

## Opening Remarks by Commissioner for Regional Policy Johannes Hahn on the URBACT Thematic Reports “Cities of Tomorrow: Action Today”

Launching event of a new series of URBACT thematic reports  
18 June 2013, Brussels

- Shortly after becoming Commissioner in 2010, I initiated a reflection process to **better understand the challenges** that our European cities are facing. This culminated with the publication the following year of the “**Cities of Tomorrow**” report.
- *Cities of Tomorrow* identifies the **major threats** to the European urban development model: demographic decline, factors undermining threats to economic development and competitiveness, growing social polarisation and the depletion of natural resources.
- In response to these threats, *Cities of Tomorrow* **presents a forward-looking, and optimistic vision**. It points to the role that cities themselves can play in finding solutions based on their specific potential, and how they can thereby contribute to the goals of the Europe 2020 strategy.
- *Cities of Tomorrow* has **provided inspiration** for urban development policy-makers and practitioners, at local, regional and national level, both within and outside Europe – the report is available in Chinese and Japanese!
- In essence, the report concludes that we need to invest in our cities,- but it is not just a question of the size of investments; a **qualitative shift** is needed to exploit the full potential of our cities.
- Our *Cities of Tomorrow* have to adopt a **model** of sustainable urban development, which
  - deals with challenges in an integrated, holistic way;
  - matches place- and people-based approaches;
  - combines formal government structures with flexible informal governance structures that correspond to the scale at which the challenges exist.

- To make this work, cities need to develop governance systems capable of reconciling competing objectives and conflicting development models in a single vision. They need to find new ways of **working across sectoral boundaries** with a wider set of partners, including citizens. Cities also have to cooperate with each other, too, to ensure coherent spatial development and efficient use of land and resources.
- **Our proposals for future cohesion policy for the 2014-2020 period respond in many ways to the recommendations of the *Cities of Tomorrow*:**
  - The new regulations emphasise the **territorial approach**, and cater for metropolitan or other functional urban area governance through the proposed Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI).
  - There is a proposed **minimum threshold of at least 5%** of national ERDF allocations for integrated urban development, as well as the possibility to use **Community-Led Local Development (CLLD)** in urban and peri-urban areas to address the need for integrated interventions at neighbourhood and local level. Both CLLD and ITI can help tackle **urban-rural linkages**.
  - 330 million euros will be available for **innovative actions** to support cities who want to test out new ways of working.
  - The **Urban Development Network** will help to create a forum for exchanges between the cities pioneering new techniques and developing integrated investments, while cooperation between urban authorities will continue under a **strengthened URBACT programme**.
  - Finally, in the new ERDF, **specific Investment Priorities** explicitly target urban areas, e.g., promoting low-carbon strategies for urban areas; improving the urban environment, including the regeneration of brownfield sites and the reduction of air pollution; promoting sustainable urban mobility.
  - **Overall, we expect that as now, around 40% of structural funds spending will benefit cities, but under the new reformed Regional Policy these investments will be focussed much more clearly than before to help cities**

**address their challenges, - and help the EU harness the power of cities in the fields of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.**

- **Vision is fine, but it is nothing if we cannot make it a reality.** URBACT is helping us to take the Cities of Tomorrow process one step further, and showing how to implement the recommendations on the ground. I am therefore very pleased to be with you here at the launch of the **six URBACT thematic reports.**
- The reports cover six interlinked challenges outlined in *Cities of Tomorrow*, all of which are high on the EU agenda: the need for jobs and economic growth; the challenges for urban youth; the issue of social and spatial segregation; urban mobility; energy efficiency and the complex issue of shrinking cities.
- There are no easy solutions to any of these challenges, but URBACT - through its extensive network of urban experts and city partners throughout all of Europe - is an ideal mechanism to test innovative approaches that others can take up.
- Earlier this morning the European Parliament's URBAN Intergroup organised a presentation of our study on **good practice in integrated urban development.** 50 case studies from the current period demonstrate the added value of EU funding. **I recommend it to you!**
- The challenge in the next period is to scale up the integrated approach. The 5 % mentioned in the new regulations is a minimum only. And, as this approach spreads, we need to make sure that we learn from each other and get it right; focus on the right issues, and find the **smartest way of working with scarce resources**, to exploit to the full the potential of our cities.
- At the end of the next programming period in 2020, I hope the good practice cases inspired by the URBACT thematic reports and supported by the future URBACT and Urban Development Network will be even bolder, and more innovative.
- To conclude: Europe cannot tackle today's challenges without the active input of cities. It is no overstatement to say that **development of our cities will**

**determine the future economic, social and territorial development of the European Union.**

- Cities will be pivotal in achieving the ambitions of Europe 2020. And – whether you are thinking of the environment, the economy, or social cohesion - if we can't get it right in our cities, we won't get it right at all.
- That is why Cities of tomorrow need action today. And this is what URBACT is all about! I congratulate you on the high quality work you have produced. Be very sure we will make good use of it!
- Thank you!

