strengthened multi-level governance that involves local authorities in the full process of Cohesion Policy.
9. The headline priorities as identified by the Commission in the consultation broadly represent the situation the EU is facing. Nevertheless we believe that the themes of creating value by basing growth on knowledge; empowering people in inclusive societies; and creating a competitive, connected and green economy fall short in several important aspects.

### **Innovation beyond industry**

10. EU 2020 should acknowledge and support all forms of innovation, beyond a focus on industry and technology. Social innovation for example, will be increasingly important in developing and implementing new solutions to meet social needs. Public sector innovation is also extremely important as cities and their partners are constantly developing new services and products from which the private sector can learn and which can serve to inform policy development at other levels of government. Similarly, EU policy must acknowledge the importance that the public and voluntary sectors will play in providing future jobs.
11. As Europe moves from recession to recovery there is a clear opportunity to develop a modern economy, based on knowledge and skills. The Commission's emphasis on the importance of universities is welcome, yet their importance for society grows if they work in partnership with others. More support should be given to cooperation between public, private and voluntary sectors, not only to learn from universities, but also to help shape research and curriculum to suit the needs of the people at the local level. Action should also be taken to ensure all citizens have access to a high quality and fully inclusive education system also beneath the University level.
12. The consultation document does not sufficiently explore the importance of SMEs in a knowledge economy. It is not only the volume of SMEs that makes them vital to future prosperity, but also their potential for innovative outputs and growth. More must be done to identify potential high growth SMEs and support local level actions that provide the support, guidance and conditions necessary for entrepreneurship and SME success. We believe that cultural and creative industries in particular have great potential to be the drivers of local economies in the future.

### **Empowerment beyond employment**

13. It is clear that having the skills and opportunity to fully participate in the economy is important for social inclusion as well as prosperity. However, as we enter the European year for combating poverty and social exclusion it is essential to underline the fact that inclusion and empowerment go beyond employment and economic factors.
14. For example, regarding migrants, the Commission document places a great deal of emphasis on work and income, both of which are important. If EU 2020 is to drive forward

prosperity however, more recognition must be given to other factors such as the integration that takes place at the local level. This involves the provision of quality services for language learning and education, the promotion of political participation, and facilitated access to employment. Cities are already leading in these areas, but more support is needed to link employment measures to wider integration policies, based on a clear role for cities in national and EU level policy making.

15. The document does not address the importance of reducing differences in health inequalities, which have both economic and social consequences. Such inequalities often lead to worklessness, tackled through locally and individually tailored support programmes, best suited to particular challenges and circumstances. The EU must seek to better understand the reasons for worklessness and empower those operating at the local level to use EU funds to improve people's life chances.

### **Sustainable society beyond the green economy**

16. The current context provides us with the opportunity and the imperative to restructure the economy around sustainable products, services and principles. This is implicitly acknowledged in the EU 2020 consultation, yet more must be said on tangible actions that bring together economic, social and environmental goals.
17. For example, there is great potential for locally developed pilot programmes to provide templates for transferable and scalable energy technologies. The impact of such interventions on the development of new jobs and skills will be important as we restructure our economy based on sustainability. Responsible procurement and consumption are also crucial elements of a drive towards a more sustainable society. The EUROCITIES Declaration on Climate Change, signed by over 80 cities, presents an integrated approach to talking climate change across the range of public policies at the local level.
18. The Commission rightly highlights connectivity as important and underlines smart transport, energy and IT infrastructures. Yet relying on 'big European projects' is not enough. Cities are ideally placed to channel funding and engage with citizens in order to drive change. For example, cities are committed to testing and implementing new technologies as demonstrated by the EUROCITIES Green Digital Charter, which commits cities to deliver on climate objectives using digital technologies that increase energy efficiency and facilitate emissions reductions.

### **Conclusion**

19. In conclusion, we call on the Commission and Member States to postpone a political decision until summer 2010 and engage stakeholders in a real dialogue on a shared strategy for the EU 2010. A great deal is at stake and we have the opportunity at this critical juncture to redefine and restructure our cities and societies. The global challenges of economic recovery and climate change will be won or lost in our cities. For this reason, we remain committed to maintaining and improving the European urban model, where the well-managed concentration of people and activity in cities remains the most sustainable form of development. This will be key to a successful strategy for EU 2020 and we wish to work together on this with all levels of government.