Dear Members of the Community of Practice on Cities,

It is my pleasure to introduce this second newsletter of the Community of Practice for cities, as well as myself. I joined JRC as Deputy Director-General in May 2020, coming from our Human Resources Directorate-General. I look forward to working with you on the increasingly important and multifaceted topic of cities. I believe that people collaborating and sharing common goals can make the difference!

In the current situation of the Covid-19 pandemic, I hope you are doing well and are managing as best as you can. This is all the more important as we become increasingly aware of the extensive indirect and long-term implications that the current emergency will have on our economy and well-being as a whole. While much is being done to facilitate the return to a more manageable situation throughout the EU, cities continue to be at the forefront of making this new ‘normal’ a better one for all. More than ever before, the importance of knowledge exchange and peer-learning is being recognised. It is also noteworthy that cities have been stepping up in implementing location-specific regulations tailored to the needs of their communities, while inspiring others to take similar actions. We at JRC will continue our efforts to support cities and other stakeholders in their efforts.

In this second edition of our CoP-Cities Newsletter, we reflect on recent events, webinars and on-going research projects relevant to both the Community of Practice on Cities and the City Science Initiative, as well as look forward to events and activities ahead. I hope you appreciate this second edition and please do share with us your concrete suggestions and inputs via the Community of Practice coordinator.

Finally, I hope that you will be able to take a much deserved summer break. For those of you travelling, we hope you can do so safely and confidently and I would refer you to the newly-launched Re-Open EU website. This is a useful tool to stay informed on any restrictions there may be in place in your destination countries.

Bernard Magenhann
Deputy Director-General, Joint Research Centre
As the EU continues to open its borders and the summer holiday season is upon us, there has been a growing need for EU-wide consistent and up-to-date information on travel restrictions. In response to this, the European Commission has created the Re-Open EU website, which gives an overview of information related to Covid-19 regulations in all EU member states.

https://reopen.europa.eu

NALAS, the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe has initiated, since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, a regular info exchange among its 14 member associations from 12 countries, representing more than 5000 municipalities in our region and beyond. As member of the European Council of Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) NALAS is part of the global task force for COVID-19. Both the NALAS Special Digest edition titled “Local Response to COVID-19” and bi-weekly COVID-19 update, display the latest member activities to contain and mitigate the pandemic sharing lessons learnt and good example throughout South-East Europe!

http://nalas.eu/News/NALAS_cov

JRC activities focused on COVID-19 are available at this link, and more information on the EC response to coronavirus is available here.

CoP-CITIES BRIEFS

As a follow-up to the successful collaborations leading to the publication of the Future of Cities Report last year, we are currently working on setting up a more systematic publication of briefs, similar in format to the chapters of the report. The focus will be on identifying emerging trends and challenges cities are faced with, and highlighting both opportunities for cities to act, and examples where they are taking action. Following the results of the survey launched in the last newsletter, we have identified 3 initial topics of interest:

◊ Shrinking Cities
◊ Urban-rural interactions
◊ Cities fit for the digital age

We are currently working on first drafts of these briefs, please contact us if you would like to contribute already at this stage, otherwise the drafts will be circulated for inputs and review together with the next newsletter in September.
Reporting from five thematic virtual workshops.

Between May and June, the CSI facilitated 5 thematic virtual workshops in the domains of circular economy; sustainable mobility; air quality; tech and the city, and mental health. Leading cities of these thematic areas hosted the events engaging together more than 450 stakeholders. The discussions addressed the specific challenges faced by cities and allowed peer learning on potential solutions, including reflections linked to the pandemic. Interesting testimonials were provided by 23 cities, with key stakeholders representing International Organisations (WHO, OECD), the European Commission (DGs JRC, ENV, MOVE, RTD, GROW, REGIO, CON-NECT), the European Union agencies (EASME, EEA, EIT), and the EU Urban programmes (URBACT, JPI, UAP), among others, providing useful inputs aiming at mainstreaming related findings.

Key take-away messages:
- Science-oriented action at urban level contributes to increase evidences in how to make a transition of the legal and policy framework from risk-based towards value-oriented approaches.
- Besides thematic applications in the five discussed domains, research evidences are also supporting green transition in complementary fields such as: governance and planning, citizens’ engagement, material and data flows, training and knowledge sharing.
- Research interventions can also explore city-wide systems and promote science for policy cooperation across the EU.
- The creation of several data platforms is a trend in several cities. The aim is to connect and articulate different databases available in cities. Skills are required in the treatment, understanding and application of this data for urban policy purposes.
- Similarly, cities approach monitoring actions from different angles and interests. Indicators systems are developed helping to measure the impact of policies. On the other hand, at EU level, more integration of indicators is needed.
- Cities are promoting science-policy partnerships, assuring not only valuable evidences and inputs for strategic planning, but also achieving a major articulation of territorial stakeholders, including representatives of universities and science and technology centers.
- Citizens’ engagement in science for policy at urban level is widely recognized as a fundamental pillar of progress. Urban living labs cope for example with the big fragmentation that usually exists between disciplines and sectors. It also allows to closely connecting research with innovation and making research results be applied in practice.

Want to know more? Power point presentations, specific messages from each workshop and updates of related knowledge dossiers can be found in the following links. The CSI extends its gratitude to participants and speakers for the interesting discussions and contributions. Leading cities are currently working on comprehensive reports of the discussions; the CSI welcomes additional contributions of partners working in these domains:

Circular economy, sustainable mobility, air quality, tech and the city and mental health.

Are you interested in joining the CSI initiative? Please follow these guidelines.

#CityScienceEU
THE EUKN REVIEWS THE JRC’S URBAN ACTIVITIES IN LIGHT OF THE NEW LEIPZIG CHARTER

The New Leipzig Charter, to be adopted under the German Presidency, sets the long-term policy framework and guiding policy principles to realise local and global sustainability agendas by mobilising the transformative power of European cities. Commissioned by the JRC, the European Urban Knowledge Network (EUKN) will review the JRC’s urban activities against the vision for, principles of, and the roadmap to sustainable urban development envisaged by the New Leipzig Charter. The assessment will result in a report to be presented and discussed with relevant stakeholders in autumn this year.

INTELLIGENT CITIES CHALLENGE (ICC) ANNOUNCES CITIES

ICC supports cities to leverage advanced technologies and relaunch their economies towards a green, smart and socially-responsible recovery. Following an open call for expression of interest, 90 applications, representing 126 EU cities, have now been selected to participate in ICC.

The full list of selected applicants and cities is available on the ICC website.

ICC offers one-to-one strategic advice, guidance and peer learning to cities, and help them plan for large-scale investments, focusing on green transition of businesses; economic growth and reskilling; urban industrial infrastructure; business-related government services and citizens’ engagement; health and safety.

The ICC will kick-start with a high-level conference the week of 28 September.
**European Cultural and Creative Cities in COVID-19 times: jobs at risk and the policy response**

Using pre-COVID-19 evidence on cultural jobs and tourism from the JRC’s Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor, this report identifies the cities most at risk and highlights inspirational practices and policies that have emerged during the crisis to support cultural and creative sectors. The coronavirus pandemic has almost entirely disrupted the basic source of revenue that cultural operations need to meet their operating costs: paying visitors. By rethinking cultural venues and events, cities across the EU are staying culturally vibrant, showing their ability to ‘bounce forward’ from this crisis.

You can find the full report [here](#).

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**The impact of COVID-19 on tourism in the EU.**

Tourism has been one of the first and most severely affected sectors since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in Europe. Policies in response to the ongoing situation need detailed analyses not only at country-level, but rather based and adapted to the regional knowledge.

The characterisation of regional tourism can be used as a baseline, to be compared with alternative impact scenarios. Such comparisons could directly support and reflect specific policy decisions. Cities concentrate considerable services, accommodation facilities, restaurants, economic activities and jobs directly or indirectly dependent on tourism. They represent a relevant share of EU tourism expenditure, just behind coastal areas. Although a decrease is foreseen in the number of travellers preferring these areas, cities cultural and architectural heritage, transportation systems, higher teleworking and digitalisation shares will continue contributing to their attractiveness and help the post-pandemic recovery.
The Urban Data Platform Plus (UDPplus) represents a concrete response to the demand for better knowledge on cities in the context of the Urban Agenda for the EU. As a key component of the joint JRC-DG REGIO initiative “Knowledge Centre for Territorial Policies” (KCTP), UDPplus is a main reference for statistical and modelled indicators at urban level in Europe and beyond. Thanks to its compliance with the European Interoperability Framework, it aims at becoming the de facto standard tool for urban and regional data collection, dissemination and visualisation. Each individual municipality or region is invited to contribute to the wealth of information available in UDPplus by sharing locally gathered indicators with the platform.

https://urban.jrc.ec.europa.eu

STRAT-Board is an interactive mapping tool providing a state of play on how the EU support urban and territorial development under cohesion policy. So far, STRAT-Board has mapped more than 1600 strategies – Sustainable Urban Development (SUD), Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) and Community-led Local Development (CLLD) implemented during 2014-2020 across Europe.

https://urban.jrc.ec.europa.eu/strat-board/
Cities in the World

Urbanisation has been hotly debated, but a global definition of urban and rural area was missing. Cities in the World provides a new perspective on urbanisation by using the new definition of cities, towns and rural areas that the Statistical Commission of the United Nations endorsed in March 2020. It highlights the advantages and disadvantages of living in cities, compared to towns and rural areas. On the one hand, this includes better employment opportunities as well as better access to healthcare and education; on the other, it includes a higher cost of living, air pollution, congestion and crime.

Read More

Who owns the city? An exploratory research activity on the financialisation of housing

This report summarizes the main findings from Citown, an exploratory research activity on the financialisation of housing in EU cities. The study includes three seven city case studies; a detailed analysis of Amsterdam housing data, and descriptive data on institutional investment in multifamily property. Over the past years investors have been increasingly active on urban housing markets, using housing as a vehicle for wealth and investment, rather than considering it a social good, which is assumed to have a negative effect on housing affordability, especially for lower and middle classes. While most findings confirm this assumption, the causality is complex, with a myriad of factors directly or indirectly influencing and reinforcing each other. The study further indicates that to better understand financialisation, as well as its consequences, more (harmonised) data are needed.

Read More
The Horizon Europe Cities Mission on “100 climate-neutral cities by 2030 - by and for the citizens” report

A mission on Cities in this area will help us meet the goals and targets set out by international policy frameworks such as the COP21 Paris Agreement, the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (notably SDG11), the Urban Agenda for the EU and the Habitat III New Urban Agenda as cities play a key role in all of them. The Cities Mission implementation is fostered and supported by a concrete citizen engagement, through co-creation and co-design, towards the global goal of having cities become carbon-neutral by 2030 and take big steps towards the overarching EU Green Deal goal: making Europe a climate-neutral continent.

The document can be found [here](#).

JPI Urban Europe is preparing a European partnership between European Commission and Member States on Driving Urban Transitions Towards a Sustainable Future. The proposal has been approved by the EC and is available [here](#). Based on a public consultation and stakeholder dialogues three innovation pillars are proposed focusing on Positive Energy Districts and Neighbourhoods, the 15 Minutes City and Downsizing District Doughnuts. Cities interested in these topics are highly invited to engage in the further development process of these programmes.
PAST EVENTS

23 - 24 June 2020 — Virtual Expert Group Meeting on monitoring and reporting of the urban and territorial dimensions of SDGs

The JRC is continuing its collaboration with DG REGIO and UN-HABITAT on the project URBAN 2030. The meetings brought together experts from UN-Habitat, World Bank, World Health Organization (WHO), the European Commission, European Environment Agency (EEA), tech firms and citizen science groups to discuss the indicators on Air quality (SDG 11.6.2) and Public spaces (SDG 11.7.1). Experts agreed that national or even city averages are not precise enough to render the unequal distribution of exposure of certain population groups to air pollution and that official and crowd sourced data can be complementary. As for public spaces, experts agreed on the appropriateness to report separately about public green spaces, streets and pedestrian areas and on the necessity to scale up the production of harmonised data to improve policy responses.

10 July 2020 Online training at the HLPF 2020 - Tools for SDG Localization

The training session focused on one of the main tools developed by the JRC for the SDG localisation: the recently published "European Handbook for SDG Voluntary Local Reviews", which describes the main steps for setting up local SDG monitoring systems. The training was attended by more than 200 people.

The recording is available here and presentations here.

FORTHCOMING ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

New H2020 project on urban regeneration starting

The EU-funded T-Factor project started last week of June. The project challenges the ‘meanwhile’ in urban regeneration - i.e. the time in between the approval of a regeneration project, and the actual opening of the regenerated areas years later. The project considers early-stage regeneration projects in historical areas in Amsterdam, Bilbao, Kaunas, Lisbon, London and Milan, involving frontrunner creative and cultural hubs across Europe and beyond to leverage their knowledge and experiences into the pilot regenerations. Other two H2020 projects on urban regeneration will start next September.
UBEIS Fair, Brno. From 2 to 4 September 2020, the city of Brno hosts: “URBIS Smart City Fair”. This event will be held as an opportunity to present technologies, visions and solutions in key urban domains such as environment, digitalization, services and citizens’ engagement.

More information [here](#).

CoP-CITIES Plenary Meeting—End September 2020
Virtual update meeting, details to follow

European Week of Regions and Cities
5-22 October 2020

More information [here](#)

Some sessions of potential interest, more details to follow in September newsletter:

City Science Initiative (CSI): The CSI session, in the third week, will showcase science-based results and contributions achieved by several EU cities in green-related domains.

A Handbook to boost your urban strategy: The workshop, in the second week, will present the Handbook of Sustainable Urban Development Strategies published by the JRC in collaboration with DG REGIO.

European Territorial Trends: The workshop, in the second week, supports the production of knowledge and evidence base to highlight strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of European regions and cities, in support to the refinement of EU policies.

Monitoring the SDGs in EU Cities: Discussion on the use of the European Handbook for SDG Voluntary Local Review (VLRs), published by the JRC, with the support of DG REGIO.

Lonely places: The Introduction of an original perspective to the study of places, instrumental to address territorial inequalities.

Understanding present and future public service delivery costs in European regions: The discussion will focus on topics related to health and education services covering different characteristics of urban and rural areas.
FORTHCOMING ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS (CONT.)

3rd, 11th, 13th, 17th, 19th and 25th November 2020 UDN webinars: Six building blocks to sustainable urban development

The Urban Development Network (UDN) webinars are aimed at providing insights on how to tackle the main challenges policy-makers face when designing and implementing sustainable urban development strategies as supported by Cohesion Policy. The webinars are based on the findings of the “Handbook of Sustainable Urban Development Strategies” published by the Joint Research Centre in collaboration with DG REGIO. Following the structure of the Handbook, the UDN webinars will be composed of six sessions, each one focusing on one of the building blocks of the EU integrated approach to urban development, namely: strategic dimension, territorial focus, governance, cross-sectoral integration, funding and finance and monitoring.

JPI Urban Europe. On Nov 12, 2020 the 5th Policy Conference of JPI Urban Europe will facilitate an exchange on how to bring knowledge and evidence on urban transformation into action. As Europe is now working on an ambitious strategy to become the first climate-neutral continent, we need to move from strategy to reality. This is why JPI Urban Europe is facilitating an exchange with change makers, researchers and urban actors on how to build capacities and mobilise all actors for experimentation and urban transformation. More details here.

Open for submissions: European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards 2021

The European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards 2021 recognise outstanding projects, research, skills and education initiatives applied to heritage, including urban heritage, historic buildings and city historic centres. In 2021, up to 30 remarkable heritage achievements from all over Europe will be awarded. Of those, up to 4 winners will receive a Grand Prix with a monetary award of 10,000 Euro. In addition, two ILUCIDARE Special Prizes supported by EU Horizon 2020 will also be awarded for excellence in heritage-led innovation and international relations. The Awards were launched in 2002 supported by the Creative Europe and are run by Europa Nostra ever since. Watch video

Entry forms and guidelines: www.europeanheritageawards.eu

Deadline for submissions: 1 October 2020