



Brussels,  
DG ENV B.4./MB D(2004)

**EU EXPERT GROUP ON THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT  
MEETING OF 7<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2004**

**MINUTES**

Attending: See end of minutes.

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**SUMMARY**

A well attended first meeting of the expanded EU Expert Group with an active participation of many members. Many different points of view on a wide range of issues were expressed (recorded below) which the Commission will now consider.

The mandates and the membership of the 3 working groups to be established were discussed and agreed.

The next meeting of the EU Expert Group will take place on 12 July in Brussels.

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**1. Welcome and Introduction**

The chairs of the EU Expert Group during 2004, Prof Colin Fudge (University of the West of England) and Chantal Bruetschy (Head of Unit, European Commission) opened the meeting (Prudencio Perera was unable to attend).

Prof Fudge outlined the history of the EU Expert Group since its inception in 1991 and explained its advisory role and the work it had undertaken to advance sustainable urban development in Europe. During 2004, the group had been expanded to include additional stakeholders so that it could act as the main consultative group for the European Commission in discussing the ideas set out in the Communication "Towards a Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment" and also offer advice on the development of the final Thematic Strategy.

Chantal Bruetschy outlined that European policy on the urban environment had entered a different phase to what had gone before. The very strong mandate for action in the 6<sup>th</sup> Environment Action Programme means it is much more possible to make progress in this area than in the past. The purpose of the meeting and the others planned for 12 July and 25 October was to seek comments, suggestions for improvements and new ideas.

**2. The interim communication ("Towards a Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment")**

DG Environment of the European Commission made a presentation outlining the process so far, the approach taken in the interim Communication and an overview of the ideas under discussion. An open discussion followed on the Communication.

Experts welcomed the Communication and the open process that the Commission had adopted in consulting stakeholders throughout the process although the NGO representative raised concerns about the lack of financial support to attend these meetings. Experts said that the communication was timely and broadly addressed the right issues.

Several experts called for the final Strategy to be more strategic in establishing integrated European level principles to guide the achievement of a better quality urban environment (for instance, the high density, mixed use, compact European model for cities rather than the American model). The links with rural issues should be strengthened and several experts called for greater emphasis to be given to social and economic issues and the link to sustainable urban development. Several experts expressed a need to define a 'city'.

Several experts called for more focus on the construction and design priority themes of the Thematic Strategy. Urban design was stressed as an important and cross sectoral issue that needed more attention and better integrated with the other themes such as urban transport.

On the question of whether there should be legal obligations for plans at the city level, experts were divided. Many, including some experts representing Member States and cities, considered that the voluntary approach had achieved as much as it could and said that mandatory or binding approaches were essential to achieve more. Several experts additionally called for mandatory targets at the European level although others stressed the difficulty in doing so and called for as much flexibility in the obligations as possible.

However, many experts expressed the view that obligations were not appropriate citing concerns over duplication of efforts, bureaucracy, cost and the subsidiarity principle.

Experts were united in calling for strong links with obligations in existing EU legislation and a strong focus on dissemination of best practices and demonstration projects and providing cities with the tools that they need. The role of training and education was highlighted several times. Several experts said that funding programmes should be used to promote sustainable urban development.

#### **The 4 Priority Themes: Sustainable Urban Management, Sustainable Urban Transport, Sustainable Construction Methods and Techniques, and Sustainable Urban Design**

The chairs of the meeting decided to introduce the 4 priority themes and outline the Commission's ideas together. Discussion on each theme would take in the context of the mandates for the expert working groups that were going to be established in order to avoid repetition. The Commission set out the rationale for the working groups (environmental management plans and management systems, sustainable urban transport plans, and urban environment research and training needs). The draft mandate for each group was circulated before the meeting.

### **3. Next Steps in the Development of the Thematic Strategy - Working Group Mandates**

#### **General comments**

The public and other stakeholders must have an active role in the preparation of any plans (more than just ‘consultation’) and the ability of the new Member States to implement such obligations must be considered when establishing them.

Several experts called for the plans to apply to smaller towns and cities than the 100,000 inhabitant level proposed in the Communication, particularly those in the smaller countries. The plans need to be more than just paper exercises – they must be implemented and must achieve changes and they should avoid destroying existing frameworks and structures that already exist. The plans must allow sufficient flexibility at the local level.

Several experts expressed concerns about whether the working groups would be able to undertake robust cost benefit analysis of their proposals. Such an analysis needs to be undertaken carefully since inaccurate figures that do not adequately address external costs of transport for instance, can be harmful to the process. They also need to take account of the savings that can be made by wiser use of funds and avoidance of unsuccessful initiatives.

#### **Mandate for Working Group on Environmental Management Plans and Management Systems**

Many experts stressed the need for clarity about terminology. Was the focus sustainable urban management or just urban environmental management? Many expressed a preference for sustainable urban management plans although others stated the need to reinforce the environmental aspects of sustainable development first. Many cities have some form of SD plan but they don't work because environment is always the weakest component of the 3. To make environment have an equal footing, it must be strengthened. Other experts expressed the view that current environment plans fail to deliver because they do not adequately take account of the social and economic position.

As in the overview discussion, experts were divided over whether such plans should be obligatory. Some expressed the view that such plans might be particularly useful for the new Member States and without any incentives (e.g. new money), an obligation was the only way forward. Some experts expressed a preference for EU level guidance or a bench-marking exercise rather than obligations.

In terms of details, the need for an environment review at the start of the process of adopting the plan was stressed. The external audit of an environmental management system is a crucial element and it could be undertaken by external auditors or other cities in a peer review, as developed during the PRESUD and EMAS Peer Review projects. Reporting on the plan and progress was crucial but the emphasis should be on reporting to citizens.

Issues such as climate change adaptation mean that the timescale of the plan may need to be long term. It also affects what is considered to be the ‘urban area’ as most flooding comes from outside cities. The Commission has a role in providing a consistent set of data to cities.

Experts said the plans must be ambitious and contain challenging elements such as the need to reduce the ecological footprint of cities.

The Commission outlined how the nominees for the working group had been collected and explained how the proposed selection had been made. Experts agreed with the Commission's selection. The final membership list for the working group (following substitutions) is attached.

### **Mandate for Working Group on Sustainable Urban Transport Plans**

The question of whether there should be a legally binding obligation was discussed with different points of view, echoing many of the points made for the management plans idea. Some felt that the mandate for a binding approach was perhaps even stronger for transport than for management given the text of the 6<sup>th</sup> Environment Action Programme. Others stressed that the benefits of any obligatory approach must be clearly demonstrated.

Experts welcomed the focus on non-technical measures, demand management of transport and promoting changes in behaviour. However, the role of freight transport was missing in the mandate. Other experts said that the role of regional and national Government is key in addressing transport issues. The strong link to land use and important role of public transport were stressed by several experts as important elements of any future plan. Some experts called for binding, common indicators so that comparisons can be made between cities. The focus should be on PM<sup>0.1</sup> rather than PM<sup>10</sup>.

Experts expressed concerns over the term 'transport' and suggested that 'mobility' or 'accessibility' would be better. Also, the definition of what is meant by the 'city' was important, since many city users and generators of traffic, live outside the city.

The Commission outlined how the nominees for the working group had been collected and explained how the proposed selection had been made. Experts questioned whether there was sufficient representation from Northern European Countries but then agreed with the Commission's selection. The final membership list for the working group (following substitutions) is attached.

### **Mandate for Working Group on Urban Environment Research and Training Needs**

Experts said that the failure of the 6<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme to include an urban focus was regrettable. The role of this working group in establishing priorities to help secure a focus during the 7<sup>th</sup> FP was important. The working group was welcomed. Links with other initiatives such as the European Technology Platform must be made. The focus on training was also seen as essential to help end traditional sectoral approaches to the training of professionals and to establish new professions that have the skills that are needed.

Experts felt that the working group should also consider how the results of existing research could be better used by cities. Experts also stressed that research must be useful, not cover well researched areas and address the barriers to using new techniques and approaches.

The Commission outlined how the nominees for the working group had been collected. This working group was not yet full and additional names were invited.

Experts agreed with the Commission's selection and the final membership list for the working group (following additional nominations and substitutions) is attached.

### **Methodology for Assessing the Sustainability of Buildings**

The Commission outlined the different options for taking forward the development of the methodology for the assessment of the sustainability of buildings outlined in the Communication. The initiative was supported although experts stressed that the methodology must also include elements such as comfort, user's needs and accessibility.

CEN explained that they were covering the environmental aspects of sustainability through a mandate given by the Commission first and that the social and economic would need to be added afterwards. The draft mandate under consideration by CEN was circulated at the meeting.

Experts said that sustainable construction was about performance objectives rather than restrictive standards. The EU Expert Group on the Urban Environment should make effective links with other groups working in this area. The Commission should consider whether more of the recommendations from the 2003 working group on sustainable construction could be taken forward in the Strategy.

### **Sustainable Urban Design**

Several experts stressed the need to incorporate the work of the group last year on sustainable urban design. There were strong links with urban transport and urban management and the ideas for plans in these areas must take account of the link with urban design.

The Commission thanked the experts for their contributions which would be carefully considered. The 3 working groups would be invited to start work as quickly as possible and should use the work of the 2003 working groups on environmental management, urban transport, sustainable construction and urban design<sup>1</sup>. Revised mandates for the 2004 working groups and the minutes were promised by 20 April but this was not possible (now attached).

A coordination meeting would be held in July for the chairs of each working group.

The process during 2004 will be an open one with all documents being placed on the internet as quickly as possible. Unsuccessful nominees for the working groups and all other parties will be able to follow the working groups' considerations via the DG ENV website ([www.europa.eu.int/comm/environment/urban/thematic\\_strategy.htm](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/environment/urban/thematic_strategy.htm)).

## **4. Aalborg +10**

The Commission introduced the Aalborg +10 event (9-11 June) to the meeting and stressed the role that cities would play in adopting commitments to quantified targets to achieve sustainable urban development. Regions would also be invited to sign up to these commitments, and the national authorities could have a role in supporting this process. This is the 4<sup>th</sup> European Conference on Sustainable Cities and Towns.

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<sup>1</sup> Reports available at [http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/environment/urban/preparatory\\_work.htm](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/environment/urban/preparatory_work.htm)

Experts were invited to participate actively in the event and to consult the website ([www.aalborgplus10.dk](http://www.aalborgplus10.dk)).

## 5. Any other business

Several experts representing the Member States requested a further informal meeting between the Member States and the Commission. This will take place on 26-27 May and invitations will be sent to the Member States and EEA Countries.

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Latest info on the Strategy: [www.europa.eu.int/comm/environment/urban/home\\_en.htm](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/environment/urban/home_en.htm)

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## Attending:

BELGIUM:	<b>Mrs. Françoise Onclincx</b> - IBGE-BIM
DENMARK	<b>Mrs. Britt Vorgod Pedersen</b> - Ministry of Environment Spatial Planning Department
FINLAND	<b>Mr. Matti Vati</b> - Ministry of Environment
GREECE	<b>Mrs. Panagiota KAPERONI</b> - Ministry for the Environment Spatial Planning and public works
IRELAND	<b>Mr. Liam Whelan</b> - <b>Ms. Mary Lane</b> - Department of the Heritage & Local Government
ITALY	<b>Mr. Diego Giuliani</b> - <b>Mr. Brunelli Giovanni</b> - Ministry for the Environment and Territory
NETHERLANDS	<b>Ms. Jitske Pultrum</b> - Planning and Environment
PORTUGAL	<b>Mrs. Maria José Festas</b>
SPAIN	<b>Mrs. Marta Garcia Nart</b> - Direccion General de la Vivienda, la Arquitectura y el Urbanismo
SWEDEN	<b>Ms. Gunnel Jonsson</b> - The National Board on Housing,
UNITED KINGDOM	<b>Mr. Tim Morgan</b> - <b>Ms. Christabel Myers</b> - <b>Ms. Katherine Higley</b> - Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
CZECH REPUBLIC	<b>Mrs. Martina Pásková</b> Ministry of the Environment Department of Ecology of Urban Areas and Tourism
HUNGARY	<b>Dr. Kálmánné BÚZÁS</b> - Ministry for Environment & Water
LATVIA	<b>Mr. Laimonis Osis</b> Project Director at the Riga City Environment Centre Agenda 21
SLOVENIA	<b>Ms. Natalija Fon-Bostjanic</b> - <b>Ms. Alenka Burja</b> - Ministry of the Environment Spatial Planning and Energy
NORWAY	<b>Mr. Hagen Ole Andreas</b> Urban development, transport and land-use planning division

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CECODHAS	<b>Ms. Claire Roumet</b> - <b>Ms. Puyol Carine</b>
European Liaison Committee for Social Housing	
Ambiente Italia	<b>Ms. Maria Berrini</b>
The Danish Ecological Council	<b>Mr Soren Dyck-Madsen</b>
European Federation for Transport and Environment	<b>Mr. Stephanos Anastasiadis</b>
Clean Air Action Group	<b>Dr. Gyöngyi Szedlay</b>
Methodos	<b>Ms. Silvia Gaggi</b>
Stichting Natuur en Milieu	<b>Ms. Karin Blaauw</b>
Fédération France Nature Environnement	<b>Mr. Christian Garnier</b>

Swedish Society for Nature Conservation	<b>Ms. Lena Jarlöv</b>
EURIMA	<b>Mr. Chris Hamans</b>
Climate Alliance	<b>Ms. Gotelind Alber</b>
VIBE	<b>Mr. Peter Thoelen</b>
EEB - European Environmental Bureau	<b>Ms. Kerstin MEYER</b>
Environmental Law Foundation	<b>Mr. Paul Stookes</b>
City of The Hague	<b>Mr. Alfons Finkers</b>
Stockholm City	<b>Mr. Torsten Malmberg</b>
Ville de Grenoble	<b>Mr. Pierre Kermen</b>
Comune di Ancona	<b>Mr. Emilio D'Alessio</b>
City of Bremen	<b>Mr. Michael Glotz-Richter</b>
City of Genoa	<b>Dr. Alberto Santel</b>
Birmingham City Council	<b>Mr. Mike Wright</b>
City of Ljubljana	<b>Dr. Marko Notar</b>
Helsinki City	<b>Anja Vallittu</b>
Dublin City Council	<b>Mr. Dick Gleeson</b>
Landeshauptstadt Hannover	<b>Mr. Reinhard Martinsen</b>
ICLEI – International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives	<b>Mr. Gino Van Begin</b>
ACCESS-EUROCITIES	<b>Mr. Ivo Cre</b>
Deutscher Städte-und Gemeindegund	<b>Mr. Holger Adam</b>
EUROCITIES	<b>Mr. Anthony van de Ven</b>
Energie-Cités	<b>Mr. Diederik Wagenaar (on behalf of Ms. Christiane Maurer)</b>
Union of Baltic Cities	<b>Mr. Mikko Jokinen</b>
Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)	<b>Ms. Pirita Lindholm</b>
Swedish Association of Local Authorities	<b>Ms. Eva Hägglund</b>
Global Warming, Local Warning Network	<b>Mr. Bryan Boulton</b>
Climate Alliance	<b>Ms. Gotelind Alber</b>
City Region Haaglanden	<b>Ir. Rob A.H.M. Sangen</b>
Committee of the Regions (CoR)	<b>Mr. Robert Ronstrom</b>
Ile-de-France Europe	<b>Ms. Françoise Chotard</b>
Environmental Platform for Regional Offices (EPRO)	<b>Ms. Eva Dalman</b>
ILS NRW (Instituts für Landes-und Stadtenwicklungsfor-schung du Bauwesen des Landes NRW)	<b>Mr. Rainer Danielzyk</b>
FIEC	<b>Mr. John Goodall</b>
Architects Council of Europe (ACE)	<b>Mr. Alain Sagne</b>
North Energy Associates Ltd	<b>Mr. Nigel D. Mortimer</b>
UITP-Euroteam	<b>Mr. Ulrich Weber</b>
European Property Federation	<b>Mr. MacBrien Michael</b>
European Union Road Federation	<b>Mr. Brendan Halleman (replacing Mr. José Papi)</b>
CEETB	<b>Mr. Oliver Loebel</b>
Deutscher Industrie- und Handelskammertag	<b>Mr. Hermann Huewels</b>
AFNOR	<b>Mr. Valéry Laurent</b>
Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors	<b>Mr. Ewan Willars</b>
SP-GROUP	<b>Mr. Ralf Stappen</b>
Finnish Forest Industries Federation	<b>Mr. Ari Ilomäki</b>
University of Groningen	<b>Mr. Christian Zuidema</b>
Swedish Research Council for Environment , Agricultural Sciences and Spatial Planning	<b>Mr. Henrik Nolmark</b>
ULB – Insitut de Sociologie	<b>Ms. Jacqueline Miller</b>
Urban planning instituteOf Slovenia	<b>Mr. Ivan Stanic</b>
IURS-Institut	<b>Ms. Jirina Jackson</b>
University of the West of England	<b>Prof. Colin Fudge (CO-CHAIR)</b>
Post Graduate Centre Human Settlements-KULeuven	<b>Prof. Han Verschure</b>
European Academy of the Urban Environment	<b>Mr. Christoph Rau</b>

in Berlin

United Nations Environment Programme

English Nature

European Environment Agency

UK Environment Agency

United Nations Environment Programme

Mediterranean Action Plan

German Institute of Urban Affairs

European Commission

**Dr. Hari Srinivas**

**Mr. David Knight**

**Mr. Ronan Uhel**

**Mr. Simon Hughes**

**Ms. Ivica Trumbic**

**Mr. Jens Libbe**

**Mr. Lavallo Carlo**

**Mr. Bacon Mark**

**Mr. Goss Simon**

**Mr. Jonas Bylund**

**Ms. Chantal Bruetschy**

**Ms Alison Eades**

**Mr. Eric Ponthieu**

**Ms. Antonia Buchbinder**

**Mr. Michael Albás**

**Mr. Jose Jorge Diaz Del Castillo**

**Ms Brice Lepape**

**Ms. Machteld Bierens de Haan**

**Mr. Christos Pipitsoulis**