



Brussels,
DG ENV/MaB D(2004)

**EU EXPERT GROUP ON THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT
MEETING OF 24th SEPTEMBER 2004**

MINUTES

Attending: See end of minutes.

SUMMARY

The interim results of the 3 working groups (environmental management plans and systems, sustainable urban transport plans, urban environment research and training needs) were discussed and comments were offered by the expert group to each group. The meeting was constructive and useful. The Expert Group was invited to submit further comments to the working groups.

The next meeting will take place in late January or February (date to be advised).

1. Welcome and Introduction

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

Ms Bruetschy outlined developments since the last meeting of the EU Expert Group on 7 April 2004:

Coordination Meeting of 3 Working Groups (12 July): Reflecting the comments made at the last EU Expert Group meeting, the chairs of the 3 working groups met to discuss overlaps and synergies between the 3 groups. It was agreed to work more closely together and if possible, to attend each other's meetings.

Discussions in Council and Parliament: On 14 October, the Council would adopt an opinion on the interim Communication "Towards a Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment" (COM(2004)60)¹.

The European Parliament has yet to begin the process of adopting an opinion.

¹ See http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/envir/82253.pdf for the Opinion.

2. Interim results from the 3 Expert Working Groups established earlier in 2004.

The website address where the interim reports from the 3 working groups could be found was circulated to the EU Expert Group in advance of the meeting² so that the meeting could focus on the draft recommendations made by each group. The presentations made during the meeting are attached as an annex.

2.1 Environmental Management Plans and Systems WG

Carlo Lavallo from the Joint Research Centre acts as consultant to the working group (Professor Bob Evans is the chair of the working group). Mr Lavallo presented the membership of the working group, its conclusions on key issues such as the definition of an environmental management plan and environmental management system, and concluded by raising questions for discussion.

There were many interventions made after the presentation. There were opposite views expressed, and a number of participants emphasize the need for the working group to have a higher level of ambition for the rest of its work. In particular, the working group should reconsider whether any future Directive should contain minimum elements for the management plan (i.e. topics or themes that must be addressed). The group expressed concern that if the Directives did not include any minimum elements, it might be too open and too flexible and may not achieve its goals of setting and achieving over time a minimum standard; at the same time there was general agreement to leave final decisions on targets to the local level.

The chairs summarised the discussion highlighting the following points:

- Report should provide independent advice to the Commission. The ‘what’ question is well understood – the report needs to focus on ‘how’ to achieve it. A lot already exists – the working group needs to understand the national/regional and local experiences and the barriers that prevent greater success and ways to overcome barriers.
- Report should be courageous and ambitious; Climate change agenda is very important and urgent
- Is urban environment the best terminology? – quality of life, health, competition might all be better and more effective messages that could be used in a complementary way.
- DG REGIO has done a lot with cities and regions. Build on this and integrate work.
- Integration of different policies is key. Need to influence decision makers to integrate urban dimension
- Agreement on a framework approach that contains minimum elements
- Needs to be flexible to take account of different situations and diversity of cities – ‘how’ to do this is the most important question

These other points were made during the discussion:

- Not ambitious enough (no mandatory targets, too little minimum content, no standardised indicators, too much flexibility for cities). Difficult to understand added value if it is so flexible. However, city representatives welcome this in their city.

² http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/environment/urban/experts_working_groups.htm

- The recommendations of the working group must be further developed and become clearer.
- The final report needs to ensure that it answers all the questions set out in the terms of reference.
- Support working group's push for issues that encourage integration and a sustainability approach (e.g. quality of life)
- Try to identify incentives.
- Must support implementation and compliance with existing acquis
- Challenge of working with different cities.
- Reporting must be useful (not establish a 'cemetery of data')
- Regional dimension must be taken into account.
- Necessity to be able to demonstrate improvements in environmental performance

Sustainable Urban Transport Plans WG

Rob Sangen, former Director of Traffic for the Hague region in the Netherlands and chair of this working group presented the group's approach, its conclusions on key aspects of the plan such as the timescale, geographical area and integration with other plans, and concluded by raising questions for discussion.

Again, many interventions followed the presentation and the Expert Group strongly stressed the regional dimension to the transport plans and the need to link to finance, not just in terms of providing new investment but also in terms of changing the way that existing money is spent. Incentives need to be considered as part of this.

The chairs summarised the discussion highlighting the following points:

- Transport needs to be considered against period of significant demographic change (ageing populations, depopulation of cities in some cases, urban-hinterland linkage)
- Terminology is important (transport/mobility/accessibility) but the substance of the measure is what counts
- Need for close integration between city and its hinterland/region
- Need to change way existing transport money is spent - longer term view.
- Look at motivating people rather than simply providing incentives
- Consider role of goods and freight

These other points were made during the discussion:

- Need to change the way money is spent on transport – investment/spending should be as long term and cost-effective as possible.
- 100,000 population limit for towns and cities could be lower – link with hinterland and region, some member states situations
- Links with land use must be made stronger
- Transport plans can help develop a level playing field for each city, so long as there is a minimum level of ambition.
- Real costs of transport (cost of private cars versus, cost of public transport versus flexibility) need to be addressed in addition to requirements for a plan

Urban Environment Research and Training Needs WG

Professor Björn Malbert acts as Chair to the working group. Professor Malbert presented the working group's membership and its approach to the terms of reference. He set out the group's reasons for further urban environment research and some of the initial

findings from the group on the specific areas that need further research. He concluded by raising questions for discussion.

The Expert Group emphasised the need to deliver results, which correspond to the cities needs and which they will actually be able to make us of. The Group also stressed the need to clarify what is needed in scientific terms and what is needed for better dissemination and utilisation.

The chairs summarised the discussion highlighting the following points:

- The answer to the ‘how?’ question is to focus on applied research that is close to reality and on the problems of non-implementation of policy
- Need for training and capacity building
- Further work on external costs – what is the cost of non-action?

These other points were made during the discussion:

- The group needs to focus on the scientific challenges and the knowledge gaps as well as the dissemination needs and how the latter should be conducted (demonstration projects)
- A code for urban research is needed where dissemination is central (results must be understandable, available in the right languages)
- Research results must be accessible to users
- Involve cities, the decision makers and other stakeholders in the research.
- CIVITAS programme for example seems effective as it involves implementation and evaluation of policy ideas
- Focus on research to provide what cities need, not further research on cities per se (applied research is needed)
- Training is a key need

Members of the Expert Group were invited to send the working groups any further comments that they had. It was stressed that it was important to contribute before the working groups concluded their work. If members of the working group felt that the recommendations were not going in the right direction, they should offer alternative proposals for the working groups to consider. Similarly, if the members of the Group disagreed with the proposals (directives) in the Communication “Towards a Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment” they should present constructive alternatives to achieve the accepted goals of the Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment. In this context Ms Chantal Bruetschy stressed once more that the Commission had not taken a final decision on the need for a directive; what matters, is to examine how to best achieve the result.

3. Extended Impact Assessment of the Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment

The Commission (Mark Bacon) briefly outlined the process for the extended impact assessment and explained that a consultant had been engaged to provide certain base data. This had been sent to the members of the EU Expert Group on the Urban Environment for comment and validation. It is also available on the Commission’s website for the Thematic Strategy www.europa.eu.int/comm/environment/urban/impact_assessment.htm. The impact assessment would continue to be an open process.

4. Update of activities on the other elements of the Strategy

On sustainable construction, the Commission (Susanne Wegefelt) gave an overview of the different initiatives taking place. CEN is finalising a common methodology for the rating required under the energy performance of buildings Directive. A new mandate for CEN to develop a methodology for the environmental performance of buildings and building products has been prepared. Ari Ilomaki from the CEN Committee working on this mandate gave a short overview of the CEN mandate and how it could be used to assist in the development of the sustainability labelling methodology proposed in the interim Communication. This could be the subject of a more detailed presentation at the next EU Expert Group meeting.

For the sustainable urban design theme, the key concerns of urban sprawl and effective land use management were being incorporated into the other themes as far as possible. For instance, the link between land use and transport has been recognised in the WG on sustainable urban transport plans and the group is considering how best to address this.

On integration of urban environment issues into other Commission policy areas, the Commission (Ms Bruetschy) outlined that this was a key issue for the Thematic Strategy. The Strategy should be a common Strategy for all Commission services. Two examples were given of where integration was already taking place:

Michael Albas from Directorate General for Regional Policy outlined how urban environment issues were taken into account in the Commission's proposals for the new cohesion policy. A paper on the implications for urban policy will be prepared and circulated to the expert working group. DG REGIO's website: http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/index_en.htm

Vincent Favrel from Directorate General Research explained that urban issues were possible topics for inclusion in the next research framework programme (Framework Programme 7). The Commission's first proposals for the next framework programme would be finalised soon.

Ms Bruetschy outlined the outcome of the 4th European Sustainable Cities Conference (the 'Aalborg +10 conference). The participating cities agreed a new set of commitments which can be signed by elected representatives of cities. Those which signed in June 2004 will have produced a baseline by June 2005 and set their targets by June 2006. By doing so, cities commit to a process of preparing an integrated environmental strategy for their urban area and also to regularly report to citizens on the progress achieved. She encouraged cities to sign the commitments. See www.aalborgplus10.dk.

5. Any Other Business

The next meeting will take place at the beginning of 2005 (January/February) once the final reports from the 3 working groups have been completed. A date will be fixed and sent to members of the EU Expert Group in good time before the meeting.

Latest info on the Strategy: www.europa.eu.int/comm/environment/urban/home_en.htm

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| <p>Participants to meeting with member states and stakeholders Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment 24th September 2004, Brussels</p> |
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1. CHAIRS:

Ms. Chantal Bruetschy (Directorate General Environment)
 Prof. Colin Fudge, University of the West of England (UWE)

2. MEMBER STATES:

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| AUSTRIA: | Mr. Werner Thalhammer – Transport, Mobility, Human Stellement and Noise Division |
| BELGIUM: | Mrs. Marie-Christine Berrewaerts – IBGE-BIM |
| CYPRUS: | Mr. Andreas Ashiotis – Ministry of the Interior Government of Cyprus |
| CZECH REPUBLIC: | Mrs. Martina P á s k o v á Ministry of the Environment Department of Ecology of Urban Areas and Tourism |
| DENMARK: | Mrs. Britt Vorgod Pedersen - Ministry of Environment Spatial Planning Department |
| FINLAND | Mr. Matti Vatile - Ministry of Environment |
| HUNGARY | Dr. Kálmánné BÚZÁS - Ministry for Environment and Water |
| ITALY | Ms. Silvia Vaghi - Ministry for the Environment and Territory |
| LATVIA | Mr. Laimonis Osis Project Director at the Riga City Environment Centre Agenda 21 |
| PORTUGAL | Mrs. Maria José Festas |
| SLOVENIA | Ms. Natalija Fon-Bostjanic - Ms. Alenka Burja - Ministry of the Environment Spatial Planning and Energy of the Republic of Slovenia |
| SWEDEN | Ms. Gunnel Jonsson - The National Board on Housing, |
| UNITED KINGDOM | Mr. Robert Lowenstein – Ms. Abigail Cottrell - Office of the Deputy Prime Minister |
| NORWAY | Mr. Jørgen Brun - Urban development, transport and land-use planning division |

3. OTHER STAKEHOLDERS:

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| CECODHAS European Liaison Committee for Social Housing | Ms Puyol Carine |
| Ambiente Italia | Ms Maria Berrini |
| The Danish Ecological Council | Mr Soren Dyck-Madsen |
| European Federation for Transport and Environment | Mr Stephanos Anastasiadis |
| Clean Air Action Group | Dr. Gyöngyi Szedlay |
| EEB – European Environmental Bureau | Ms. Kerstin Meyer |
| European Council of Town planners (ECTP) | Mr. Jan Vogelij |
| Environmental Law Foundation | Mr. Paul Stookes |

Fédération France Nature Environnement
City of The Hague
City Planning Administration Stockholm
Ville de Grenoble
City of Opole, Poland
Comune di Ancona
City of Bremen
Birmingham City Council
City of Ljubljana

Helsinki City
Greater London Authority
Dublin City Council
Landeshauptstadt Hannover
ICLEI
ACCESS-EUROCITIES
Deutscher Städte-und Gemeindebund (DSEGB)
EUROCITIES
Union of Baltic Cities
Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)
Global Warming, Local Warning Network
Environmental Platform for Regional Offices (EPRO)
ILS NRW
Architects Council of Europe (ACE)
UITP-Euroteam
European Property Federation
Finnish Forest Industries Federation
University of Groningen
ULB – Insitut de Sociologie
Urban planning institute Of Slovenia
IURS-Institut
European Academy of the Urban Environment in Berlin
Universidad Rey Juan Carlos
English Nature
European Environment Agency
UNEP Mediterranean Action Plan
German Institute of Urban Affairs
Chair WG on Research and Training
Chair WG on Transport

Mr. Christian Garnier
Mr. Alfons Finkers
Mr. Torsten Malmberg
Mr. Pierre Kermen
Ms. Dannte Jazkowiecka
Mr. Emilio D’Alessio
Mr. Michael Glotz-Richter
Mr. Mike Wright
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Ms. Brigitte Ollier
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Mr. Hanns-Uve Schwedler
Ms. Susana Galera Rodrigo
Mr. David Knight
Mr. Ronan Uhel
Ms. Ivica Trumbic
Mr. Jens Libbe
Prof. Björn Malbert
Mr. Rob Sangen

4. EUROPEAN COMMISSION REPRESENTATIVES:

Joint Research Centre
Directorate General Environment

Mr. Lavallo Carlo
Mr. Bacon Mark
Ms. Susanne Wegefelt
Mr. Christophe Ebermann
Ms Sara Ochelen
Mr. David Delcampe
Ms Irja Vounakis
Mr. Manfred Fuchs

Directorate General Enterprise

Directorate General Research
Directorate General Regional Policy

Directorate General Information Society

Mr. Marek Przeor
Mr. Marcel Rommerts
Mr. Vincent Favrel
Mr. Michael Albás
Ms Sandra Gizdulich
Mr. Brice Lepape