



The urban dimension of the Juncker priorities

Quick Scan on the role of EU capital cities regarding
the EU Urban Agenda

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1 Summary

Cities are key to achieving the EU 2020 goals: 72% percent of the European population live in cities, cities are the engines of economic growth and innovation, but cities are also facing great challenges concerning sustainable transport, environment and inclusion. Because of the important role of cities, EU policies and initiatives have a strong impact on cities. At the same time, the contribution of cities is crucial in achieving EU objectives including the priorities of the Juncker Commission.

However, when taking a closer look at the Juncker Priorities, the conclusion is clear: the role of cities in the realisation of the priorities is not explicitly addressed. Here lies an important task for cities and their stakeholders. There is a need for all urban actors – local authorities, regions, national governments and the European Commission – to make the urban dimension of the Juncker Priorities more explicit and link them to specific urban issues, in order to better identify how cities can contribute to these priorities. With this aim the city of Amsterdam has commissioned a Quick Scan on the urban dimension of the Juncker Priorities and the role of EU capital cities regarding the EU Urban Agenda.

The Quick Scan focuses on capital cities for several reasons. First, capital cities are of great importance for economic growth and sustainable development in Europe. Even more important is the responsibility of capital cities to represent the interests of other national cities in the international arena. In addition, capital cities can catalyse economic, social and sustainable development because of their administrative, economic and symbolic power within their national and international contexts. Furthermore, due to their geographical distribution and differences in size they reflect the wide variety of cities within the EU: ranging from big cities like London (8.6 million inhabitants) to small- and medium-sized cities like Valetta (7,000 inhabitants).

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1.1 How can capital cities contribute to the Juncker Priorities?

The Quick Scan discerns seven Juncker Priorities with a clear urban dimension, that is: a new boost for jobs, growth and investment; a connected digital single market; an energy union and fighting climate change; a deeper and fairer Internal market; an area of justice and fundamental rights; a new policy on migration; and a union of democratic change.

Regarding the priority of **Jobs, Growth and Investment**, cities can contribute to the priority by promoting the integration of services, by offering tailored individual support to the unemployed and by providing incentives for employers to help unemployed (back) into work. Cities can be more effective in doing so if they would get better access to existent funds and if they would find ways to increase their organising capacity to make better use of existing financial instruments. For example, with regard to the European Fund for Strategic Investment (EFSI) it is important that local authorities can make use of these funds and cities are eligible in a fully transparent project selection.

Cities can contribute to a connected **Digital Single Market** by maximising the growth potential of the digital economy and by using technology and innovation to improve resource efficiency and the quality of life. Up-scaling of local projects, taking place in smart cities like Vienna and Helsinki, and experimenting with smart solutions can strengthen the local contribution to this priority. Collaboration of

the capital cities with the Commission to experiment with new models of procurement and funding to promote the uptake of smart city solutions would be mutually beneficial.

By up-scaling best practices cities can also contribute to the priority of the **Energy Union and Climate Change**. For example, some capital cities – Copenhagen, Ljubljana and Oslo for instance – have well-developed plans to become a circular and green economy. Furthermore, the EU capital cities are prepared to help achieve EU energy and climate objectives by searching for innovative solutions in the built environment and urban transport. Capital cities can also take up leading roles in smart solutions for spatial adaptation and soft mobility.

Cities should also be stronger involved in the debate at EU level regarding the **Internal Market**, as they play a crucial role in accommodating (the impact of) the departure and arrival of mobile EU citizens. Cities can support the Commission's ambition by developing adequate policies for these mobile EU citizens and to contribute to countering its negative consequences. For example, like Third-Country Nationals, mobile EU citizens can benefit from integration support. However, both categories are strictly distinguished in EU policies. This hinders the development of integration services of new inhabitants at local level. Thus there is a need to investigate obstacles for using European funds for integrated services for both categories at local level.

The role of local authorities regarding the priority of **Justice and Fundamental Rights** is self-evident. Many capital cities like Amsterdam are on the frontline in addressing the root causes of radicalisation and extremism. Capital cities are implementing preventive measures, including raising awareness of first line practitioners, methods to engage with individuals at risk, combating exclusion, discrimination and polarisation. Such well-developed policies should be more shared and scaled up on national and European level.

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It has long been recognized that cities are the places where cultural diversity flourishes and where migrants are received from all over the world. The European Agenda for **Migration** can benefit from closer involvement of cities in finding adequate responses to the current refugee crisis. Local practices on reception, housing, language courses and integration are not sufficiently shared. Capital cities, in cooperation with the Commission, are well positioned to support this exchange of experiences and development of standards.

A closer cooperation between the Commission and EU capital cities will strengthen the **Democratic Change** agenda aimed at making the EU more democratic. Cities are best placed to provide information on on the ground problems with the implementation of EU legislation. They can also give practical input for the testing phase of the urban impact assessment of Commission proposals.

1.2 Conclusions

The concluding section summarises the results of the Quick Scan. Although there is no explicit attention for the urban dimension in achieving the Juncker Priorities, the Quick Scan has shown that cities can – and should – play an important role in contributing to the priorities. Cooperation between the Commission and cities will add value by promoting both the Commission's ambitions and by addressing specific challenges in European cities relating to the achievement of the EU priorities. The annual Conference of the Mayors of the EU Capital Cities is an excellent opportunity that can be used for this

purpose: a stakeholder group of mayors that puts political issues on the agenda and discusses the concrete contribution to the EU Urban Agenda. At the same time the EU Capital Cities should also broaden their strategy at EU level by establishing a stronger alignment with the Commission and with sectoral DGs.

The Mayors of the EU Capital Cities should take advantage of the current political context which explicitly recognises cities as key partners and maximises the contribution of cities to the Juncker Priorities. The Quick Scan presents five routes for improving cooperation between the Commission and the EU Capital Cities. The recommendations to EU capital cities consider both the Juncker Priorities and the EU Urban Agenda. These five are: 1) participate actively in the EU Urban Agenda partnerships, 2) use the EU Capital Mayors' conference to strengthen the ties with DG REGIO and the launch of closer cooperation on concrete issues, 3) invest in broadening the cooperation with other sectoral DGs within the Commission, 4) start cooperation with the Commission on specific issues linked to the Work Programme and Juncker Priorities, and 5) strengthen the exchange of knowledge and experience between capital cities and other cities.

2 Introduction

The 10 key political priorities of the Juncker administration for the 2014-2020 planning period form the cornerstone of the Juncker Commission's Working Programme. If one takes a closer look at these priorities, one cannot but conclude that they are "spatially blind": they do not address the role of cities in the realisation of the priorities. Here lies an important task for cities and their stakeholders.

There is a need for cities and urban stakeholders to identify the urban dimension of the Juncker Priorities, to link them to specific urban issues, and to prioritise them by importance and urgency. The main objective of the current Quick Scan is to support European cities in this process. Given the political importance of the EU Capital Cities, this Quick Scan focuses on the EU capital cities but it intends to have a much wider impact affecting all EU cities.

Europe is a highly urbanised continent. As a result, EU policies and initiatives have a strong direct or indirect impact on cities. Conversely, the contribution of cities is crucial in reaching EU objectives, including the Europe 2020 targets and the ten priorities of the Juncker Commission. Gradually, awareness has grown about the need for improving the coordination of EU sectoral policies with an urban dimension. The recent Riga Declaration towards the EU Urban Agenda of 10 June 2015 constituted a major step in this direction.¹ The European Ministers responsible for territorial cohesion and urban matters provided political support for developing an EU Urban Agenda to improve the coherence of EU actions towards local authorities. At around the same time, the European Commission's DG for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO) published its Staff Working Document: "Results of the public consultation on the key features of an EU Urban Agenda".² This document summarises the outcomes of the 2014 public consultation among stakeholders across Europe on the scope of the future EU Urban Agenda. The consultation confirmed the demand to establish such an agenda.

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The intention of both the European Commission and the Dutch Presidency of 2016 is to jointly develop an EU Urban Agenda in order to improve and coordinate existing initiatives within the Commission, and to promote closer cooperation on urban issues between all levels of governance: EU, national, regional and local. It also implies better collection and monitoring of data with regard to the urban impact of EU initiatives, and to address bottlenecks in the implementation of EU directives at all relevant governmental levels, in accordance with the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality.

The Quick Scan addresses the urban dimension of the priorities of the Commission and links them to the EU Urban Agenda. By doing so, the specific position and political power of capital cities are taken into account. Capital cities are of great importance for the economic growth and sustainable development at the regional, national and European level. Due to their geographical distribution, the capital cities reflect the wide variety of cities within the EU: ranging from London to Valetta and from Sofia to Amsterdam. In terms of both geographic spread and size the differences are quite significant. Furthermore, capital cities can catalyse economic, social and sustainable development because of their administrative, economic and symbolic power within their national and international contexts. For these

¹ [Declaration of Ministers towards the EU Urban Agenda](#), Informal meeting of EU Ministers for Territorial Cohesion and Urban Matters, 10 June 2015, Riga.

² European Commission, [Commission Staff Working Document on Results of the public consultation on the key features of an EU Urban Agenda](#), SWD (2015) 109 final/2, 27 May 2015, Brussels.

reasons capital cities in general and the Mayors of EU Capital Cities network in particular are “strategic partners in shaping the European Union’s future regional and urban policy”.³ Against this background it is important to explore the opportunities to strengthen the cooperation between the Commission and the capital cities on the urban contribution to realise the Juncker Priorities as well as how EU programmes related to these priorities can help cities to strengthen their capacity to tackle urgent societal challenges.

The Quick Scan is intended to support the city of Amsterdam in its preparation for the 2016 Conference of Mayors of the EU Capital Cities and the European Commission. More in specific, this paper provides ideas and input as to how the EU Capital Cities can take up a role in advancing an EU Urban Agenda with a limited number of urgent topics in close cooperation – or partnership – with the Commission. With this aim, the Quick Scan provides an analysis of the urban dimension of the Juncker Priorities. Section 2 starts with a general description of the political priorities of the Juncker administration, to be followed by subsections examining the urban dimension of the seven selected Juncker Priorities. The priorities are discussed in the Commission’s original order; this does not imply that the first priority is the most important. Key questions in the analysis are:

- What will be the urban impact of the initiatives and activities related to the Juncker priorities? How will cities be affected by the elaboration and implementation of the priorities?
- a. How can cities contribute to realising the priorities? And how can EC programmes better facilitate cities in promoting the EU priorities and addressing related urgent challenges?
- b. How to strengthen the cooperation between the Mayors of EU Capital cities and the Commission with the aim of both promoting the Commission’s priorities and strengthening the capacity of (capital) cities to address related urgent urban challenges?

The analysis is mainly based on desk research of documents of the Juncker Commission, of related Commission programmes and of position papers of key urban stakeholders (esp. EUROCITIES and CoR) on the urban dimension of the Juncker Priorities and related Commission programmes. The third section outlines the EU Urban Agenda, which is still work in progress but offers interesting perspectives for EU cities, including capital cities.

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The results of the Quick Scan will be summarised in the concluding section. This chapter will also set out some strategic ideas how to strengthen the urban dimension in the Juncker Priorities in collaboration between the Commission and the Mayors of EU Capital Cities within the context of the EU Urban Agenda. The conclusions of the desk research are supplemented by insights obtained by interviews with selected key experts within the Commission.⁴

³ Mayors of the EU Capital Cities, Vienna Declaration, “[A strong voice in Europe](#)”. 21 April 2015, Vienna.

⁴ We have interviewed – by phone - 7 staff members of the Commission who work in the Juncker Cabinet, the Secretariat General, DG Mobility and Transport (Research and Innovative Transport Systems), DG Energy (New energy technologies, innovation and clean coal), DG Research and Innovation (Directorate Climate Action and Resource Efficiency), DG Migration and Home Affairs and DG Regional and Urban Policy. Their suggestions have been included in the analyses of the priorities (section 2) and in particular in the concluding chapter with policy recommendations.

3 The Juncker priorities with an urban dimension

Jean-Claude Juncker became European Commission President on the basis of a 10-point programme (Political guidelines). These principles will guide the European Commission's work in the current mandate, including the Commission's 2015 Work Programme "A New Start".⁵ The Commission focuses on ten policy areas in order to make a difference in these areas, especially in the field of jobs and growth. Six Vice-Presidents in addition to the EU's High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy are responsible for the Juncker Priorities and for steering and coordinating the work undertaken by all of the Commission in the key areas of the chosen priorities. The Commission wants to focus on the "big things" where there is clear EU added-value (the priorities) and to drive change in these areas, by working better together with co-legislators but also by reaching out beyond the Brussels base to regain the trust of the EU citizens. The Better Regulation agenda – linked to the priority of Democratic Changes – is a key point here: doing the big things better, while refraining from actions that do not match the Commission's objectives and/or which will yield no results.

Seven of the ten Juncker Priorities have a clear urban dimension. In the Staff Working Document on the EU Urban Agenda, the Commission discerns five priorities with a clear urban dimension. In our view, two other priorities also have an urban dimension: the fourth and seventh, and more in particular the urban impact of intra-EU mobility (the Internal market priority) and countering violent radicalisation and terrorism (Justice and fundamental rights priority). Thus, the seven priorities to be analysed in this report are:

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- A new boost for Jobs, growth and investment (Juncker priority 1);
- A connected Digital Single Market (priority 2);
- An Energy Union and climate change policy (priority 3);
- A deeper and fairer internal market (priority 4);
- An area of justice and fundamental rights (priority 7);
- A new policy on migration (priority 8);
- A union of democratic change (priority 10).

Departing from the cross-sectoral political priorities the Commission will work out proposals for initiatives which should ultimately lead through the usual institutional way to concrete policy actions, directives and legislation.⁶ The initiatives will be elaborated by and become part of the Commission programmes and implemented by the relevant sectoral DGs of the Commission. Moreover, most of the actions within the Juncker Priorities build on ongoing policies and actions rooted in the sectoral programs of the Commission. For this reason, we will have a look at the urban dimension of relevant EC programmes in analysing the urban dimension of the priorities.

⁵ EC, Commission Work Programme 2015 *A New Start*, COM (2014) 910 final.

⁶ See the *Annexes* to the Work Programme 2015 for the new initiatives, etc. See the EC site on the [10 priorities](#) for more information on the activities related to the priorities. The roadmaps of new initiatives are published on the [Better Regulation website](#). The [ZEI Monitor EU Progress 2014-2019](#) of the Center for European Integration Studies (ZEI) of the University of Bonn monitors the implementation of the 10 Juncker priorities.

The following subsections will provide a review of each of the seven Juncker Priorities that have been identified as particularly relevant for cities, including capital cities.

3.1 Jobs, growth and investment

“My first priority as Commission President will be to strengthen Europe’s competitiveness and to stimulate investment for the purpose of job creation”, stated Mr. Juncker in his Political Guidelines (of 15 July 2014). With this priority, the Commission intends to promote economic growth combined with an increase in the numbers of jobs, and to restore investment levels to overcome the crisis. The three pillars of the jobs and growth strategy are: (1) structural reforms to put Europe on a new growth path; (2) fiscal responsibility to restore the soundness of public finances and financial stability; and (3) investment to kick-start growth and sustain it over time.

Cities are the engines of growth and innovation in Europe, as repeatedly underlined by the Commissioner for Regional Policy.⁷ It is for this reason that it is important to involve cities more closely in the implementation of the Jobs, growth and investment priority. The Investment Plan for Europe is at the heart of the Commission’s strategy. Its three objectives are:

- Removing obstacles to investment by deepening the single market;
- Providing technical assistance to investment projects;
- Making smarter use of new and existing financial resources.

Existing resources include the structural funds of the Cohesion policy. In the programming period 2014-2020 nearly €80 billion of the European Regional Development Fund “will be invested, directly or indirectly, in urban areas”.⁸ The Investment plan provides additional finance for new investments mobilised through the new European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), set up within the European Investment Bank (EIB). The fund, operational since 1st July 2015, is intended to mobilise €315 billion in private and public investment across the EU. It should mobilise additional investments in areas including infrastructure, education, research, innovation, renewable energy and energy efficiency. In short, activities that contribute to the realisation of the other Juncker Priorities; these are also areas where cities can make a substantial contribution. EFSI will target projects that will, among other objectives, promote job-creation, long-term growth and competitiveness.⁹ The Fund is intended to support risk finance, and not only in infrastructure projects. An Investment Project Portal has been opened to facilitate project identification by investors and an Investment Advisory Hub will be launched shortly to assist project promoters. Furthermore, the use of innovative financial instruments will be promoted to increase the impact of the EU funds.

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As part of its broader effort to fight unemployment, the Commission plans a package of measures to support Member States in getting people, especially the longer term unemployed and younger people, into work and developing a skilled workforce. The Commission started a public consultation on service provision to long-term unemployed (February-May 2015). The Commission was particularly interested in public authorities’ opinions on the integration of services, tailored individual support, and incentives for employers to hire long term unemployed people. These are precisely the services that are developed and implemented in cities. The role that cities can play in tackling long-term unemployment is

⁷ See for instance the statement by Commissioner Crețu in the European Parliament, 08-09-2015: [announcements](#).

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ European Commission, [Fact Sheet: The Investment Plan for Europe: Questions and Answers](#), 20 July 2015.

acknowledged by the Commission in the background document. EUROCIITIES, in its contribution to the consultation, advocates to formalise this crucial role of cities “through a specific commitment from European and national bodies to involve cities in the design, implementation and evaluation of the range of measures needed to address long term unemployment; it should also be enabled through a dedicated allocation of resources, such as specific earmarking in the European Social Fund”.¹⁰

With regard to youth unemployment, the Commission proposed to deliver one billion euro in EU funding in 2015 of the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) funding for 2014-2020, to help Member States get up to 650,000 young people into work. April 2015, this proposal was approved by the European Parliament. In its Declaration on Work of February 2015, EUROCIITIES already called for an accelerated action to address youth unemployment. Many Member States have so far not made use of the resources the Commission has made available to combat youth unemployment (ESF and YEI). According to EUROCIITIES, “the Commission should examine the possibility of making part of these funds directly available to the major cities. YEI funds should also be available to address unemployment in deprived neighbourhoods of our cities”. Furthermore, fighting the high levels of youth unemployment could be better tackled through improved partnerships at local, national and EU level.¹¹

More in general, EU legislation and implementation in many areas will have a major impact on jobs, growth and innovation. Also the revised Circular Economy package, to be presented at the end of 2015, will contribute to “green growth” (The 2015 Work Programme of the Commission) and job growth in this sector.

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The initiatives associated with the Jobs, growth and investment priority will have a direct or indirect impact on many cities, by broadening investment opportunities which will foster economic growth and employment in cities and by supporting national and local policies to help young people and long term unemployed onto the labour market. Although cities are not mentioned in “An Investment Plan for Europe”,¹² they implement most public investments in the EU.¹³ Commission President Juncker stated in an interview that “local and regional authorities will be instrumental in the implementation and success of the plan”¹⁴. This contribution of cities can be strengthened by closer involvement of cities in the design, implementation and evaluation of policies and measures with an urban dimension. The role of cities in furthering the objectives of the Commission with regard to jobs and growth can be strengthened in various ways, for example:

- With regard to the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) and the boost of the European Structural and Investment Funds it is important that also local authorities can make use of these funds and enlarge the possibilities for cities to use them. It should be ensured that “cities are eligible in a fully transparent project selection”.¹⁵ Furthermore, it is advisable to link the Juncker Fund more closely to the objective of employment. This is possible by making job creation an explicit criterion for project selection.¹⁶

¹⁰ EUROCIITIES, Fighting long-term unemployment: The contribution of European cities, May 2015.

¹¹ EUROCIITIES [Press release: EU urban agenda for better regulation and better results](#) - EUROCIITIES at 2nd CITIES Forum and [EUROCIITIES Declaration on work](#).

¹² “An Investment Plan for Europe”, COM (2014) 903 final.

¹³ [CoR news](#): The EU invests in new technologies for education to combat unemployment.

¹⁴ [CoR news](#), interview with Juncker: What we need is not more public money, but smarter investment.

¹⁵ Energy Cities, [Energy Cities' position Juncker Investment Plan, Position paper](#), Brussels, February 2015.

¹⁶ [European Fund for Strategic Investments Five points from an urban perspective](#), EUROCIITIES Position Paper, 18-03-2015.

- Cities need technical assistance to utilise these funds. For this reason, the European Investment Advisory Hub (EIAH) is welcomed by EUROCITIES¹⁷: “Support for the use of technical assistance for project structuring and use of innovative financial instruments is much needed in cities”. It is important to involve cities in advance in the development of the EIAH services, to achieve that the EIAH will be designed to meet their needs.
- Not all funds to combat youth unemployment (ESF and YEI) are used by Member States. Therefore, it is advisable that the Commission examines the possibility of making part of these funds directly available to cities. Furthermore, the EFSI, as well as other European (YEI) and national funds, should better recognise and enable “the integrated approach at city level, linking investments with skills development and jobs”.¹⁸ To utilise the possibilities of EFSI and other funds and to develop joint, multi-level policies to support an integrated approach at local level, “effective partnerships are needed between cities, national governments, the Commission and EIB in implementing EFSI”.¹⁹
- Since January 2014, Member States have the legal obligation to create a working partnership with local and regional governments during the programming cycle of cohesion policy.²⁰ It is advisable that Member States “involve their main cities in strategic policy development and programming, especially with regards to the National Reform Programmes and the partnership agreements that determine the investment priorities for the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF).”²¹ Capital cities should take up an active role.
- The central role of local authorities in tackling unemployment, including long-term and youth unemployment, has been recognised by the Commission. It would be helpful to organise a dialogue and cooperation between the Commission and local authorities to improve local strategies to fight long-term and youth unemployment and to better channel financial resources to cities with the aim of improving local policies.

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3.2 Digital single market

The Commission sees the digital single market as one of the key factors in creating a new dynamic across the European economy, ensuring new jobs, growth, innovation and social progress. All aspects of the economy are becoming digital and Europe intends to be a frontrunner of this digital revolution. The main goal is to tear down regulatory walls and move from 28 national markets to a single one, bringing down barriers “offline” when using online tools and services.²²

The initiatives from the European Commission on the Digital Single Market (DSM) package are aimed at 3 tracks:

- Better access for consumers and businesses to digital goods and services across Europe;
- Creating the right conditions for digital networks and services to flourish;
- Maximising the growth potential of the digital economy, notably by promoting standards that are interoperable.²³

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid*; Mayors of the EU Capital Cities, Vienna Declaration, “A strong voice in Europe”. 21 April 2015.

¹⁹ EUROCITIES Position Paper, see note 16.

²⁰ CEMR, *Cohesion policy – Planning of EU structural funds: Is Local Government a real partner?* 15.05.2014.

²¹ EUROCITIES, *An EU urban agenda. Engaging cities for a smart, sustainable and inclusive Europe*, June 2014.

²² Commission Work Programme 2015, “A New Start”.

²³ New initiatives linked to this priority are: (1) Digital Single Market (DSM) Package: to ensure that consumers enjoy cross-border access to digital services, create a level-playing field for companies and to create the conditions for a vibrant digital economy and society. Scheduled

Of these three tracks, the third one is most relevant from the perspective of local authorities. The second track is primarily a task for the Commission; better regulation and conditions throughout Europe would be beneficial to support activities being done by cities that relate to the third track.

In his Mission Letter to Commissioner for Transport,²⁴ Violeta Bulc Mr. Juncker refers to cities, and more in specific smart cities. Cities in general and smart cities in particular are crucial for furthering the objectives of a modern infrastructure for optimal connectivity and for sustainable transport that contributes to greenhouse reduction targets: “A modern transport policy can make a key contribution to the sustainability of our environment, to help Europe achieve its climate and energy objectives and to the development of smart cities.”

The Commission’s Communication “A Digital Single Market Strategy for Europe” is focused on Member States, industries, SMEs and consumers. Nevertheless, digital services are concentrated in cities and local authorities can utilise smart technologies to improve public services, transportation and quality of life of the inhabitants. Environment and mobility are the most prevalent characteristics in European cities that have implemented a smart cities concept. The involvement and role of local governments, the private sector and civil society and their collaboration varies by type of initiative and city. Local authorities are in general important drivers of intelligent traffic systems and participation platforms. Successful smart cities projects require a strong local government partner as a key player for strategy and co-funding and to embed it in a comprehensive city vision, including alignment with city innovation and development strategies.²⁵

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Issues related to the Digital Single Market are proposed as a priority for the EU Urban Agenda in various consultations. Smart city concepts are key in maximising the growth potential of the digital economy. It is clear that the success of the Digital Single Market priority will depend on the contribution of cities to maximise the growth potential of the digital economy. A close cooperation between the Commission and cities can help to facilitate the digital economy. Local projects can be up-scaled by creating uniform conditions throughout Europe. As underlined by EUROCITIES, cities are leaders of innovation in areas such as creation, co-creation, and adoption of open platforms, open data, implementing integrated solutions, and citizen engagement. Smart cities, or “ever smarter cities”, are using technology and innovation to improve resource efficiency and the quality of life. And urban planning considerations should be taken into account in any new smart city solution. Several cities, sometimes in collaboration, have invested in open data and in becoming a transparent government. This knowledge can be used to support the activities of the Commission to maximise the growth potential of the digital economy which focuses on free flow of data and the European Interoperability Framework (EIF) for public services.

New digital tools can be used in smart cities to empower, engage with and capitalise on citizen participation and to experiment with innovative forms of co-creation to mobilise stakeholders to help them meet new urban challenges. Smarter cities can encourage this using new governance and transparency tools such as living labs, tools to integrate citizen input in urban planning, and spaces and

for 2015-2016. And (2) European data protection reform and the Regulation on a Connected Continent: simplification of regulation, pushing roaming premiums out, consumer protection.

²⁴ Mission Letter to Violeta Bulc, Commissioner for Transport, 1 November 2014.

²⁵ EP 2014: <http://www.smartcities.at/assets/Publikationen/Weitere-Publikationen-zum-Thema/mappingsmartcities.pdf>.

support for start-ups. “A digital single market can grow only if local authorities boost bottom-up innovation in EU citizens’ and workers’ daily lives.”²⁶

Most cities already have a lot of experience with smart cities. Knowledge and experiences gained from participation in projects of the Commission (Horizon2020) or JPI Urban Europe is and will be valuable, as well as results and knowledge from the Smart Cities and Communities European Innovation Partnership (EIP SCC).²⁷ A report by the European Parliament on mapping smart cities in the European Union shows an impressive number of smart city initiatives in different Member States that will help to meet the objectives of Europe 2020 growth strategy, including the capital cities of Estonia (Tallinn) and Finland (Helsinki).²⁸ At the moment it is the larger cities that are leading and set an example, while a national strategy is often not yet in place.

The global initiative of Open Agile and Smart Cities (OASC) and the Digital Single Market strategy can mutually benefit from each other. The Open & Agile Smart Cities (OASC) initiative, signed by 31 cities from Finland, Denmark, Belgium, Portugal, Italy, Spain and Brazil, aims to kick-start the use of FIWARE standards to foster the development of smart city applications and solutions. FIWARE is an innovative, open cloud-based infrastructure for cost-effective creation and delivery of Future Internet applications and services. The vision of the Open & Agile Smart Cities initiative is to create an open smart city market based on the needs of cities and communities. Cities need interoperability and standards to boost competitiveness by avoiding vendor lock-in, comparability to benchmark performance, and easy sharing of best practices. They also need solutions that can be implemented with respect for local practices and job creation. This global initiative is highly relevant for the Juncker Commission's objectives of a Digital Single Market, as underlined by Commissioner Mr. Oettinger.²⁹

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The contribution of cities to this priority can be further reinforced by working together on a number of themes, for instance:

- A Digital Single Market will impact all thematic priorities (of the Commission) directly or indirectly. It would be valuable to investigate where the impact will have the most effect. Cities and the Commission would need to cooperate to make the impact more visible.
- Precisely because of the link with other agendas – including the one of sustainable development – there is a need for the development of cross-sectoral financial instruments. Cities are the places where policies for different sectors come together and are integrated. Their knowledge is important for the development of smart regulation and funding at EU level. This requires a closer cooperation.
- New models of investment and funding are needed to promote the uptake of smart city solutions. One important action of the Smart cities and Communities initiative relates to developing new procurement procedures and strategies of public-private cooperation for innovative solutions for the complex city needs that are relevant at pan-European scale.³⁰

²⁶ [Interview with CoR President Markkula](#) 19/06/2015.

²⁷ The Commission outlined the importance of ICT for smart growth in cities, especially with reference to the EIP SCC in a letter of commissioners Hahn to the mayors of the EU capital cities in 2013.

²⁸ European Parliament's Committee on Industry, Research and Energy, [Mapping Smart Cities in the EU, January 2014](#). And for instance, the Dutch Digitale Steden Agenda (Digital urban agenda, DSA) is looking for digital solutions on a wide variety of topics. Cities need to support and coordinate national and regional initiatives on digitising the industry, in order to succeed in creating critical mass and attracting private investment. See also the UK [Smart City Background paper](#) from October 2013; it opts to explore the opportunities in Smart Cities.

²⁹ [Mr Oettinger's speech at Net Futures 2015](#), 25 March 2015.

³⁰ EU Smart Cities: Priority Areas: [Business models, procurement and funding](#).

Capital cities can collaborate with the Commission to experiment with new models of procurement and funding.

3.3 Energy union and climate

The priority of the Energy Union focuses on the development of a Strategic Framework for the Energy Union for 2030. This will include actions ensuring energy supply security, a fully-integrated international energy market, enhancing energy efficiency, decarbonising the economy and promoting research, innovation and competitiveness in the energy field. The framework builds on the 2020 climate and energy package and is in line with the longer term perspective set out in the Roadmap for moving to a competitive low carbon economy in 2050, the Energy Roadmap 2050 and the Transport White Paper. The binding targets set in the “2030 Climate and Energy Policy Framework” are (i) reducing domestic greenhouse gas emissions by 40% until 2030 compared to 1990, (ii) increasing the share of renewables to 27% , and (iii) improving energy efficiency by at least 27% compared to “business-as-usual” projections of the future energy demand.³¹

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Cities have an important role to play in meeting the key targets for the year 2030. Mr. Juncker recognised in the State of the Union 2015 that cities are key for realising climate change objectives: “The fight against climate change (...) will be won or lost on the ground and in the cities where most Europeans live, work and use about 80% of all energy produced in Europe”.³² Thus, involvement of cities is indispensable for an Energy Union that has “citizens at its core, where citizens take ownership of the energy transition”.³³ Cities are the level of government closest to 75% of Europe’s citizens. In the Energy Union Package, A Framework Strategy for a Resilient Energy Union with a Forward-Looking Climate Change Policy³⁴, the Commission refers to the role of local authorities, mostly in combination with the national and regional authorities, with regard to objectives related to energy efficiency, protecting vulnerable consumers (energy poverty) and furthering the Energy Union’s objectives in general.

Smart cities play a key role in the Energy Union strategy, to facilitate the active consumers and to enhance energy efficiency and renewable energy production and consumption that are central to the energy transition. Maroš Šefčovič, EC Vice-President for the Energy Union, stated: “Cities are a conduit for our transition to an energy efficient, sustainable, and prosperous future. The work of the Smart Cities is important for achieving progress on energy efficiency in and outside the EU. If we want cities to take ownership of our energy transition, we need to streamline and simplify EU’s urban initiatives”. The European Innovation Partnership on Smart Cities and Communities has supported innovative measures that help to deliver on local climate commitments through close cooperation between cities, industry and researchers.

The EU Energy and Climate policy will impact on two urban domains in particular: the built environment and urban transport. Regarding the energy efficiency of buildings, the Energy Union has to address issues both at the level of individual buildings, such as insulation, and the level of districts, such as

³¹ EC, DG Energy, 2030 Energy Strategy.

³² [State of the Union 2015](#).

³³ EC, [Delivering a New Deal for Energy Consumers](#), Brussels, 15.7.2015, COM (2015) 339 final.

³⁴ [EC, Energy Union Package, A Framework Strategy for a Resilient Energy Union with a Forward-Looking Climate Change Policy](#). Communication from the Commission, Brussels, 25.2.2015, COM (2015)80.

efficient district heating and cooling. Given the right framework, cities are best placed to improve energy efficiency at both levels, and to integrate building and district measures into city-wide energy strategies. The 2013 Urban Mobility Package of the Commission reinforces its supporting measures to make urban transport sustainable. Two main EU policy lines to support sustainable urban transport are:

- stimulate the development of an alternative fuel infrastructure (Clean power for transport package) for vehicles powered by these alternative fuels;
- mobilising Intelligent Transport Systems in EU cities.

There are already various European initiatives in this field to generate and exchange knowledge and experiences, including the Civitas initiative for clean and better transport in cities and the Polis network of Cities and Regions for Better Transport.

The Covenant of Mayors and the Mayors Adapt are important initiatives of representatives of cities and towns that support the European energy and climate objectives. The Covenant of Mayors has successfully engaged the local level, with over 6,000 signatories committed to reducing their greenhouse gas emissions by an average of 28% by 2020. In the State of the Union 2015 Mr. Juncker acknowledges the important contribution of cities to fight climate change. He asked President Schultz of the European Parliament to host the Covenant of the Mayors meeting in the Parliament 15 October 2015 that brought together more than 5,000 European mayors: "They have all pledged to meet the EU CO² reduction objective". This initiative is an important political signal for the Commission, that European goals are supported and addressed at local level.

Research and innovation are crucial for energy and climate solutions. The EU Research and Innovation programme Horizon 2020 offers many possibilities to urban stakeholders for funding innovative actions with regard to climate adaptation and sustainable cities. Many cities are involved in consortia that carry out projects. One problem cities regularly face is that demonstration projects, which are expected to realise and test new technological and non-technological solutions, include non-research parts that have to be financed by other resources than EU research funds. This may create unexpected barriers for transnational demonstration projects, for all partners of the consortium have to find additional national resources for the non-research part. These kinds of projects are important for innovation in cities, thus more attention is needed to overcome problems with combining various EU and national funds.³⁵ Cities and city networks should be actively involved in advisory groups and consultations on the EU research programme and agenda, to express their interests and to identify bottlenecks.

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In the context of the development of the EU Urban Agenda, themes of energy efficiency, climate adaptation and low carbon cities are often mentioned as promising priority themes for improved coordination between the European, national and local authorities. There are reasons to develop a stronger urban dimension of EU energy initiatives, to better coordinate initiatives and financial means on energy and climate, to exchange knowledge across all levels of governance, and to improve regulations on air pollution and energy efficiency.³⁶ New developments have to be anticipated, for instance, the fact that renewable energy production becomes more localised due to new technological developments. The contribution of cities to the Commission's objectives in this field can be further strengthened by working together with the following initiatives or networks:

- Renewing and prolonging the Covenant of Mayors. 15 October 2015, the EU Institutions strengthened the alliance with cities through a New Covenant of Mayors for Climate and

³⁵ Source: interview with a policy staff member DG Research and Innovation.

³⁶ EUROCITIES statement on the Energy Union Package, May 2015.

Energy. Three new pillars are: the 2030 horizon, integration of mitigation and adaptation and the international dimension (the COP21).

- Renewing the European Innovation Partnership on Smart Cities and Communities (EIP-SCC).
- Coordinating initiatives through the EU Urban Agenda for instance by streamlining EU initiatives that aim to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from cities, such as the Covenant of Mayors and the Smart Cities EIP. And coordinating work on sustainability indicators between the smart cities activities and follow up actions of the 7th Environmental Action Programme.
- Collaborate in pilot projects on some pressing challenges with a clear local dimension and a clear EU competence. For instance, sustainable urban transport issues, such as the ‘last mile’ challenges in logistics. Due to the increase in online purchases, parcel transport from local parcel delivery centres to customers has increased tremendously. This is the least efficient link in the supply chain, and it implies challenges of delivering goods to dense urban areas leading to congestion and pollution. Cities, the Commission and other stakeholders could jointly try to find and test creative solutions.³⁷
- Cities should utilise the possibilities to involve actively in the agenda setting on research and innovation at EU level, to ensure that urgent urban challenges are met by research programmes, and that account is taken of bottlenecks in the participation of local governments in projects.

Cities themselves, such as Amsterdam, Berlin, Copenhagen and Paris, already have their own energy agenda, since a lot of the energy demand and climate effects are present in cities. Support for cities from the Commission could be on:

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- Creating better regulation on air pollution. Effects on a local level can be caused transnational. More European source policy could help to guarantee the emission reduction. Air pollution does not stop at the border and European regulations are needed to meet the goals set out by Europe. A relevant note on this matter is that environmental and health organisations across Europe have expressed grave concerns over proposals for a trade-off scheme for pollutants in the Clean Air Package, for it risks rendering the National Emissions Ceiling (NEC) Directive completely unworkable.³⁸ This might also impact the new package on the Circular Economy.³⁹
- Cities need support from regional and national governments and the European Union. Some cities have ambitious plans to promote the transition to the circular economy, but they are in need of support by other authorities. The new improved Circular Economy package of the Commission could offer this support, and stimulate and facilitate this transition. The capital cities could examine together with the Commission issues regarding European funds, regulations and lack of knowledge that hinder the transition to a circular city.
- Climate adaptation is an international task. Water is an important aspect in climate adaptation. Amsterdam for example has a leading role in spatial adaptation (part of the Delta Strategy of the Netherlands). Cities can contribute to the European task to coordinate and regulate the actions set out for climate adaptation.⁴⁰

³⁷ Theme suggested in interview with staff member of DG Move.

³⁸ [Flexibility mechanism on air pollutants will undermine drive towards better regulation](#) .

³⁹ EurActiv.com, [Commission plans to ditch circular economy and air pollution rules](#) , 11 Dec 2014.

⁴⁰ Gemeente Amsterdam, *Europastrategie Amsterdam: Focus in bestuurlijke prioriteiten 2015-2018*.

3.4 Internal market

It is the ambition of the Commission to promote a deeper and fairer internal market with a strengthened industrial base. Upgrading the Single Market will create more opportunities for people and businesses in all Member States. European Commission activities related to the priorities of the Digital Single Market, Energy Union and the Economic and Monetary Union will help to reduce obstacles for cross-border activities. Deepening the internal labour market is part of this endeavour; it implies: “removing remaining obstacles to free movement of workers and gradually elaborating the common set of minimum rights that apply to all workers across the EU.”

Here we will focus on the Commission’s objectives that pertain to one of the most debated issue of the free movement of workers and services, which have a clear urban relevance. The Commission aims to (1) encourage workers to take up jobs in other EU countries to fill vacancies and meet the need for special skills; and (2) to review the Posting of Workers Directive and ensure its strict implementation, to prevent social dumping. The Commission is currently working on a Labour Mobility Package that will be presented towards the end of 2015. The package aims at supporting labour mobility and tackling abuse by means of better coordination of social security systems, the review of the Posting of Workers Directive and an enhanced European Employment Service (EURES).

In recent years, intra-EU labour mobility is vigorously debated in many Member States because of the supposed abuse of social security by what some people perceive as “benefit tourism” or “poverty migration”. Especially the mobility of Roma EU citizens has raised concerns in some EU destination countries, while in the media discussions these citizens were stereotyped (Roma people begging or being involved in illegal activities). Cities are searching, often very pragmatically, for solutions to these kinds of problems. In this they need the support of other governments, of regions of origin, and of national and European authorities. For example, with regard to the Roma, the EU has long stressed the need for better Roma integration and supports the development of national strategies while offering financial support. How to use this support to finance actions with regard to mobile Roma EU citizens? The Commission is confident to uphold the principle of free movement. Since 2013 it also acknowledges some of the adverse consequences, including the abuse of the right of free movement. In its 2013 “Communication on free movement of EU citizens and their families” the Commission announced actions to fight this abuse and fraud. Recently, the Commission launched a consultation on EU Social security coordination, as a part of the Labour Mobility Package, to gather views (until 7 October 2015) on the functioning of the current coordination rules in several cross-border situations with regard to family benefits, unemployment benefits and posted workers. This consultation should inform the elaboration of the ambitious aim of the Commission “to develop a European pillar of social rights” to protect the workers in the EU (Juncker in his State of the Union 2015). Good co-ordination in this area and preventing of abuse is important for cities, in which many mobile EU citizens settle temporarily or for cities in border regions with many cross-border commuters.

The Commission recognises the important role of local authorities in accommodating the arrival of mobile EU citizens. In this line, one of the initiatives is to promote the exchange of best practices amongst local authorities to address social inclusion challenges. The new Commission’s ambition to promote a fairer internal market and the review of the posting of workers Directive can be viewed as a follow up.

Intra-EU mobility is regularly proposed as an issue for the EU Urban Agenda, for instance in the Commission's consultation. The survey by the Dutch government on EU Urban Agenda themes (July-August 2015) showed that several sending regions with a huge outflow of workers to other Member States are struggling with its social impact, including maintenance of public services adapted to the new demographic situation, prevention of down-skilling and maintaining contacts with citizens abroad. Receiving cities are facing different problems, including lack of knowledge of numbers, composition and future plans of residents from other Member States, the need for adequate housing for temporary migrants and an infrastructure for their reception and integration. For example, Dutch local governments identify labour mobility within the EU as one of the key issues of EU relevance, because of the labour market and social impacts.⁴¹

The Commission's initiatives to further a deeper and fairer internal market will have an impact on cities, and cities can support the Commission's ambition by developing adequate policies for mobile EU citizens and to counter negative consequences. Closer cooperation of the Commission and cities could improve the management of EU-mobility with regard to specific challenges, for instance:

- Stronger involvement of cities in the debate at EU level. Cities of origin and of arrival are directly confronted with both the benefits and costs of the free movement of citizens, workers and services. "In particular when concentrated geographically, it may also create disruptions".⁴² Therefore it is important that they are involved in the dialogue on the consequences of intra-EU mobility flows and in the collection of relevant data (data collection and analysis is one of the objectives of the Labour Mobility Package).
- Improve access of local actors to EU funding to develop services for mobile EU-citizens as well as to facilitate data exchange on these mobile citizens to enable the development of an integrated approach to intra-EU mobility on local level.
- Many mobile EU citizens have similar integration needs to Third-Country Nationals (TCNs), especially those that stay for a longer period of time or settle. However, both categories are sharply distinguished in EU policies and different DGs have competence here. This hinders the development of integrated reception services and language courses for the different categories of new (temporary or permanent) inhabitants at local level. There is a need to investigate obstacles for using European funds for integrated services for both categories at local level.
- Cities in sending and receiving regions could work together to develop policies to counter down-skilling of EU mobile workers, in collaboration with other stakeholders. For instance, collaboration is possible on improving the international recognition of formal and informal skills, offering relevant information, personalised counselling and language courses before departure and after arrival in the destination region, and supporting measures for the successful labour market reintegration of returners.⁴³

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⁴¹ Steunenbergh, B., M. Akerboom, P. Hutten (2015), [De wisselwerking tussen Europa en Nederland: een verkenning van de Europese politieke prioriteiten en hun invloed op de verschillende overheden in Nederland](#). Leiden University.

⁴² Commissioner Marianne Thyssen, [Intervention of Commissioner Marianne Thyssen at 3rd Labour Mobility Congress](#), Cracow 23 April 2015.

⁴³ [EUKN, Internal mobility in the EU and its impact on urban regions in sending and receiving countries](#), EUKN research paper to support the Lithuanian EU Presidency 2013.

3.5 Justice and fundamental rights

The EU is not simply a common market for goods and services. Europeans share values that are spelled out in the EU Treaties and the Charter of Fundamental Rights. The Commission wants to uphold the shared values, the rule of law and the fundamental rights in the European Union as an area of justice and fundamental rights. It will continue to fight against cross-border crime and terrorism, promote equality of opportunity and fight all forms of discrimination. “Dramatic events unfolding this year such as the attacks in Paris, Copenhagen and most recently on the Thalys cross-border train confront Europe with challenges that defy the capacity of individual countries to act alone and require a coordinated and collaborative European approach” (State of the Union 2015). Not only countries, but also cities are affected, for radical groups and threats are concentrated in cities.

April 2015, the Commission presented “The European Agenda on Security” for the period 2015 – 2020.⁴⁴ It reviews ongoing actions and identifies new actions with the aim of developing an effective and coordinated approach at EU level to tackle threats of (1) terrorism and foreign fighters, (2) organised cross-border crime and (3) cybercrime. Here we focus on the issue of countering violent radicalisation and terrorism. The priority of tackling terrorism and foreign fighters includes the need “to address the root causes of extremism through preventive measures”, including prevention of radicalisation by “promoting common European values, fostering social inclusion, enhancing mutual understanding and tolerance” (The European Agenda on Security).

Preventive policies to counter radicalisation are a typical task for local actors and cities. This is also recognised by the Commission, for the main initiative of the Commission in this field relate to exchange of local knowledge and experiences. The Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), an EU-wide umbrella network launched in 2011, that enables the exchange of experiences and practices between first liners from different Member States, thus local practitioners including teachers, police officers and youth workers engaged in preventing radicalisation and violent extremism. The Commission is now in the process of setting up a RAN Centre of Excellence (RAN CoE), an EU knowledge hub concerned with policy advice and research guidance for all EU Member States. RAN will extend its anti-radicalisation work with Turkey, the Western Balkans, the Middle East and North Africa. In addition, there is the Policy Planners’ Network on Countering Radicalisation and Polarisation (PPN), made up of the security and integration ministries of ten European countries and Canada. It provides a network for streamlining and systematising the sharing of information on policy, practical implementation and best practice. It holds regular meetings for discussion, exchange and presentations from experts.

Given the security-urgency, European support for exchange of knowledge and experiences among local authorities and policy makers should be strengthened. RAN cannot fulfil this task, as its primary task is to support first-line local practitioners. Effective local approaches require coordination with regional, national and even European authorities. Also local policymakers have a need to learn from each other in order to develop appropriate responses when confronted with departure of radicalised inhabitants as foreign fighters, or more in general, to develop a broad approach to counter radicalisation that balances preventative and repressive measures.

⁴⁴ EC, [The European Agenda on Security, COM \(2015\) 185 final](#), 28 April 2015

Many countries and cities in Europe are confronted with comparable challenges of radicalisation and polarisation. Some municipalities are already well on their way in developing and implementing prevention policies (esp. municipalities with foreign fighters who left for Syria), while other municipalities have to make a start. Countries and cities have a lot to learn from each other. Mutual learning and exchange of experiences will help policymakers and practitioners at local level to get a better understanding of preventive approaches and measures to counter forms of radicalisation. Preventive policy also includes a policy to address the breeding ground for polarisation and radicalisation, by combating exclusion and discrimination, and providing opportunities for groups that feel excluded. Moreover, European and national policy frameworks to counter radicalisation will support the development of effective local policies.

Some possibilities for cooperation between the Commission and the Mayors of EU Capital Cities are:

- The RAN network is focused on facilitating the exchange of knowledge between practitioners. But also policymakers should be supported in the development of appropriate policies, by national and European governments. Local policies can be strengthened by facilitating knowledge exchange between cities, by making EU funding accessible and by improved coordination between all levels of government.
- There are already some relevant international initiatives, for instance the Strong Cities network⁴⁵, a global network of local authorities united in building resilience to prevent violent extremism. It would be beneficial if the European Commission would consider how it can collaborate with these and other networks in order to address the challenges of violent radicalisation and extremism.

3.6 Migration

Migration is currently the major challenge the EU is facing. The “refugee crisis” is “the first priority today”, stated Mr. Juncker in his State of the Union 2015. The current crisis management activities of the Commission are based on a proposal for a comprehensive approach to the issue of migration and asylum. On 13 May 2015, the European Commission presented “A European Agenda on Migration”.⁴⁶ This Agenda outlines the immediate measures and emergency responses that will be taken in order to respond to the current crisis situation in the Mediterranean, but it also defines a new strategic approach to manage migration collectively in the medium to long term. It builds on previous policy initiatives, including an EU single permit for immigrants working and residing in the EU (Blue Card) and earlier actions on creating a Common European Asylum System and on improving the integration of Third-Country Nationals (TCNs). A common strategy in this area has become urgent and thus the Commission quickly came with various proposals for measures to elaborate the Agenda on Migration.

Proposed actions include increasing the capacities and assets for the Frontex joint operations; a temporary distribution mechanism for persons in need of international protection within the EU; an EU-wide resettlement scheme for displaced persons in need of international protection in Europe; and working on a possible operation in the Mediterranean to dismantle traffickers' networks and fight smuggling of people. In addition, the Commission proposes four pillars to manage migration better in the medium and longer term:

⁴⁵ <http://strongcitiesnetwork.org/>

⁴⁶ A European Agenda on Migration, COM (2015) 240 final.

- Reducing the incentives for irregular migration;
- Border management: saving lives and securing external borders;
- A strong common asylum policy;
- A new policy on legal migration: by modernising and overhauling the Blue Card scheme, by reprioritizing integration policies, and by maximising the benefits of migration policy to individuals and countries of origin.

“We need a new policy on migration that will address skill shortages and the demographic challenges the EU faces and that will modernise the way the EU addresses these challenges” (Mission letter of Mr Juncker to Commissioner Avramopoulos). Funding for actions of Member States that support these aims are possible by the Asylum Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), while also the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF) can be of particular importance.

The Agenda on Migration underlines that “All actors: Member States, EU institutions, international organisations, civil society, local authorities and third countries need to work together to make a common European migration policy a reality” and to restore confidence in the ability of Europe to address migration collectively. The Commission refers to the high “volumes of arrivals “in the EU and that “the capacity of local reception and processing facilities is already stretched thin”. Finally, the Commission mentions the role of local authorities in effective integration policies: “Although the competence lies primarily with Member States, the European Union can support actions by national governments, local authorities and civil society engaged in the complex and long term process of fostering integration and mutual trust.”

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EUROCITIES and the Committee of the Regions (CoR) support the Commission in this venture, but also demand attention for the voice of local and regional authorities who face the reality of migration every day and who will have to implement many of the policies.⁴⁷ Because “cities are often at the forefront of issues of migrant reception and integration” and they “are responsible for providing the basic protection and services that newly arrived migrants urgently need”, they should be supported in this role and be closer involved in finding adequate responses to the current asylum crisis.⁴⁸ At the same time, cities experience the opportunities of migration for cities, countries and the EU. “If on the one hand regions and towns have to cope with considerable difficulties in terms of reception and management of migrants, on the other hand the EU also needs immigrants in order to respond to demographic changes and potential labour market shortfalls.”⁴⁹

Concrete issues on where cooperation between the Commission and the cities may add value, by promoting both the Commission’s ambitions as well as addressing specific challenges in European cities, are:

- The Commission, together with Member States, can support cities in finding solutions to the problems they face with regard to basic reception and protection of asylum claimants, but also with the integration of resettled refugees and legal labour migrants. Conversely, cities can

⁴⁷ Markku Markkula, Why we all need an EU migration agenda. Markku Markkula is president of the European Committee of the Regions. [EurActiv, Opinions on EU Priorities 2020](#), 9 June 2015. Anna Lisa Boni, Cities are at the forefront of the asylum crisis. Anna Lisa Boni is secretary general of EUROCITIES. [EurActiv, Opinions on EU Priorities 2020](#), 25 June 2015.

⁴⁸ Interview Boni, see note 47.

⁴⁹ Interview Markkula, see note 47.

support the Commission's ambition to develop and promote a new EU Agenda on migration, by promoting adequate reception and integration services. Specific challenges in European cities should be explored further.

- Sudden, high volumes of arrivals of asylum seekers and irregular migrants (even if only for temporary stay, in transit) have to be solved by local authorities and NGOs, when adequate national responses or policies are lacking. Both the exchange of experiences and the availability of funding can support local authorities in addressing these challenges. Furthermore, it would be effective to include local authorities, being responsible for social services and social cohesion, along national authorities in the list of bodies eligible for emergency financial assistance.⁵⁰ A structured dialogue between cities, Member States and the Commission on better social and economic integration of asylum seekers and refugees locally may help to prevent integration problems in the longer term.
- The Mayors of the EU Capital Cities can cooperate with the Commission and other stakeholders to improve exchange of knowledge on practices and experiences with regard to services for refugees. The relatively new situation (new destinations, new countries of origin, higher numbers) requires new approaches and alternative solutions. The capital cities could partner with smaller cities for support and advice.
- Increasing the possibilities for recruiting foreign highly-skilled labour to fill skill gaps is considered an urgent issue by local governments in larger cities. There is a need to build a genuine common labour immigration policy, and those affected should be involved in developing this policy, including cities. Cities are natural partners in this field, because most highly-skilled workers settle in larger cities and because universities and international industries that attract these workers are located in cities.
- “Our migration policy will succeed if underpinned by effective integration policies” for legal migrants and refugees, states the Commission in its European Agenda on Migration. Part of the opposition of Member States, especially in Eastern Europe, stems from the fears among local populations and authorities that immigration inevitably creates societal problems. Many of these Member States have little experience with policies of reception and integration. By supporting local authorities and other stakeholders in their efforts to promote integration and by the exchange of good practices, the presumption that migrants only cause problems can be partly rebutted. Capital cities who are experienced in this area can play a role, by sharing knowledge with other capital cities and other cities which have less experience with the reception and integration of migrants. Cooperation with the Commission would be valuable, to support knowledge exchange and to provide information on access to funds.
- A relevant initiative in this field is the Integrating Cities Charter, launched in 2010 by EUROCITIES to encourage local authorities to ensure equal opportunities and non-discrimination for all citizens in their roles as policymakers, service providers, employers and buyers of goods and services. This initiative could be broadened. Its endorsement by other cities will give a political signal.

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3.7 Democratic change

The Juncker Commission intends to improve the openness, transparency and efficiency of the Commission and its work. It plans to make the European Union more democratic by bringing it closer to

⁵⁰ EUROCITIES, *statement on asylum in cities*, 12 May 2015

the citizens. The Commission is committed to improve the relationship with the European Parliament, as well as to working more closely with national parliaments. One of its main ambitions is to design EU policies and laws in such a way that they achieve their objectives in the most efficient and effective way. This reform is labelled “better regulation”. It relates to the pledge of Mr Jean-Claude Juncker to refocus the EU executive on the bigger political issues and to cut regulations seen as unnecessary or hampering business activity. He appointed his First Vice-President Frans Timmermans to watch over the subsidiarity principle, whereby the EU should only intervene where it can act more effectively than national or local governments.

May 19th 2015, Vice-President Timmermans presented the Commission’s Better Regulation Agenda⁵¹, a comprehensive package of reforms covering the entire policy. The strategy will:

- Increase transparency in the EU’s decision-making process.
- Improve the quality of laws through more impact assessments and consultations.
- Promote reviews and revamps of existing laws.
- Turn the Commission’s Impact Assessment Board into an independent Regulatory Scrutiny Board, with half of members recruited from outside the executive.

The ultimate aim is to produce EU policies that achieve their objectives in the most effective and efficient way. The Better Regulation Package will be directly implemented by the Commission. The Commission will open up its policy making process to further public scrutiny and input, and there will be new opportunities for stakeholder comments throughout the entire policy lifecycle.⁵² Better regulation can only work if it is a shared commitment of the Commission, Council and European Parliament. Therefore, the Commission submitted as well a proposal for a new Interinstitutional Agreement (IIA) on Better Law-making to the Parliament and Council, aiming for agreement before the end of 2015.

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The last ten to fifteen years, legal safeguards, procedures and tools such as consultations, impact assessments and evaluations are implemented to help ensure that new European legislation is not unnecessarily costly or entails excessive reductions of the policy space of national and local governments.⁵³ The new Commission’s Better Regulation agenda is a next step in this process, and builds on and strengthens the Commission’s Regulatory Fitness and Performance Programme (REFIT), that commits the Commission to make EU law simpler and to reduce regulatory costs. One of the Better Regulation aims is to increase the transparency and the quality of the impact assessment process. The Impact Assessment Board will be replaced by the Regulatory Scrutiny Board, which is comprised of three ‘internal’ members and three ‘external’ members. Furthermore, it is proposed to conduct impact assessments throughout the legislative process, not just during the Commission’s preparation work. Further, the Commission will launch a new web platform for anyone to provide their view on EU legislation.⁵⁴

To ensure that EU action is effective, the Commission assesses the expected and actual impacts of policies, legislation and other important measures during the different stages of the policy cycle – from planning to implementation, to review and subsequent revision. The Commission acknowledges that it is important that all stakeholders, including urban ones, should be able to express their views. Right

⁵¹ [EC, Better regulation](#)

⁵² http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/index_en.htm and http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4988_en.htm

⁵³ Lange, E.E. de., R.A. Wessel, N.S. Groenendijk (2015) *Europa als kans: Better regulation voor Nederlandse medeoverheden*. University of Twente.

⁵⁴ ZEI insights No. 23 June 2015, *In pursuit of better regulation*.

from the very start of an initiative, they have the possibility to provide feedback on roadmaps and impact assessments. The Commission also actively consults citizens and other stakeholders during the preparation of all major policy initiatives. In addition, stakeholders can react on Commission proposals once they have been adopted. The participation of regional and local authorities in the EU's policy cycle has been formalised in the involvement of the Committee of the Regions (CoR) as an official advisory body. Influence by local authorities is possible through direct responses to consultations, or indirectly through network organisations (EUROCITIES for instance) or platforms (like CIVITAS).

Commission impact assessments assess the potential economic, social and environmental consequences of proposed options for action. Since 2013, it was optional to assess the territorial – including urban – impact of proposed options for actions. The Better Regulation Guidelines of May 2015 attached the assessment of territorial impacts more directly to the impact assessment instruments, as one of the tools.⁵⁵ Assessing the territorial impact of proposals may be relevant if the policy may produce heterogeneous territorial impacts or the impacts associated with the problem are heterogeneously distributed across the Union. Currently, DG REGIO together with the Joint Research Centre is testing possibilities for an urban impact assessment as a specific type of territorial impact assessment. The test is applied to two Directives with an urban impact: the Blue Card Directive that is under review and the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive which is now evaluated by the Commission. DG REGIO explores in this test phase appropriate methodologies that are available (the ESPONs quick scan tool is used), which data are required and whether they are available, how much time it takes and whether it is compatible with the principle of proportionality. In May 2016 it will report on the outcomes of this test phase.

26 Until now the Better Regulation agenda focuses on reducing the burden for businesses and citizens. However, there is a growing awareness at EU-level that local authorities should be involved in EU policy making to achieve its objectives in the most effective and efficient way. This is reflected in the development of an EU Urban Agenda and in testing the possibilities of an urban dimension of territorial impact assessments.

Local authorities will benefit from higher quality standards for EU legislation and reduced administrative burdens. Better Regulation may imply also risks for local authorities. It can lead to more room for local tailor-made solutions and reduced implementation costs, but also to a shift of administrative burdens from businesses to governments because of the REFIT programme.⁵⁶

In the context of the REFIT and Better Regulation programmes of the Commission, there is a lot of attention for EU regulations that hamper cities in the development and implementation of integrated, tailor-made policies. The Dutch knowledge centre *Europa decentraal*, established by the Dutch local and regional governments' representative bodies and the Dutch Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations, aims to explain European legislation to local and regional governments. The centre has made an inventory of problems of local and regional policy makers with EU legislation and bottlenecks in this legislation. A recent survey found that public procurement rules, state aid rules, and subsidies of the European Regional Development Fund are regarded as the most costly and restrictive by Dutch

⁵⁵ Better Regulation "Toolbox", Tool #29, European Commission.

⁵⁶ Lange, E.E. de., R.A. Wessel, N.S. Groenendijk (2015), *Europa als kans: Better regulation voor Nederlandse medeoverheden*. University of Twente.

local governments.⁵⁷ A survey by the Dutch government on EU Urban Agenda themes among UDG members (July-August 2015) showed that many governments across Europe face comparable problems with EU regulations. For instance, problems with EU rules that limit state aid were mentioned several times, because they may hinder the development of policies to secure affordable housing for vulnerable groups. At the same time this survey shows that it is difficult for Member States to give concrete examples of bottlenecks because their distance to the local reality.⁵⁸ Partnerships of the Commission with national and local authorities within the framework of the EU Urban Agenda could provide more evidence on concrete problems with EU regulations.

The involvement of local authorities in improving regulation at EU-level is still limited, although they can provide the Commission with valuable information, for instance evidence for impact assessments and difficulties experienced with implementing regulations. Along these lines, cooperation between the Commission and Capital cities could focus on:

- Involvement of Mayors of EU Capital Cities in the examination of the Commission on how to assess the impact of proposed and existing EU initiatives on local governments. More in general, EU policy-making – by the Commission, the European Council and the European Parliament – would be more effective if it would be receptive to input from decentralised levels of government when developing and deciding on new policies.
- Cities, city networks and also the Mayors of EU Capital Cities have to consider how to deal with the new opportunities offered in the Better Regulation package. Consultation with relevant stakeholders can provide important information, for instance on the impact at local level. However, local stakeholders have limited capacity and resources for participation in these consultations. Cooperation between capital cities or with other cities would provide more capacity and resources for participation. Many sectoral DGs of the Commission – that have to carry out the impact assessments – lack information on urban data as well as contacts with local authorities. Therefore, it is advisable that (capital) cities expand their contacts to sectoral DGs. Moreover, close involvement in the administrative policy development process at EU-level does not guarantee that the voices of cities will have impact. This also requires that local authorities engage with their own Member States in the Council of Ministers and Members of the European Parliament, in an attempt to influence the outcomes of the political process. Here, too, capital cities can play a major role.
- Better regulation is one of the requirements of good governance. This cross-sectoral principle should receive due attention in all EU Urban Agenda partnerships on priority themes, for instance on sustainable urban transport, air quality and affordable housing. It would be effective if the Mayors of EU Capital Cities would provide capital cities involved in the EU Urban Agenda partnerships with practical examples of bottlenecks from other cities in this network.

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⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ The incoming Dutch EU Presidency has set up a Working Group on Better EU Regulation, however only Member States, the Commission and CoR are involved, not local authorities.

4 EU Urban Agenda

There is a link between the Juncker Priorities and the EU Urban Agenda, as mentioned in the previous sections of this Quick Scan. The EU Urban Agenda is still work in progress. It is a process that has to be developed further in close cooperation between cities and other urban stakeholders – Member States, the European Commission, other European institutions and networks, private sector and citizen organisations – in conformity with the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality.

The EU Urban Agenda's main objective is to improve coordination horizontally between EU sectoral policies, and vertically among European, national and local governments. There is a need for better coordination on the urban dimension and impacts of EU policies and regulations, getting better regulation and legislation, making financial instruments accessible to cities and strengthening the exchange of knowledge. The agenda aims to initiate and facilitate concerted actions in a limited number of cross-sectoral priority themes to be identified in close cooperation among the Commission, Member States, cities and other stakeholders.⁵⁹ An EU-wide consultation process among Member States (organised by the incoming Dutch Presidency) and workshops with a wide variety of urban stakeholders (organised by DG REGIO) has led to a list of priority themes for the EU Urban Agenda approved by the DGs responsible for Urban Development on 21 October 2015. The priority themes were selected on the basis of four general criteria. They should:

- Have the support by Member States, European Commission and cities;
- Address major challenges faced by cities;
- Call for integrated action at the EU-level and multi-level cooperation;
- Potentially produce concrete results in a reasonable timeframe.

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In addition, the priority themes are supposed to respond to a set of cross-cutting issues. The following cross-cutting issues have been identified:

- Good urban governance;
- Governance across administrative boundaries and inter-municipal cooperation;
- Sound and strategic urban planning;
- Integrated approach;
- Innovative approaches (incl. social innovation);
- Impact on societal change;
- Challenges and opportunities of small- and medium-sized cities;
- Urban regeneration;
- Adaptation to demographic change;
- Availability and quality of public services of general interest;
- International dimension: link with the New Urban Agenda (Habitat III) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN.

Eventually, twelve priority themes were adopted at the level of the DGs responsible for urban development. At the Ministerial Meeting in Luxembourg the Ministers will be asked to acknowledge the following themes:

⁵⁹ Riga Declaration (2015), [Declaration of Ministers towards the EU Urban Agenda](#), Informal meeting of EU Ministers for Territorial Cohesion and Urban Matters, 10 June 2015, Riga.

- Jobs and Skills in the local economy;
- Urban poverty;
- Housing;
- Inclusion of migrants and refugees;
- Sustainable use of land and nature-based solutions;
- Circular economy;
- Climate adaptation;
- Energy transition;
- Urban mobility;
- Air quality;
- Digital transition;
- Innovative and responsible public procurement.

The full EU Urban Agenda will be part of the “Pact of Amsterdam”, to be adopted at the Ministerial Meeting on 30th May 2016. The selected themes will constitute the basis for the thematic partnerships of Member States, the Commission, cities and other urban stakeholders. The partnerships will start with more in-depth explorations on which are the most pressing issues to be addressed, how to address them and by whom. In addition, the Innovative Actions, which will kick off at the end of 2015, will also be centred around the priority themes of the EU Urban Agenda. This forms new opportunities for cities to participate.

In preparing the Pact of Amsterdam, pilot partnerships will be established to collect practical experience with the partnerships. At least two pilots will start, on Urban Poverty and Housing. The Mayors of EU Capital Cities intend to take advantage of this opportunity to strengthen the cooperation with the Commission to address key urban challenges related to the EU priorities. Active participation in the EU Urban Agenda partnerships is an opportunity for capital cities, but it is advisable to consider also alternative forms of collaboration with the Commission.

5 Conclusions and strategic recommendations

This Quick Scan has analysed the Juncker Priorities with the aim of identifying the urban dimension of the priorities of the Juncker Commission. This concluding chapter will start with a summary of the main findings of the analysis to highlight for each of the priorities their potential urban impact and the way cities can contribute to them. Subsequently, we will propose strategic recommendations on the way the European Commission and EU Capital Cities can mutually benefit from a closer cooperation in realising the Juncker Priorities' objectives.

5.1 Main insights on the urban dimension of the priorities

Looking at the seven Juncker Priorities that have a clear impact on local policies one can only conclude that there is no *explicit* attention for their specific urban impact nor for the way cities can contribute to the realisation of these priorities. This does not imply that the Commission is ignorant of the important role of cities in implementing the policy priorities. As the interviewed staff members of the Commission underlined, the Commission is aware that European policy and legislation affects all policy levels, including local policy actors. However, it does imply that the Commission lacks a strategic view on the role of cities in furthering the Commission programme and its priorities.

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The first Juncker priority of **Jobs, Growth and Investment** is a case in point. The Commission's Work Programme does not mention the vital role of cities in job creation, economic growth and local investments. Cities are quintessential in any EU strategy focused on job creation, local innovation, investment and skills development. They contribute to this priority by promoting the integration of services, by offering tailored individual support to the unemployed and by providing incentives for employers to help unemployed (back) into work. The Commission's Work Programme does not mention possible ways in which cities can contribute to the targets of this specific priority. Cities can be more effective if they would get better access to existent funds and if they would find ways to increase their organising capacity to make better use of existing financial instruments. Larger cities such as capital cities could be very useful here since they usually have the required resources to benefit from existing EU tools and instruments such as ESF. Existing support now remains sometimes unutilised. In addition, capital cities have the political power to raise concrete challenges at the appropriate political level (regional, national, and European). The instrumental role of cities in the deployment of the Juncker Priorities is certainly acknowledged by the Commission. It is no surprise that this priority is also a priority theme within the EU Urban Agenda. Cities, including capital cities, can – or perhaps even should – play an active role in these partnerships.

The role of cities pertaining to **Digital Single Market** can be found in promoting standards that are interoperable, such as the utilisation of smart technologies (smart cities), digital services and the integration of different sectors. This is the only priority referring to cities, i.e. as smart cities. However, cities and local authorities are not mentioned in the Commission's Communication "A Digital Single Market Strategy for Europe". Nevertheless, it is clear that the success of this strategy will depend on a close cooperation between the Commission and cities. Cities can contribute to this strategy by maximising the growth potential of the digital economy, using technology and innovation to improve

resource efficiency and the quality of life and to use technology to empower, engage with and capitalise on citizen participation. Cities and the Commission can collaborate to strengthen the local contribution to this strategy by working towards the up-scaling of local projects, and experimenting with innovative ways of investment and procurement for smart solutions that are both tailor-made and relevant at pan-European scale. Here again, there is a clear link with the EU Urban Agenda priority theme of Digital transition, offering an opportunity for close involvement.

For the **Energy Union and Climate** priority, cities are key since they take ownership of the energy transition by enhancing energy efficiency, renewable energy production and consumption and sustainable urban mobility. The EU Capital Cities can contribute by searching for innovative solutions for meeting European energy and climate objectives in the built environment and urban transport and by taking up leading roles in smart solutions for spatial adaptation and soft mobility. The Mayors of the EU Capital Cities can collaborate with the Commission to explore how European funds, regulation and knowledge can be better used for realising circular cities, after the publication of the new Circular Economy package by the Commission, late 2015. Some capital cities, like Copenhagen, have well-developed plans to become a circular and green economy. Collaboration with the Commission, as well as with other cities and national governments, offers possibilities for upscaling. Links with the EU Urban Agenda priority themes can be explored, especially with regard to themes such as the circular economy, climate adaptation and energy transition.

The ambition of the Commission to further a deeper and fairer **Internal Market** affects all levels of government, including cities. The Commission is currently working on a Labour Mobility Package that aims at supporting labour mobility and tackling abuse by means of better coordination of social security systems, the review of the Posting of Workers Directive and an enhanced European Employment Service (EURES). Cities can support the Commission's ambition by developing adequate policies for these mobile EU citizens and to contribute to countering its negative consequences. Cities of arrival and of departure should be stronger involved in the EU dialogue on labour mobility, for they play an important role in accommodating (the impact of) the departure and arrival of mobile EU citizens. Many cities are developing policies for mobile EU citizens by providing – in collaboration with other stakeholders – housing for temporary migrants and an infrastructure for reception and integration. Exchange of new concepts of housing for temporary migrants or approaches to address negative consequences of labour mobility like poverty migration could be strengthened by support of EU Capital Cities in collaboration with the Commission. Possibilities within EU Urban Agenda exist with regard to the priority themes of housing and public procurement.

The EU is not simply a common market for goods and services, as the Commission underlines; it wants to uphold the shared values, the rule of law and the fundamental rights in the European Union as an area of **Justice and Fundamental Rights**. Here, the significant role of local authorities is self-evident. One of the aims of the Commission's European Agenda on Security is to address the root causes of extremism through preventive measures. Many cities, and especially capital cities, are on the frontline in addressing the root causes of radicalisation and extremism and implementing preventive measures, including raising awareness of first line practitioners, methods to engage with individuals at risk, combating exclusion, discrimination and polarisation, and education of young people on citizenship, democratic values and tolerance. The Commission already supports the exchange of experiences and practices to counter radicalisation between local practitioners. What is missing is a platform to exchange local approaches and policies between local policymakers. Here lies an opportunity for cooperation

between the Commission and the EU Capital Cities, for many capital cities have well developed policies to counter radicalisation.

Migration is the major challenge the EU is facing currently. The urban dimension of the migration agenda is that cities deal with the consequences on the ground, including local reception, the processing facilities and the accompanying long term integration of refugees and migrants. Yet, the role of cities receives little attention in the Commission's European Agenda for Migration. However, cities should be supported in their role in all migration and refugee issues, from finding housing and ensuring subsistence, to facilitating language courses and securing equal opportunities to participate in local society. The European policy will benefit from closer involvement of cities in finding adequate responses to the current refugee crisis, because of their practical knowledge and pragmatic approach. In this new situation (new refugee groups, new destinations, higher numbers), there is a need for exchange of (innovative) practices on reception and housing of refugees. Capital cities, in cooperation with the Commission, are well positioned to support this exchange of experiences and practices within their region or across borders. There is an evident link with the priority theme of the inclusion of migrants and refugees within the framework of the EU Urban Agenda.

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The Commission is committed to improve the openness, transparency and efficiency of its work, and to make the European Union more democratic by bringing it closer to the citizens. The Better Regulation agenda is the main strategy to promote **Democratic Change**. There is a growing awareness at EU-level that local authorities should be more involved in EU policy making to achieve its objectives in the most effective and efficient way. This is also reflected in the development of an EU Urban Agenda, emphasising changes in urban governance, and in efforts to add an urban dimension to impact assessments. Better Regulation may imply both opportunities and risks for local authorities. It can lead to more room for local tailor-made solutions and reduced implementation costs, but also to a shift of administrative burdens from businesses to governments because of the REFIT programme. The involvement of local authorities in the better regulation agenda is still limited, often mediated by national authorities. Closer cooperation of the Commission and EU Capital Cities would be valuable for providing information on problems with the implementation of EU legislation on the ground, locally, and input for the testing phase of the urban impact assessment of Commission proposals.

5.2 Recommendations

The analysis showed that the Commission and cities share interests in many respects. There is a clear urban dimension in the Juncker Priorities, but this dimension is not identified nor are actions linked to it. This is because the Commission lacks a strategic view on the role of cities in furthering the priorities of its work programme. At the same time urban agendas are in the making on European and global level, and also in many Member States. The Mayors of the EU Capital Cities should take advantage of the current political context which explicitly recognises cities as key partners, by developing jointly with the Commission an action perspective on how to collaborate in order to pursue shared objectives. Cooperation between the Commission and the cities can have added value, by promoting both the Commission's ambitions as well as addressing specific challenges in European cities relating to the EU priorities. Different initiatives and networks are already in place to link cities and the priorities of the Commission, but collaboration should be strengthened to be more mutual beneficial. The Conference of the Mayors of the EU Capital Cities, initiated by Commissioner Hahn in 2014, can be employed for this purpose, as an informal network to put political issues on the agenda. The 2016 edition of the Mayors of

the EU Capital Cities Conference, with the participation of Commissioner Crețu (DG Regional and Urban Policy), is the ideal opportunity to discuss political issues with the Commission, on how to make better use of existing city networks and platforms for dialogue (EUROCITIES, CoR, CEMR, Mayors of EU Capital Cities) and how the Mayors of Capital Cities can take on a role as special stakeholder group. Preparatory discussions at senior policy level can pave the way for the high-level conference and can be used for agenda-setting purposes without the need to create new networks.

An important question is how to leverage the opportunities arising from the shared interest of the Commission and cities with regard to the Juncker Priorities. All the formal procedures, mechanisms and processes of consultation and stakeholder involvement did not have the desired effect until now. They are regularly experienced by city networks and local authorities as too formal, too limited, not transparent enough or secondary (indirect influence). It is not always clear how the outcome of public consultations is processed in Commission initiatives. The formal role of CoR is important, but it represents a wide array of local and regional authorities and thus the voice of cities does not always resonate clearly in its opinions. The unease is reflected in the responses to the consultation on the EU Urban Agenda, showing a broad agreement on the need to improve coordination of EU policies horizontally and vertically. Ms Anna Lisa Boni, EUROCITIES Secretary General, expresses it clearly: “Proper involvement of cities in EU policy development means moving beyond consultation to genuine partnership between cities, Member States and the EU institutions. This will deliver more effective results and tangible and sustainable benefits for citizens, as the Commission sets out in its better regulation agenda.”⁶⁰

This is what the EU Urban Agenda should aim at. The EU Urban Agenda aims to promote EU policies that are better suited to implementation within the large diversity of urban Europe. Currently, twelve priority themes have been identified. The next step will be the formation of two partnerships that serve as pilots before new partnerships will be launched at the Amsterdam Ministerial meeting on 30 May 2016. The pilot partnerships to be launched will be around the priority themes of urban poverty and housing. In these partnerships among Member States, the European Commission, urban authorities and other stakeholders, concrete challenges related to these themes will be tackled in a concerted and innovative way. In addition, other coordination mechanisms are about to be established, including the Urban Development Network (UDN). Furthermore, as mentioned above, the Commission is investigating the possibility to include the urban or local dimension in impact assessments. However, it is still unclear how these proposals and actions will take shape.

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Cities should take a proactive approach in this process for there are still many uncertainties about the next steps and DG REGIO lacks (still) a strong mandate from the Commission on this urban agenda. The Amsterdam Conference of Mayors of the EU Capital Cities can be used to give a political signal and support to the development of an EU Urban Agenda, and to propose a closer cooperation on a few specific topics on this agenda. These may be the 2 or 3 themes that will be explored the next months, or some other priority themes.

At the same time, the EU Capital Cities should broaden their strategy at EU level, by not limiting it to active involvement in the EU Urban Agenda and collaboration with DG REGIO, but also to establish a

⁶⁰ [Press release: EU urban agenda for better regulation and better results - EUROCITIES at 2nd CITIES Forum, 02-06-2015.](#)

stronger alignment with the Commission and its priorities, and with other sectoral DGs. Therefore, the key question is how cities can contribute to the realisation of the Juncker Commission's priorities.

5.3 On the road to Amsterdam: five actions for EU capital cities

To conclude this Quick Scan five promising routes for improved cooperation between the Commission and EU Capital Cities Mayors are worth considering. The recommendations consider both the Juncker Priorities and the EU Urban Agenda.

1 Active participation of capital cities in EU Urban Agenda partnerships, starting with the three first (pilot) partnerships (on urban poverty, housing and inclusion of migrants and refugees). Membership of these partnerships requires investments. Capital cities have the capacity to invest in these partnerships, to set the example and to make it attractive for other cities to participate. Thus they can strengthen the political significance of this initiative. They can transfer the experiences and knowledge to other national cities and collect relevant information on challenges and good practices. Because the Mayors of the EU Capital Cities conference will take place before the Amsterdam Declaration, this informal network can make use of this opportunity to generate support for active participation of European capital cities in the EU Urban Agenda, and advocate a clear role for cities in those partnerships. It is also possible to make proposals at the conference for new partnerships on other priority themes.

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2 Use the Conference to strengthen the ties with DG REGIO and the launch of closer cooperation on concrete issues.

Possible issues for cooperation are:

- EU Capital Cities can be involved in developing the urban dimension of the Territorial Impact Assessments. DG REGIO is currently testing this tool, probably until May 2016. EU Capital Cities could contribute to this process by raising issues with regard to problems of data, of relevant urban units, etc. Capital cities could for instance present the first results with the Commission during the Amsterdam EU Capital Cities conference.
- Active participation in the EU Urban Agenda partnerships; see above.

3 Invest in broadening the cooperation with other sectoral DGs within the European Commission, e.g. DG Energy, DG Home, DG Move and DG Research and Innovation.

- Capital Cities should utilise the possibilities to involve actively in research and innovation agenda setting at EU level (DG Research and Innovation) to ensure that urgent urban challenges are met by research programmes, and that account is taken of bottlenecks in the participation of local governments in projects.
- Cities, not exclusively capital cities, can collaborate to procure large data systems; together they have a stronger position and formulate more advantageous conditions. The Commission can support these actions with funds. This will promote smart cities objectives of the Commission.
- The existing regulation on air pollution is being reviewed. Capital Cities can contribute by gathering knowledge about problems it causes for implementation in cities and for developing an integrated approach for sustainable urban development.

4 Start cooperation with the Commission on specific issues linked to the Work Programme/Priorities.

Capital cities can invest in initiatives leading to the establishment of cooperation with the Commission on a selected number of urgent topics related to the Juncker Priorities. Collaboration should focus on topics with a clear EU mandate and a clear urban dimension, for instance energy and climate change adaptation, democratic change, but also the urgent issues of inclusion of migrants and refugees. This Quick Scan has proposed several themes for the cooperation between the Commission and capital cities in particular. Issues on which improved coordination and cooperation between the Commission and cities will have a clear added value are for example:

- Examine with the Commission and Member States how cities can help to make better use of the available EU funds (ESF and YEI) to combat youth unemployment.
- Partnerships could be set up between local, national and EU-level authorities to tackle long-term and youth unemployment.
- Technical assistance to utilise the funds, especially the Investment Advisory Hub (EIAH). Capital Cities can play a role in making these funds more effective, and to provide assistance to smaller cities lacking knowledge and resources to be fully involved.
- EU Capital Cities Mayors can cooperate with the Commission to improve the exchange of knowledge on good and bad practices with regard to realising services for refugees (reception, housing, education, labour market integration etc.), in cooperation with other stakeholders (private sector, NGOs, relevant networks, etc.). Although there are already many good practices, there is always the need for more and better knowledge since situations are different (larger numbers, different migrant groups, different destinations), and there are difficulties with reaching smaller cities. Capital cities could advise other cities and partner with the smaller ones. Cities are more eager to learn from other cities than from the Commission.
- Capital cities have networks transcending national and European boundaries. The wider international context is highly relevant looking at the international cooperation of the Commission in the fields of sustainable urbanisation. Many capital cities are cooperating with major cities in other regions in the world, e.g. China and Brazil. Cities, especially capital cities, can act as a linking pin between the Commission and other global regions, for instance with regard to urban sustainability.

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5 Strengthen the exchange of knowledge and experience between capital cities and other cities.

Capital cities have the position and capacity to act as responsible capitals, by reinforcing the exchange of knowledge and technical support to smaller cities within their country as well as to other EU capital cities, in collaboration with the Commission. There are three types of topics for strengthened exchange of knowledge:

- Technical support for applying for EU funds has been diminished in many Member States. Capital cities could play a role in advising other cities, supporting exchange of knowledge. Twinning of cities is another possibility (like in the case of twinning smart cities). More in particular, EU Capital Cities could collaborate with the Commission to exchange experiences and to advise other cities on how to use EU funds (Integration Fund, ESF, Regional Funds) for migrant integration activities. The Commission and the EIB now offer technical support, but the outreach is still limited. Especially smaller cities are hard to reach. The capital cities could

organise in their own country, with collaboration of the Commission, practical seminars for policy officers to facilitate smaller cities in using the funding possibilities.

- Exchange of knowledge and experiences on various subjects by the Commission has its limits; for instance, smaller cities are often not reached. Capital cities can play a role here, by organising for example national meetings or platforms for exchange of knowledge on for instance energy efficiency and sustainable transport.
- A more specific topic for exchange of knowledge is public procurement. Larger cities have more capacity to develop innovative approaches to public procurement while smaller cities are lacking this capacity. Thus, capital cities can support and advise smaller cities on these issues. The Commission, and especially DG Research is interested in innovative public procurement approaches and will be prepared to support the initiatives of Capital Cities in this area and to collaborate.

Both the Juncker Priorities and the EU Urban Agenda are part of the process that is gradually taking shape. This means that many aspects need to become clearer. One trend however is clear for all urban stakeholders: The Juncker Commission can no longer stay “spatially blind”. The priorities will have a significant impact on cities and they cannot be realised without a strong role of cities, including the capital cities. Cities are ready to take on their responsibility and to contribute actively to the realisation of the Juncker Commission’s priorities. The EU Urban Agenda, with its partnerships around some of the Juncker Priorities, seems to be a promising project. On the road to the Pact of Amsterdam the Capital Cities Conference is bound to be an important stepping-stone.



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