

# GREENER CITIES, GREENER EUROPE

How the Urban Agenda for the EU Partnerships  
can bring sustainability closer to citizens

**EUKN Conference Report**

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European Urban  
Knowledge Network



Ministry of the Interior and  
Kingdom Relations



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Knowledge Network



## About the EUKN

The European Urban Knowledge Network (EUKN) EGTC is the only independent, Member State-driven network in the field of EU urban policy, research and practice. The EUKN supports its members – Cyprus, Czechia, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, and Spain – with strategic knowledge and advice on urban matters. The EUKN delivers strategic knowledge to its members through tailor-made activities (Policy Labs and on-demand support), network-wide activities (knowledge dissemination and communication) and external activities (specific projects for either member or non-members). The EUKN has been closely involved the establishment of the Urban Agenda for the EU and the global New Urban Agenda, and has been actively supporting the further development of these strategic agendas through events and research. In 2020 and onwards, the EUKN will focus on the sustainable transition of the EU by supporting the incoming Presidencies of Germany, Portugal and Slovenia and by starting a Horizon 2020 research project to promote nature-based solutions in the EU and in South America.

For more information on the EUKN, visit the EUKN website and subscribe to our Newsletter.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This publication explores **the concrete contribution of the Urban Agenda for the EU (UAEU) towards Europe's sustainable transition** by focusing on its environmental face: the most straightforwardly 'green' Partnerships. It builds on the EUKN Conference 'Greener Cities, Greener Europe – How the Urban Agenda for the EU Partnerships can bring sustainability closer to citizens', which was organised on 7 October 2019 as an official side event of the 2019 European Week of Regions and Cities (EWRC). Both the conference and the publication were commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations.

The conference, acknowledging the dominant role of the urban realm in the fight against climate change, sought to answer three main questions:

1. What is the role of cities and citizens in implementing sustainability policies?
2. How can the 'green' Partnerships of the Urban Agenda for the EU contribute to bringing sustainability closer to citizens?
3. How can key political stakeholders support the implementation of the Actions proposed by the Partnerships?

By elaborating key findings from the conference and analysing the experiences of the 'green' Partnerships, this study wishes to gather knowledge on existing practices and gaps in bringing about an urban sustainability transition, structurally supported by the outcomes of the Urban Agenda for the EU.

From this study, it emerged that:

**Future-proofing the UAEU** implies a commitment towards a model of sustainable economy centred around local practices and experiments. Nonetheless, it is still uncertain whether the UAEU will fully materialise as a transition arena, allowing top-down guidance and bottom-up initiatives to develop a shared language, which is key for a successful cooperation of all actors involved in the UAEU and for the implementation of actions proposed by the Partnerships.

**Close cooperation between UAEU Partnerships** is crucial for the successful implementation of actions. The current setup of the UAEU does not sufficiently promote such a cooperation. The production of 'green' actions from all existing Partnerships underlines the shared engagement to reduce the environmental footprint of urban areas as well as the need for a holistic understanding of sustainability. Several Partnerships have been working together to achieve this shared goal but there is a strong need for more cooperation.

**Bottom-up local initiatives need to be empowered by top-down guidance.** European cities are frontrunners when it comes to the design of solutions to achieve sustainability goals. However, local action needs to be supported by other governmental levels – regional, national and European – to produce a real impact. Finding the right balance between bottom-up and top-down approaches is crucial to achieve structural changes and to embed local successes into multi-level policymaking.

**The constant tension between institutionalisation and experimentation** is an intrinsic issue in sustainability transitions, and particularly relevant in light of policy discussion about the future of the UAEU. Opinions on this topic differ, but it has been generally recognised that the successful informal working method of the UAEU needs to be combined with formal actions in order to enhance its impact at the European level.

The conference and this publication represent the start of a series of EUKN activities to future-proof the UAEU after 2020. By supporting the preparations of the incoming German (2020-2) and Slovene (2021-2) Presidencies, the EUKN is part of this strategic discussion. To learn how to get involved in the various activities, please contact the EUKN's Director Mart Grisel ([martin.grisel@eukn.eu](mailto:martin.grisel@eukn.eu)) directly.



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# BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

Climate change – increasingly termed a profound **'climate crisis'** – has become a key defining issue of our time. Governments and other stakeholders worldwide are becoming aware of the **need for urgent action** in the face of poverty, inequality and other deprivations exacerbated by global temperature rises and its ecological consequences. **Global frameworks** such as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and, most notably, the Paris Agreement (2015), precisely stand to animate efforts towards urgent climate action as a requirement for sustainable development.

Against this backdrop, the language and logic of sustainable development have gained a central role in European policy over the past decades. The urgency of a green and just transition for Europe have been echoed in several mission letters recently sent by the **new Commission** President Ursula von der Leyen to the Commissioners taking office in December 2019. Former Dutch Member of Parliament and Minister of Foreign Affairs Frans Timmermans has been designated as Executive Vice-President of a **European Green Deal** and lead for the *climate action portfolio*, including the proposal of a *European Climate Law* enshrining the 2050 target into EU legislation within the first 100 days of the new Commission's office.<sup>1</sup>

For a long time, the EU's Cohesion Policy has been one of the key policies both addressing and affecting urban areas in Europe. In May 2018, the European Commission presented its proposals for the **post-2020 Cohesion Policy** guided by five proposed Policy Objectives (POs)<sup>2</sup>. They aim to improve the effectiveness of current investment mechanisms in aid of the transition towards a Europe that is: **smarter** (PO1); **greener, carbon free** (PO2); more **connected** (PO3); more **social** (PO4); and **closer to its citizens** (PO5), as a cross-cutting rationale.

The proposed new Cohesion Policy features a **strong urban dimension** as it proposes to earmark 6% of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to sustainable urban development, and to explicitly support 'locally-led development strategies while empowering local authorities in the management of the funds.'<sup>3</sup>In line with the post-2020 vision, a European Urban Initiative (EUI) has been put forward as part of the ERDF/Cohesion Fund Regulation proposal. Its objective is to streamline the governance structure of EU-level initiatives, programmes, and networks on sustainable urban development with a view to strengthening their links with EU policies and Cohesion Policy investments.<sup>4</sup>While still being under negotiation as of December 2019, the Cohesion Policy proposal exemplifies an increased understanding of the potential of sustainable urban development in bringing about the needed societal, economic and environmental transformation. In fact, **European cities** have started embracing their role as **key agents of transformation**. Increasingly involved in EU institutional landscape, they are at the heart of several initiatives and networks co-shaping policies with an urban dimension.

## The Post-2020 Policy Objectives



Smarter Europe



Greener Europe



Europe closer to its citizens



More connected Europe



More social Europe

1 von der Leyen, U. (2019). Mission Letter to Frans Timmerman. Brussels, 10 September 2019. Retrieved from: [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/mission-letter-frans-timmermans-2019\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/mission-letter-frans-timmermans-2019_en.pdf).

2 European Commission (n.d.). Regional Development and Cohesion Policy beyond 2020: The New Framework at a glance. [Online] available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/2021\\_2027/](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/2021_2027/).

3 ibidem.

4 DG REGIO (2019). Explanatory Memo: European Urban Initiative- Post 2020. Retrieved from: [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docgener/brochure/explanatory\\_memo\\_eui\\_post\\_2020\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/brochure/explanatory_memo_eui_post_2020_en.pdf).

Considering urban areas as places where sustainable transitions take place and innovative solutions are born, the **Urban Agenda for the EU (UAEU)** reflects the undisputed linkages between urban life and the promise of sustainable development. As something of a novel approach for EU policy-making, the UAEU proposes a working method based on vertical and horizontal multi-stakeholder and multi-level cooperation as an informal instrument of policy design, implementation, and evaluation. It builds on the principle of integrated and multi-sectoral planning championed by the 2007 Leipzig Charter, positioning itself as 'an enabler' of global commitments<sup>5</sup>: it proposes to scale up sustainability, from the local (urban) to the European and global arena. As recognised by the **Bucharest Declaration**<sup>6</sup>, there is a need to 'assess, learn and build on the innovative governance dynamics that the Urban Agenda for the EU has set in motion' as well as to 'develop a functional relationship between the **New Leipzig Charter** and the Urban Agenda for the EU and the Territorial Agenda 2020+<sup>7</sup>' looking ahead. In fact, with the Leipzig Charter being updated in the wake of the 2020 German Council Presidency, discussions on a sustainable future of the UAEU post 2020 have been gaining momentum.

This study intends to explore the scope of the UAEU's concrete contribution towards Europe's sustainable transition by focusing on its environmental face: the most straightforward 'green' Partnerships. It builds on the **EUKN Conference 'Greener Cities, Greener Europe - How the Urban Agenda for the EU Partnerships can bring sustainability closer to citizens'**, which was organised on 7 October 2019 as an official side event of the 2019 European Week of Regions and Cities (EWRC) and on behalf of the Dutch Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations.<sup>8</sup>The conference, acknowledging the tremendous challenges for policy coherence to act on climate change and linked environmental dilemmas, brought together two of the guiding themes of the EWRC: a greener Europe and a Europe closer to its citizens. It addressed the topic of sustainable transition(s) looking at the experience of the UAEU 'green' Partnerships as recounted by their Action Leaders and Coordinators. In fostering horizontal learning and multi-stakeholder knowledge exchange, it sought to answer **three main questions**:

1. **What is the role of cities and citizens in implementing sustainability policies?**
2. **How can the 'green' Partnerships of the Urban Agenda for the EU contribute to bringing sustainability closer to citizens?**
3. **How can key political stakeholders support the implementation of the Actions proposed by the Partnerships?**

By elaborating key findings from the conference and analysing the localised experiences of the 'green' Partnerships, this study wishes to gather knowledge on existing practices and gaps in bringing about an urban sustainability transition. If the pathways towards sustainable development are *de facto* multi-faceted and complex, the urban dimension plays a great role in most, if not all, of them.

## The 7 'Green' Partnerships



Air Quality



Circular Economy



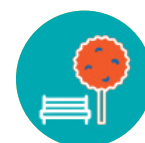
Climate Adaptation



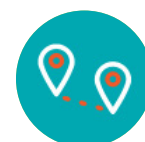
Energy Transition



Public Procurement



Sustainable Use of land and Nature-based Solutions



Urban Mobility

<sup>5</sup> EC (2019). Urban agenda for the EU: Multi-level governance in action. Brussels, p.22.

<sup>6</sup> It was endorsed at the Informal Meeting of EU Ministers Responsible for Urban Matters hosted by the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the EU in June 2019. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/system/files/ged/2019-06-14\\_bucharest\\_declaration\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/system/files/ged/2019-06-14_bucharest_declaration_en.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> Full text available at: [https://www.nweurope.eu/media/1216/territorial\\_agenda\\_2020.pdf/](https://www.nweurope.eu/media/1216/territorial_agenda_2020.pdf/).

<sup>8</sup> European Week of Regions and Cities, 7-10 October 2019, Brussels. Official Website. [Online] available at: <https://europa.eu/regions-and-cities/>.

# Format

The programme of the Conference is structured along five moments. The overview below shows how each of them addresses, through a specific angle, one of the three leading questions.

## 1 Derk Loorbach, Keynote Speech

What is the role of cities and citizens in implementing sustainability policies?



## 2 Working Groups 2a 2b 2c

How can the 'green' Partnerships of the Urban Agenda for the EU contribute to bringing sustainability closer to citizens?



## 3 Jan Olbrycht, Keynote Speech

How can key political stakeholders support the implementation of the Actions proposed by the Partnerships?



## 4 Political Panel



## 5 Keynote Listeners

Reflect back on the three questions and the outcomes of the day





# URBAN SUSTAINABILITY TRANSITIONS AND THE URBAN AGENDA FOR THE EU

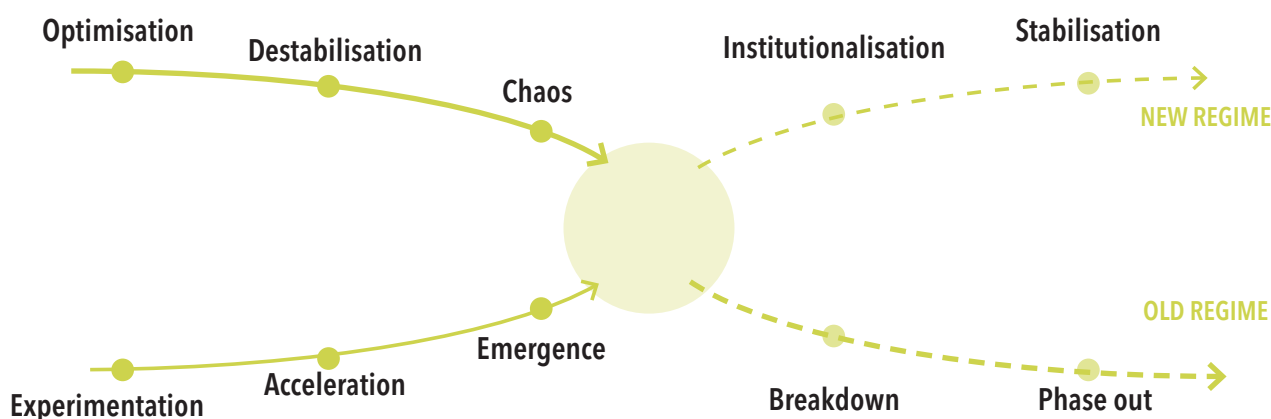
Many of the challenges encountered by modern society in urban contexts are highly complex. They could be defined as wicked or persistent problems as 'they are rooted in different societal domains, occur on varying levels, and involve various actors with dissimilar perspectives, norms and values.'<sup>1</sup> At the same time, societal transitions are being initiated at various levels, which triggers an increasing body of research.

This section delves deeper into the state of sustainability transition research and practice. It builds on the EUKN conference keynote delivered by Derk Loorbach, director of the *Dutch Research Institute For Transitions* (DRIFT), and makes a link between sustainability transitions and the Urban Agenda for the EU (UAEU).

## But first: some theory

**Transition** is defined as a 'process of change from one system state to another via a period of non-linear disruptive change'<sup>2</sup> Hereby, **regimes** as 'dominant and stable configuration[s] in a societal system'<sup>3</sup> are maintained by established practices, structures and cultures. Transition research investigates the different facets of societal change along these lines. In essence, it tries to find answers to the question

## 'How we can better understand processes of structural social change to help realize a sustainable future?'<sup>4</sup>



Before new regimes can emerge, existing (unsustainable) ones first need to destabilise in order to eventually phase out.

Three forces can exert pressure on dominant regimes and the related cultures, structures and practices:

- Changing context outside the structure;
- Tension within the structure itself;
- The rise of alternative solutions.

1 Loorbach, D. (2009). Transition Management for Sustainable Development: A Prescriptive, Complexity-Based Governance Framework. In: *Governance* 23(1), pp. 164.

2 Loorbach, D. (2009). Transition Management for Sustainable Development: A Prescriptive, Complexity-Based Governance Framework. In: *Governance* 23(1), pp. 164.

3 *ibid.*

4 Loorbach, D. (2014). To Transition! Governance Panarchy in the New Transformation. Inaugural Address given in shortened form at the occasion of accepting the appointment as professor of socio-economic transitions; science and practice, at the Faculty of Social Science on behalf of Vereniging Trustfonds EUR on Friday, October 31, 2014. Available online: [https://drift.eur.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/To\\_Transition-Loorbach-2014.pdf](https://drift.eur.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/To_Transition-Loorbach-2014.pdf).

**Transition arenas** are spaces in which these forces and their relevant actors can work together and develop a shared language. A transition arena is defined as

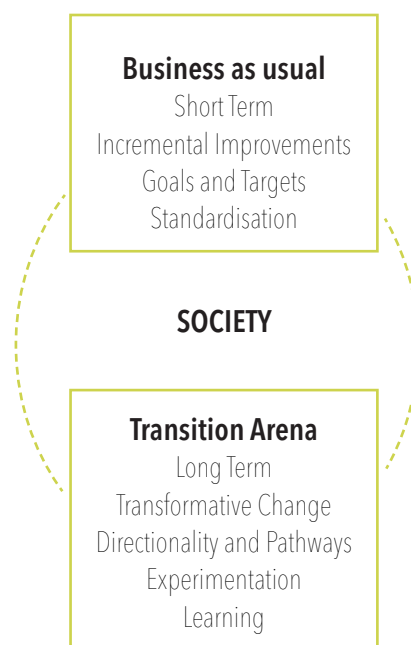
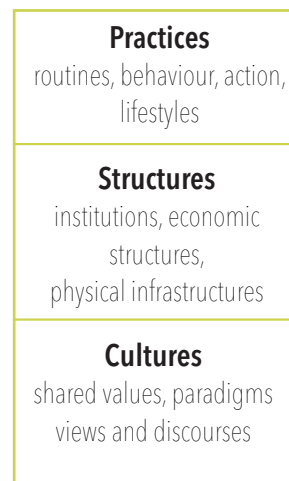
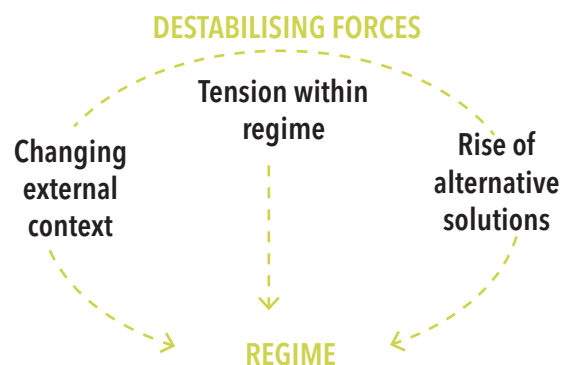
**'a small network of frontrunners with different backgrounds, within which various perceptions of a specific persistent problem and possible directions for solutions can be deliberately confronted with each other and subsequently integrated'.<sup>5</sup>**

## Governing (urban) sustainability transitions: 'top down' to empower 'bottom up'?

Does transition come from above or from below? The scientific and practical answer seems to be: from both. According to the transition management theory, governance processes need to be designed to accompany structural social change, and to develop long-term solution strategies by allowing room for short-term innovation.<sup>6</sup> These innovations are often found within **bottom-up initiatives** and gain shape through people's concrete efforts to develop alternative realities to those offered by the dominant regimes. However, sooner or later, these innovations need the embedding and support of larger structures.

**Top-down guidance often triggers or promotes bottom-up initiatives, but it is also functional for their success and implementation.**

In his keynote, Mr Loorbach linked the transition management to **urban sustainability**. He recalled that transition requires a 'transition mind-set' and behavioural change rather than plans. As global-scale problems increasingly play out at local scale, urban contexts serve as 'labs for working differently' and for overcoming predominant pathways of unsustainable development. Mr Loorbach made this explicit using the city where DRIFT is located as an example. Rotterdam (NL) represents many of the global issues playing out at local scale such as a fossil-based port, an unsustainable individual mobility system, health inequalities, air quality issues, transport poverty, etc. At the same time, various **local initiatives** call for change concentrating on resilient neighbourhoods<sup>7</sup>, democratic diversity<sup>8</sup>, social mobility<sup>9</sup>, and urban acupuncture<sup>10</sup>.



<sup>5</sup> Loorbach, D. (2009). Transition Management for Sustainable Development: A Prescriptive, Complexity-Based Governance Framework. In: Governance 23(1), pp. 173.

<sup>6</sup> D Loorbach, Transition Management for Sustainable Development, pag. 163

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.dokterbiemans.nl/o-v-e-r-o-n-s-a-b-o-u-t-u-s>; <https://www.vakmanstad.nl>; <https://www.rotterdam.nl/wonen-leven/frontlijn>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.mooimooiermiddelland.nl>

<sup>9</sup> <https://drift.eur.nl/ fietsen-op-zuid-en-meer-op-het-stadsmakerscongres-2016>

<sup>10</sup> <http://happymobility.nl/portfolio/happy-streets>; <http://happymobility.nl/portfolio/parking-day-2017>

## Local initiatives Learning from the City of Rotterdam



### Urban Acupuncture

The foundation **Happy Mobility** aims to raise awareness on the possibilities of inclusive mobility. It is connected to the **Happy Streets** movement, which is a Rotterdam-based movement committed to inclusive, sustainable mobility and better use of public space. The participants of this movement are also the organisers of the **Parking Day** in Rotterdam. This is an annual event, open to every-one, where citizens, activists and artists collaborate to temporarily transform parking spaces into park spaces: temporary public spaces with creative and green expressions. Happy Streets and Happy Mobility try to inspire society to think differently on how we want to live, travel, move and meet.



### Social Mobility

**'Fietsen op Zuid!'** started in 2016 as a program to increase bicycle use in Rotterdam South. The Cycling in South programme focuses on both 'software' opportunities (changes in lifestyle, awareness raising and education) and 'hardware' solutions (the cycling infrastructure and other elements of the public space in Rotterdam, and simply the availability of a well-functioning bicycle to all different groups in society). Part of these solutions are also the establishment of bike schools, the opening of (underground) bicycle parkings, and bicycle-friendly schools.



### Democratic Diversity

By means of the project **'Mooi, Mooier, Middelland'**, local residents, entrepreneurs active in the area and the City of Rotterdam collaborate to improve the neighbourhood. This cooperation is an example of so-called policy co-creation. Co-creation means that local citizens and entrepreneurs cooperate in defining and implementing local policies for the development of the neighbourhood. The role of the municipality is to support the initiatives rather than take the lead. The exact way of working and how to co-create still needs to be developed together by the partners, but the focus chosen is on physical and social improvement of the neighbourhood. They are investigating together what co-creation in Middelland could mean in practice and how they can involve new partners and citizens to offer their contribution to it.



### Resilient Neighbourhoods

**'Stadsgeneeskunde'** is a practical road towards a more inclusive and healthy public space. The idea of this way of working is that the daily maintenance of the neighbourhood is transformed into a cooperation plan in which everybody can participate. This approach is funded by the normal maintenance budget of the city council, now available for the initiative. The advantage of this is that local citizens do not only improve their neighbourhood, but also connect more to other people in it, and improve their own health because of the physical activity executed by them.

## The Urban Agenda for the EU as a transition arena?

Urban areas represent spaces where challenges and opportunities meet. This encounter can be an engine for innovative solutions. In this line of thought, the **Pact of Amsterdam** has laid out an innovative multi-level working method that brings together urban, national and European levels in thematic Partnerships clustered along 14 priority themes, each essential to ensure the sustainable development of urban areas.

By many, the UAEU is seen as an example of **experimental governance**. It is considered as a truly novel approach to urban governance at EU level, especially for urban and regional representatives. Utrecht University's Urban Futures Studio has investigated the UAEU in two publications.<sup>11</sup> The authors find the UAEU to be '**promising, but vulnerable**' and call for more 'systematic experimentation... by helping the partnerships formulate actions that are practical and fundamental at the same time'<sup>12</sup>. In his conference keynote, Mr Loorbach emphasised that:

**future-proofing the UAEU means taking the pathway to a sustainable economy seriously, learning from local experiments, and clearly articulating the need for change.**

It remains to be seen whether the UAEU will fully materialise as a transition arena in the field of urban policy and experimentation, eventually contributing to fundamental sustainability transitions. The official assessment of the UAEU on behalf of the European Commission will be presented in January 2020 during the CITIES Forum in Porto. Until then, several preliminary assessments<sup>13</sup> and opinions of urban stakeholders give rise to the finding that the experimental, multi-level character is the UAEU's biggest success as it fosters cooperation on urban matters across (governmental) levels. Shortcomings seem to remain mostly with regard to the initiative's longer-term vision, resource endowment, and impact – the latter in particular on the 'better regulation' objective.

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<sup>11</sup> Potjer, S. & Hajer, M. (2017). Learning with cities, learning for cities. The golden opportunity of the Urban Agenda for the EU. Urban Futures Studio. Available from: <https://www.uu.nl/en/news/essay-learning-with-cities-learning-for-cities>; Potjer, S. & Hajer, M. & Pelzer, P. (2018). Learning to experiment. Realising the potential of the Urban Agenda for the EU. Available from: <https://www.docdroid.net/99DbF6c/research-urbanfuturesstudio-web-def-1.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> Potjer, S. & Hajer, M. & Pelzer, P. (2018). Learning to experiment. Realising the potential of the Urban Agenda for the EU, pp. 1.

<sup>13</sup> Bahl, D. et al (2019). The national impact of the Urban Agenda for the EU 2016-2019, European Urban Knowledge Network. Available from: <https://www.eukn.eu/publications/the-national-impact-of-the-urban-agenda-for-the-eu-2016-2019/>

# THE 'GREEN' PARTNERSHIPS OF THE URBAN AGENDA FOR THE EU

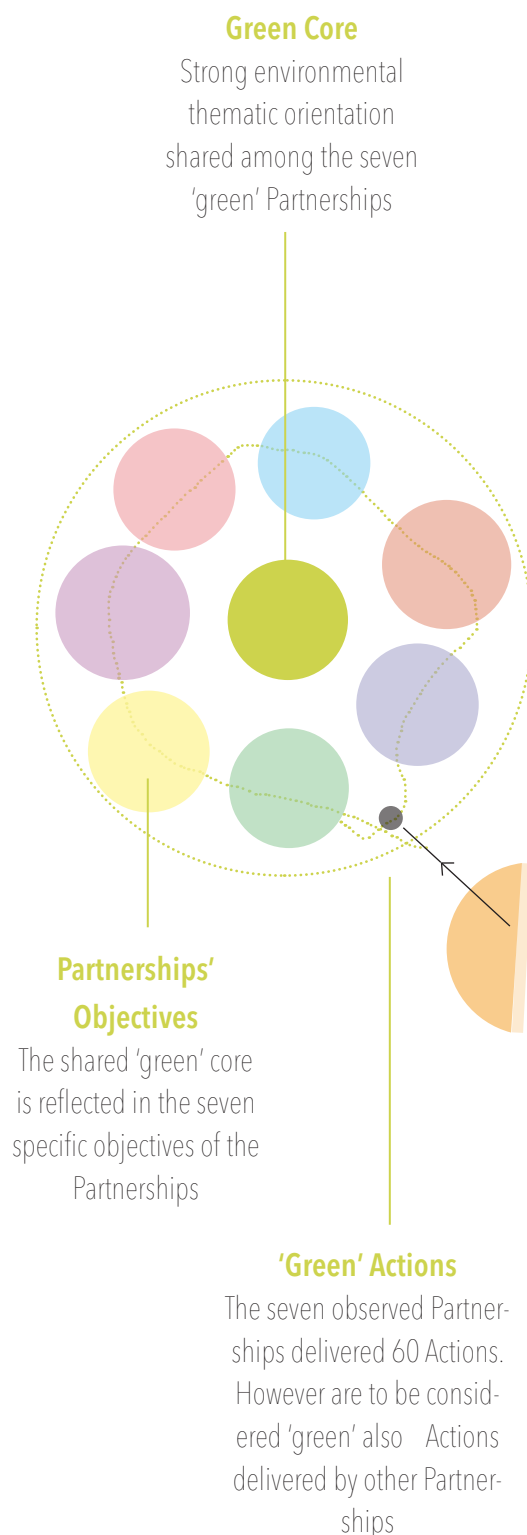
The UAEU Partnerships and their respective Action Plans translate the multi-level governance working method enacted by the Pact of Amsterdam. Within each Partnership, urban and regional authorities, Member States, EU institutions including relevant Directorate-Generals of the European Commission, civil society organisations, and further stakeholders and experts work together on a voluntary basis. Their common goal hereby is to **design concrete proposals** contributing to better regulation, funding and knowledge regarding policies with an urban dimension. One or several Coordinators guide the Partnerships' work along the different phases set out in the Pact of Amsterdam: stocktaking, identifying bottleneck/potentials, defining deliverables and actions, implementation, and evaluation.

Several of the 14 current Partnerships have a strong environmental thematic orientation: a **'green' core**. In their Action Plans, they identify gaps or contradictions in the current legislative and funding landscape addressing the 'better funding' and 'better regulation' objectives. Within the 'better knowledge' objective, they propose to elaborate guiding practices, toolkits, or databases for cities. In doing so, these Partnerships reflect the growing – and needed – role of cities to act on the climate and ecological crisis by refashioning their patterns of production, consumption, and operation.

Crucially, **the seven 'green' Partnerships** acknowledge and verbalise the need for (vertical and horizontal) cooperation in order to reduce the environmental footprint of urban areas, while also enhancing liveability and inclusion. The fact that also 'non-green' Partnerships have presented **'green' actions** and vice versa underlines the scope of the challenges and the need for a holistic understanding of sustainability. Moreover, Partnerships' Action Plans are explicitly linked with international commitments such as the New Urban Agenda and the SDGs, pinpointing issues cutting across several Partnerships (e.g. effective and participatory urban governance; urban regeneration; etc.).

**Cooperation** within Partnerships is at the heart of the UAEU. Cooperation *between* Partnerships as an instrument of implementation has turned out to be a challenge *within* the current setup of the UAEU – this notwithstanding, several Partnerships have been and are working together on joint actions and activities.

The following table summarises the key characteristics of the seven 'green' Partnerships in terms of their composition, programmatic objectives and proposed actions.



# Partnerships Composition

## Air Quality

The Netherlands (Coordinator), Croatia, Czech Republic, Poland; Constanta, Duisburg, Greater London Authority, Helsinki/HSY, Milan, Utrecht; EUROCITIES, HEAL; URBACT; DG REGIO (Coordinator), DG AGRI, DG ENVI, DG GROW, DG JRC, DG RTD.

## Circular Economy

Finland, Greece, Poland, Slovenia; Oslo (Coordinator), Flanders Region, The Hague, Kaunas, Porto, Prato; ACR+, CEMR, EIB, EUROCITIES, URBACT; DG REGIO, DG CLIMA, DG ENV, DG GROW, DG RTD.

## Climate Adaptation

Bulgaria, France, Hungary, Poland; Genova (Coordinator), Barcelona Diput., Glasgow, Loulé, Potenza, Sfantu Gheorghe, Trondheim; CEMR, Covenant of Mayors, EASME, EEA, EIB, EUROCITIES, URBACT; DG REGIO, DG CLIMA, DG ENV, DG JRC, DG RTD.

## Energy Transition

France, Germany; Gdansk (Coordinator), London (Coordinator), Roeselare (Coordinator), Gothenburg, Groningen, Navarra-Nasuvinsa, Udine, Tilburg, Vaasa, Vidzeme Region, Warsaw; CELSIUS Project, CEMR, EIB, Energy Cities, EUROCITIES, Euroheat & Power; URBACT; DG REGIO, DG CLIMA, DG ENER, DG RTD.

## Public Procurement

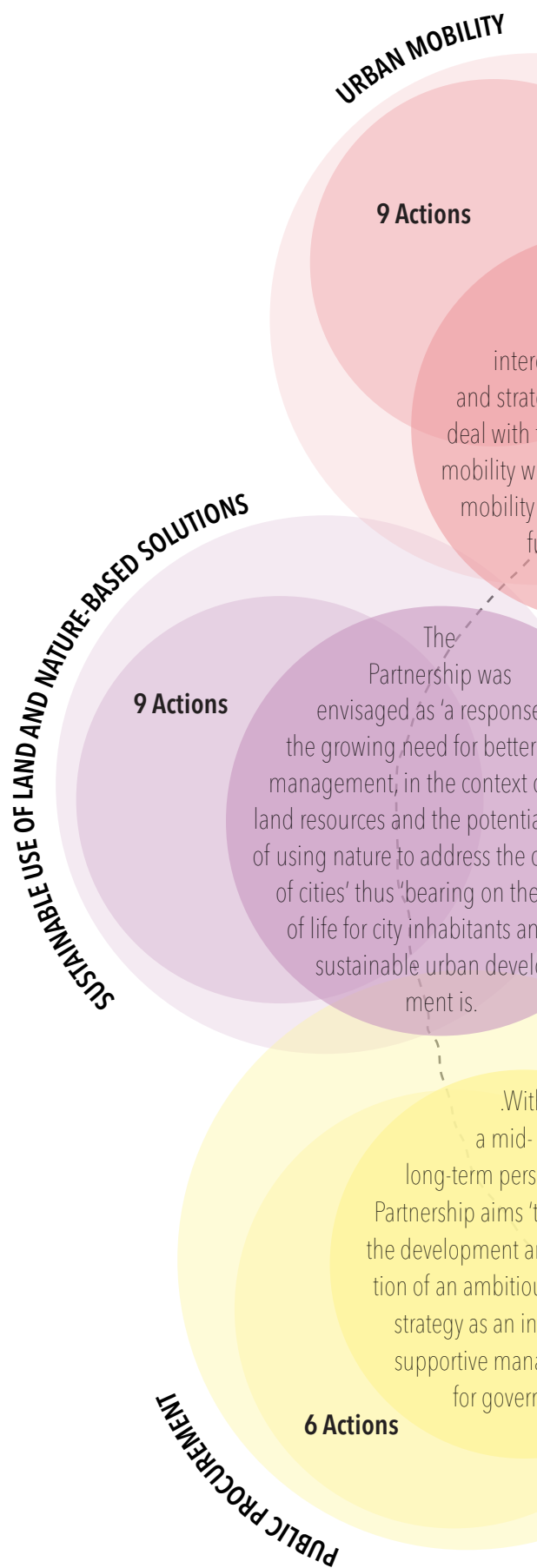
Italy, the Netherlands; Haarlem (Coordinator), Gabrovo, Larvik, Nantes, Munich, Preston, Turin, Vantaa; CEEP, CEMR, EUROCITIES, ICLEI, UIA; URBACT; DG REGIO, DG CNECT, DG GROW.

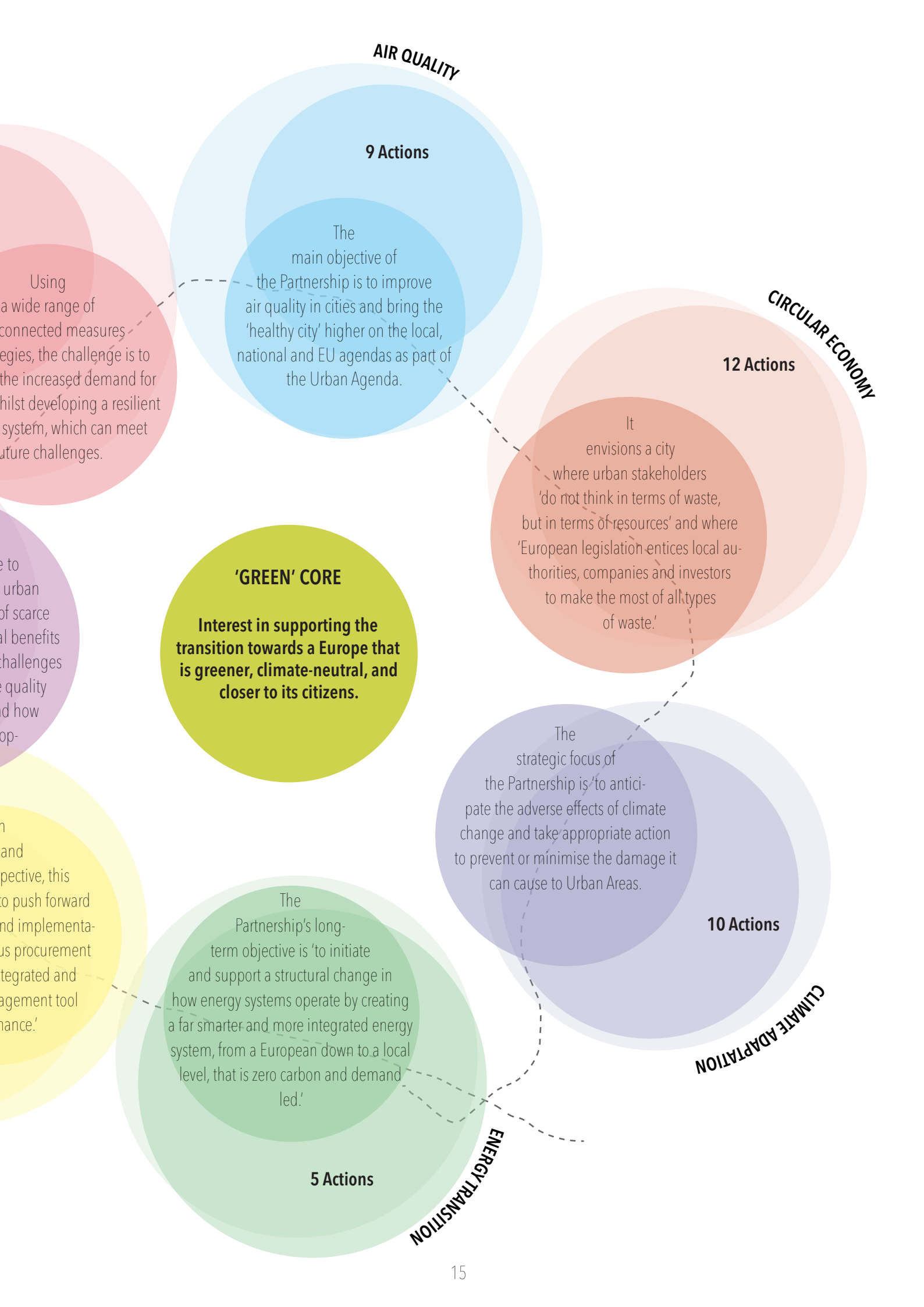
## Sustainable use of land and Nature-based solutions

Poland (Coordinator), Cyprus, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Portugal, Slovenia; Bologna (Coordinator), Antwerp, Cork, Métropole Européenne de Lille, Stavanger, Verband Region Stuttgart, Zagreb; EEA, EIB, EUKN, EUROCITIES, ICLEI, INCASOL, ISOCARP; URBACT; DG REGIO, DG ENV, DG JRC, DG RTD.

## Urban Mobility

Czech Republic (Coordinator), Cyprus, Finland, Romania, Slovenia; Karlsruhe (Coordinator), Bari, Bielefeld, Burgas, Gdynia, Malmö, Nijmegen, Skåne Region, Torres Vedras, Wallonia Region; CEMR, EIB, EUROCITIES, European Cyclists Federation, POLIS, UITP, Walk21; URBACT; DG REGIO, DG ENV, DG MOVE.





# WORKING GROUPS: ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

## Format

The format of the Working Groups was articulated in three moments and designed to answer to the question: how can the green Partnerships of the Urban Agenda for the EU can bring sustainability closer to citizens? Representatives of the seven 'green' Partnerships were asked to be actively involved in the Working Groups, however those from the Partnership of Sustainable use of land and Nature-based solutions did not manage to be present. The overview below shows the distinct aim of each section and the supporting material delivered to the participants.

### 2a Partnership Pitch

The Coordinator or/and Action Leaders of the Partnerships were asked to present how they experienced the Urban Agenda for the EU and how they 'personalised' its innovative working methods.



### 2b The selected Action

**Phase 1:** The Coordinator or/and Action Leaders of each Partnership presented one Action, previously selected from their Action Plan, that has a special link with the cross-cutting issue 12.1 ('Effective urban governance, including citizens participation and new models of governance').

**Phase 2:** The Coordinator or/and Action Leaders of the Partnerships reflected on the relation between the presented Action and the cross-cutting issue 12.1.



### 2c Question for the Panel

The participants had four minutes to formulate a question for the panel, following the instructions on the card. These questions were discussed within the group that, in the end, had to agree on two questions to bring to the panel debate.



### **Formulate a Question for the Panel:**

The panel is composed of policy-makers representing different levels and organisations. What can they do to facilitate the implementation of actions leading to a greener Europe and one closer to the citizens? Please be precise and build on your own experiences as well as the working group discussions.



# Working Group 1

## Climate Adaptation

After having depicted the composition of the Partnership, Coordinator Stefania Manca (Genoa) shared her experiences with the UAEU process and Partnership work. She stressed the perceived tension between the need to deliver concrete results and actions on the one hand and the voluntary character of the initiative on the other hand. Even though the commitment of the Partners involved was remarkable, the Partnership deplors the lack of a support structure as a hindering factor in delivering concrete results. As reported by the Coordinator, the Partnership had been identifying barriers and potentials in existing regulation. Their key learning was that several tools aiming to improve climate adaptation, such as specific regulations, are already in place. What lacks is a coherent overview of those tools. Such an overview is seen as a precondition and basis for any further action.

### Action K4

#### Enhancing stakeholder involvement at regional and local levels

Stakeholder engagement is key in municipal policy-making and climate change adaptation planning. Therefore, additional efforts need to be made to inform and raise awareness among citizens and other stakeholders on adaptation-related issues, as well as account for their expertise and priorities. This implies encouraging stakeholder consultation and participation as common practices at the municipal level when planning climate adaptation actions (i.e. in the framework of the Covenant of Mayors).

Caroline Lambert, leader of the selected Action K4 on behalf of the European Commission, presented the work done within this context to enhance stakeholders' and citizens' involvement in adaptation planning. More specifically the Action aimed at strengthening the capacity of urban municipalities, cities and towns to access LIFE<sup>14</sup> funding for urban adaptation projects. The Action delivery was organised as follows. First, the dissemination and up-scaling of those frameworks designed to support cities obtaining LIFE funding for urban adaptation projects. Second, the formulation of concrete suggestion to improve the access of cities to the LIFE programme. According to Ms Lambert, the work done to support this Action helped in transforming the existing will of cities to raise awareness about urban adaptation issues into the design and implementation of concrete actions.

<sup>14</sup> The EU's funding instrument for the environment and climate action; see <https://ec.europa.eu/easme/en/life>.

## Energy Transition

Anna-Maria Spyriouni, Coordinator of the Partnership on behalf of the City of London, gave the Partnership Pitch. She reflected not only upon the work done within the Partnership, but also upon the dynamics and overall functioning of the UAEU. In relation to the working method, Ms Spyriouni stressed the importance of the UAEU as a way to overcome a 'silo mentality' as it brought experts, policymakers and practitioners together to cooperate on the same topic. At the same time, she mentioned the encountered drawbacks, especially related to the voluntary participation, resulting in suboptimal engagement by the partners. Ms Spyriouni concluded with the suggestion to modify the funding system, allocating more funds to the action implementation phase.

### Action 1

#### Creation of 'financing for district energy' task group

This Action is designed to bring district energy and financing experts together to share experiences, collaborating to identify potential funding sources and mechanisms. A paper will be developed and presented to the European Commission (DG ENER). The goal of this will be to explore and identify existing forums, such as the Energy Efficiency Financial Institutions Group (EEFIG), to start an open dialogue on how cities can become engaged on the topic at the European level. The outcomes of this dialogue will then be used to raise awareness on the topic across EU institutions in order to specifically identify the most appropriate forum in which to develop possible solutions to the challenge faced.

Timo Wyffels, Coordinator of the Partnership representing the Belgian city of Roeselare, presented the selected Action. He saw the newness and relevance of this experience in bringing together the two worlds of districts energy and financing and developing a shared language. This experiment has resulted in a collection of best practices but, more important, in an increased awareness of interests and priorities among the stakeholders.

## Working Group 2

### Air Quality

René Korenromp, Coordinator of the Partnership on behalf of the Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management, and Jeroen Schenkels, Action Leader and Partnership member on behalf of Utrecht (Netherlands), brought to the participants' attention that poor air quality is the cause of 400,000 premature deaths in Europe every year. They illustrated the feedback loops between pollution sources found at different spatial levels. In practice, the ambition of meeting air quality targets set by the WHO at the local level can be hampered by pollution coming from elsewhere.

#### Action 4

##### Better focus on the protection and on the improvement of citizens' health

In the current situation (spatial) planning is based upon approaches that do not fully reflect adverse health effects of pollution. Therefore, the Action aims to develop additional instruments needed to take these effects into account and protect and improve citizen's health. These new indicators could be useful to: 1) stimulate more focus on improvement of citizens' health and encouraging cities to give more emphasis to air quality-related impacts on health in the strategic planning of their interventions; 2) request to indicate the impact of air quality on health and apply a new instrument for measuring benefits generated in terms of citizen's health and living environments.

According to the Partnership representatives, improving citizens' health fundamentally requires integration of air quality measures with policies targeting other sectors such mobility, energy, climate, agriculture, and urban development, as well as coordination and cooperation among different governance levels (local, regional, national, European). As Jeroen Schenkels explained, tools such as the PAQ2018<sup>15</sup> developed as part of Action 4, precisely combine existing indicators to conduct more thorough and comprehensive health impact assessments in cities. In fact, thanks to the PAQ2018 policymakers and other stakeholders can measure the health impact of a certain policy measure through statistical data, making it easier to mobilise support and public awareness on the needed change.

<sup>15</sup> Partnership for Air Quality (2018). The PAQ2018 tool: Factsheet and step-by-step instructions. [https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/system/files/ged/the\\_paq2018\\_tool.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/system/files/ged/the_paq2018_tool.pdf)

### Urban Mobility

Piotr Rapacz, representative of the European Commission (DG MOVE) and action leader of several actions of Partnership on Urban Mobility, presented the Partnership composition and key objectives. He emphasised the critical role played by mobility and transport systems for sustainable urban development. Because urban mobility is to date defined by conventionally fuelled means of transport, its impact on the climate change and human health is worrying. Mr. Rapacz reiterated that along with the 400,000 premature deaths caused by poor air quality and for which urban transport systems are highly responsible, about 25,500 premature deaths are caused by road accidents every year, apart from the health problems resulting from reduced physical activity.

#### Action 5

##### Developing guidelines on infrastructure for active mobility supported by relevant funding

This action aims to unlock a substantially higher share for walking and cycling projects from both Member States transport investments (local, regional and national) as well as from the EU Structural Funds. The partners will elaborate quality design guidelines regarding the different types and parameters of active mobility infrastructure components. Moreover, there will be an update of the EU Funding Observatory for Cycling to include references to relevant EU funding instruments.

In order to counter the worrying trends mentioned above, Action 5 is aimed at promoting emission-free modes of transport such as walking and cycling which are also beneficial to human health. To facilitate this, the Partnership identifies the need to mainstream more inclusive forms of public transport governance, at municipal and regional levels, so as to enhance active citizens' engagement and institutions to accommodate smart mobility solutions.

## Working Group 3

### Public Procurement

Valentina Schippers-Opejko, coordinating the Partnership on behalf of the Dutch city of Haarlem, presented the group's set-up, goals and actions. She recalled Public Procurement to be an important strategic tool to address cities' and other public organisations' challenges, while contributing to the fulfilment of the SDGs (in particular SDG 12 'Ensure sustainable production and consumption patterns'). Cities' spending decisions can contribute to a wide range of goals, given an annual public procurement value of around 2000 billion euro in Europe.

Ms Schippers-Opejko presented all seven actions and invited interested cities to become 'reference cities' of the Partnership, thereby receiving access to tools, expertise, and the Partnership network. As success factors of the Partnership, she mentioned the inclusive character and the solution orientation.

#### Action 2 Circular procurement

Learning is key to innovative and responsible public procurement and specific efforts are required in new policy areas where competences are still underdeveloped, such as circular procurement competences. The main goal of the Action is that public procurement officers in local and regional authorities across the EU are offered and attend workshops and trainings that support them to conduct circular procurement. The goal of the action is to make knowledge on circular procurement easily available so that cities can build and develop competence for relevant staff. The expected impact of implementing the Action on a medium to long term will be an increase in the use of circular procurement in the cities that have made use of the circular procurement workshops or academy.

This Action is one that the Procurement Partnership took over from the Circular Economy Partnership. Regarding the challenge of circular procurement, Ms Schippers-Opejko underlined that a cultural change was necessary among public buyers. At the same time, innovative market solutions might exist but are unknown to the relevant procurement departments. Ms Schippers-Opejko called the potential of public procurement regarding e.g. greening or air quality improvements truly 'magical' if approached as a strategic tool. While the Circular Procurement Action is being implemented via trainings, the Partnership would like to upscale them via e-learning tools and by involving other parties. Budgetary constraints hamper the roll-out of this up-scaling, though.

### Circular Economy

Siri Carlsen Bellika from the Norwegian capital Oslo, Coordinator of the Circular Economy Partnership, presented the group as well as the state of affairs regarding action implementation. She called the UAEU a very suitable platform to discuss the circular economy and its urban dimension, not least given the relevance of the topic on the Commission's agenda. In order to progress as planned and to maintain partners' commitment, the Partnership has created smaller-scale working structures dealing with specific sub-themes. Ms Bellika emphasised the positive experiences with the multi-level governance method and unique character of the common work – she held that a new Partnership on the circular economy would probably be completely different. As the biggest challenge, she named governance – i.e., mapping and understanding the highly heterogeneous existing knowledge and action on the circular economy in different cities.

#### Action 7 Promote Urban Resource Centres for waste prevention, re-use and recycling

This Action aims to facilitate the establishment of so-called 'Urban Resources Centres' - physical centres that enable sustainable consumption within a city, provide education on waste prevention measures, and facilitate re-use, repair and recycling. This will be done through investigating the potential of these centres and share knowledge through a network of centres and enable peer-to-peer exchange. Part of the implementation of the Action will also be to address alternatives for funding and financing of the Urban Resource Centres.

Regarding the Action in question, Ms Bellika explained how this was really about creating local circular solutions. Cities, in her view, are called to develop those together with citizens in order to bring about systemic change. While the city level is always seen as 'the local level' from the EU or national perspectives, at city level, 'the real local level' are citizens! Regarding circular consumption, Ms Bellika said that core behaviour change-related aspects such as waste prevention were often dismissed at policy level, and that more experiences were needed. The Urban Resource Centre Action is being implemented in cooperation with eight new cities and supported by an URBACT Action Planning Network.

# INSIGHTS FROM THE PANEL

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As mentioned in Chapter 1 of this study, the panel of experts of the Conference sought to address key political aspects of the process resulting in the adoption of the Pact of Amsterdam in 2016 and the launch of the Urban Agenda for the EU. The panel was composed of two members of the European Parliament, two (deputy) mayors, a representative of the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy of the European Commission, as well as the President of the European Environmental Bureau. This specific composition triggered a vivid debate, allowing voices from both the European and local levels to be heard.

Panellists were first asked to address the questions formulated by the different working groups, displayed here on the right, and then those from the Conference's moderator, Mart Grisel. The questions posed by Mr Grisel mainly covered three areas, namely:

**How to move from actions proposed by the Urban Agenda Partnerships to actual implementation of these actions?**

**How to involve citizens in the transformation of the EU towards a climate-neutral continent, as suggested by the new President of the European Commission?**

**How to continue the process of the Urban Agenda for the EU in the next programming period?**

Based on the key questions raised, panellists offered critical insights onto the political circumstances of the Urban Agenda and its future, encompassing the local as well as the European institutional level. These are presented in the following pages.

## **Working Group 1**

**1**

In order to avoid silo mentality and foster an integrated approach towards environmental urban challenge, how can we better institutionalise the dialogue between cities and the other governmental levels?

**2**

How to ensure visibility of the social impact of environmental policies?

## **Working Group 2:**

**1**

What is the most disruptive action you know about which makes you very nervous but of which you're at the same time aware that it is sooner or later inescapable?

**2**

How to go beyond the current voluntary approach and make the outcomes of a Partnership binding?

## **Working Group 3:**

**1**

How can new European policies enable innovation through new models of collaboration while ensuring the support of the legal framework?

**2**

Some actions are very punctual and financially feasible, how can we give this a push and support their implementation?

## Local Level



**Fatma Koser Kaya**

Vice Mayor of Amersfoort (NL)

### Cities as frontrunners of sustainable solutions

Ms Koser Kaya addressed the existence of meaningful innovative initiatives at local and regional level. In this respect, she referred to cities as frontrunners when it comes to the achievement of sustainable development goals. As a case in point, she mentioned the Dutch cities of Amersfoort and Utrecht being astonishingly active in the Healthy Urban Living Region. Nonetheless, Ms Koser Kaya emphasised the pivotal role that Europe should play in up-scaling these initiatives. As she contended, EU funding is a key requirement to stimulate and uptake projects initiated by municipalities.

### Outdated EU regulations

Ms Koser Kaya urged the need for a more prominent role of European policymakers in supporting local initiatives. She indicated that many EU regulations are old-fashioned and can de facto hamper sustainable development at the local level. She gave the example of regulations around the circular economy that, due to their outdated status, have prevented the city of Amersfoort to use worms to process organic waste.



**Victor Everhardt**

Deputy Mayor of Utrecht (NL)

### UAEU and the connection with citizens

Victor Everhardt, one of the two Keynote Listeners of the Conference, reflected that a practical way for the UAEU as well as for EU and national policy instruments to better connect to citizens, is to connect to their first-hand problems. For instance, health is at the heart and in the mind of citizens' daily lives. This is one of the reasons why Utrecht is so active in improving health for its citizens, prompting the city's decision to join the Air Quality Partnership.



**Mario Guarente**

Mayor of Potenza (IT)

### Involvement of small-sized cities in the UAEU

Mr Guarente was asked to reflect on what it truly means for a small-sized city such as Potenza to be involved in one of the UAEU Partnerships, especially in terms of the implications of size on capacity and resources. The Mayor highlighted that Potenza is, in fact, the largest city in its region, shifting the attention to smaller villages. These unusual suspects also face a number of challenges and it is important to hear their voices. As the Mayor continued, because of their limited resources, they are unable to participate in EU Partnerships, projects and networks. In this respect, Mr Guarente claimed that European policy should be more aware of the local regional context including functional areas, rather than focusing on city administrations alone.

## European Level



### The existing gap between citizens and the EU

Having recently started her first term at the European Parliament, Vera Tax expressed her eagerness to work towards the closure of the gap between the EU and its citizens. As a step towards this bridging, she suggested to comprehensively map the innovative sustainability solutions promoted by municipalities around Europe. As a way of raising awareness on their critical contributions towards the sustainability transition, this map could support MEPs keep track of bottom-up initiatives and promote their upscaling.



### Municipalities supporting MEPs

According to Mr Olbrycht, representatives of municipalities could support MEPs identifying bottlenecks and contradictions in EU legislation. He affirmed that the aim of the EU is not to impose measures on cities but rather to design measure that could concretely support cities, regardless of their size. Mr Olbrycht pointed out that subsidiarity should not be used as an argument to block proposal in European political debates.

### Sustainability to future proof the UAEU

Mr Olbrycht advocated that the multi-faceted topic of sustainability offers an excellent impetus to update the UAEU and make it future-proof, linking the Pact of Amsterdam to the tremendous challenges of our time. As highlighted by Mr Olbrycht, the will to make the transition to sustainability is shared throughout Europe, yet it needs to lead to the implementation of concrete actions.



### Balance between formality and informality

Mr Hans Tijn claimed that for the UAEU to become future proof, its operational method needs to become more institutionalised while still leaving enough room for informality and experimentation. In light of policy discussions around the future of the UAEU, he was happy to announce that the Vice Prime Minister of the Netherlands recently decided that the Netherlands will maintain the position of a dedicated envoy for urban matters for the next two years at least.

In January 2020, Mr Hans Tijn left the Ministry of the Interior. The current urban envoy is Ms Karen van Danzig.

# ON THE ROAD TO EUROPE'S SUSTAINABILITY TRANSITIONS

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The sense of urgency stemming from the global environmental and climate emergency is increasingly being translated into legislative and practical policy solutions at different scales. The work of the UAEU green Partnerships is one of such examples. Moreover, as part of the pledge to make Europe the first climate neutral continent by 2050, the European Commission has presented on 11 December 2019 the *European Green Deal* to become the hallmark of Europe's sustainability transition. As envisioned by the new Commission's Executive Vice-President, Frans Timmermans, the deal is 'an opportunity to improve the health and well-being of our people by transforming our economic model' stressing the responsibility 'to make sure that this transition is a just transition, and that nobody is left behind'.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, the *Sustainable Europe Investment Plan*<sup>17</sup> has the intention to unleash €1 trillion in investment over the next ten years in aid of this transition. In fact, the new Commission President Ursula von der Leyen emphasises:

**'To make a real step change, we must look at everything from how we use and produce energy, unlock private investment and support new clean technologies, all the way through to the transport we use, the food we eat and the packaging we throw away.'**<sup>18</sup>

By elaborating on the findings of the Conference and giving voice to the questions raised by the partnerships, this study has sought to understand how European cities and citizens can facilitate and be the protagonists of Europe's sustainability transition through the Urban Agenda for the EU. With this purpose, **key uncertainties around the future of the Urban Agenda** have been raised.

## A greener Europe closer to its citizens

In their role as critical agents for leveraging Europe's sustainable transition, European cities represent a critical nexus point for crucial social, economic and environmental infrastructures, from transport systems to recycling and waste treatment facilities, energy, water, and so on. Appreciating the urgency in transforming these infrastructures in an effort to reach the bold –yet imperative– goal of climate neutrality by 2050, the UAEU green Partnerships have mobilised stakeholders and resources in this direction. The creative power of urban initiatives and bold actions was illustrated in Chapter 2 (page 9).

## To upscale initiatives, we need Europe. – Fatma Koser Kaya

Several European cities are frontrunners when it comes to locally streamline sustainability goals. Nevertheless, local action is not enough in itself to upscale the needed transformation: cities and citizens need support from institutions to embed bottom-up processes into policy making. As explored in Chapter 2, top-down guidance is necessary to empower and complement local initiatives and accompany structural social change.

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16 European Commission (2019). The European Green Deal sets out how to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050, boosting the economy, improving people's health and quality of life, caring for nature, and leaving no one behind. Press Release, 11 December 2019. [Online] available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP\\_19\\_6691](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_19_6691).

17 Zubaşcu, F. and Wallace, N. (2019). New commission president pledges to make Europe, 'the first climate neutral continent'. Science Business. [Online] available at: <https://sciencebusiness.net/news/new-commission-president-pledges-make-europe-first-climate-neutral-continent>.

18 European Commission (2019). Towards a sustainable Europe by 2030, Reflection paper, European Commission. Retrieved from: [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/rp\\_sustainable\\_europe\\_30-01\\_en\\_web.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/rp_sustainable_europe_30-01_en_web.pdf).

## How can the green Partnerships help?

By pinpointing to bottlenecks and gaps in regulation, funding and knowledge, the Partnerships have started charting possible pathways to transition to a greener, more inclusive, and just urban life in Europe. To varying degrees, and depending on their status of implementation, the green Partnerships have helped bring a unified focus to efforts aimed at reshaping processes and institutions responsible for our interaction with the 'built' and 'natural' environment, seeing them as part of a continuum and not in isolation from one another.

Because sustainability is a complex, multi-dimensional and multi-scalar concept by definition, the action plans of the Partnerships make explicit connections to international frameworks provided by the New Urban Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), thus promising to reconcile the local with the regional and global levels.

## Challenges ahead

Because of the largely experimental and voluntary nature of the Urban Agenda for the EU, of which Partnerships are the key implementation instrument, throughout the conference a series of uncertainties were expressed. What emerged from the discussion is that there exists a fundamental tension to be addressed or else the efforts mobilised risk giving out, failing to upscale the needed transition:

### **How can the UAEU be institutionally embedded within the EU urban policy context and Partnerships still maintain the informal, experimental character that has determined their achievements so far?**

The trade-off between institutionalisation and experimentation deserves attention. As remarked by Hans Tijl, the (then) Dutch Urban Envoy, for the UAEU to be future proof, its modus operandi needs to transition towards a more institutionalised structure while leaving room for informality. This tension becomes particularly relevant in light of policy discussions around the future of the Urban Agenda for the EU. As reiterated by MEP Jan Olbrycht, continuity represents a major obstacle to up-scaling the inspiring actions and transitions catalysed on the (urban) ground. In particular, key issues around ownership, responsibility, and sustained funding of the Partnerships' actions and their follow up need to be addressed to make sure findings and changes enacted are fed into the wider EU political agenda. Once again, the interaction between the bottom-up and top-down governance of the UAEU is pivotal to its sustainability and uptake beyond 2020.

While it is outside the scope of the European Union to impose measures on cities, Mr Olbrycht stressed that subsidiarity should not translate into policy deadlock. As evidenced by preliminary assessments of the UAEU and echoed during the conference, the novel governance approach brought about by the UAEU has been a success. Not to lose momentum, MEP Olbrycht stresses, the UAEU must evolve and build on what the Partnerships have achieved so far.

### **The Urban Agenda for the EU must continue to deliver – Jan Olbrycht**

The Bucharest Declaration, adopted in June 2019 by the ministers responsible for urban matters, invites the incoming German Presidency to propose future steps for the continuation of the UAEU as an operational mechanism to implement the principles of the new Leipzig Charter. This may lead to a clustering of the existing Partnerships and of the Actions proposed by these Partnerships. Cooperation with political bodies such as the European Parliament is indispensable in that respect.

The Urban Agenda for the EU was established as an action-oriented agenda with the aim to improve regulation, funding and knowledge (exchange). Implementation of the proposed Actions is now of the essence. Combining Actions across the green Partnerships would be a good next step towards concrete implementation of the Actions. The Agenda 2030, the Green Deal of the new European Commission and the new Leipzig Charter offer a political framework par excellence to bring sustainability closer to the citizens.





European Urban  
Knowledge Network



Ministry of the Interior and  
Kingdom Relations