

# Urban re-development as contribution to economic growth in the framework of the EU cohesion policy

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The Committee on Regional Development adopted the report by Andrea COZZOLINO (ALDE, IT) on urban re-development as contribution to economic growth in the framework of the EU Cohesion Policy.

Noting that 80% of European citizens live in an urban context, a figure which is increasing due to the acceleration of rural-to-urban migration flows, Members **call for a new EU regulatory phase** connected to a plan to safeguard and regenerate urban areas, which – while respecting the principle of subsidiarity – may **supply the legal basis required, define common and shared medium- to long-term goals and optimise the use of cohesion policy funds**. They point out that cities represent the engine of the economy, manufacturing and employment, yet at the same time they are the places where one encounters the problems of suburbanisation, unemployment and, more generally, social exclusion and segregation, and environmental pollution.

The committee emphasises the key role that urban areas have to play in achieving the economic, social and environmental objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy, and highlights the fact that the Union can only be globally competitive if its cohesion policy fully harnesses the development potential of all its regions and urban areas. **It asks for cultural and economic resources to be mobilised**, and hopes for actions aimed at the completion and restoration of existing parts of cities and the return of strongly symbolic and historically rich spaces which have lost their original function and have become progressively neglected.

Members stress that **new forms of urban regeneration are required**, focusing on the need for communities to have public spaces, parks, leisure, culture and sport. They call for an integrated approach which involves the interconnection of nature and the environment with history and culture and with society and commerce, ensuring the development of infrastructure, the improvement of urban spaces and the growth of the economic fabric. They are convinced that **environmental problems like the management of waste** represent a major problem that transcends merely technical aspects and has an impact on social issues. Furthermore, the increase in green spaces and urban parks constitutes an element of extremely high value in terms of the natural, historic and cultural heritage, and contributes to regulating negative microclimate effects, a better energy budget and financial savings, increases sustainability and the quality of the urban environment, and allows social and recreational needs to be met.

Stressing that the **local development model represents a key strength of the cohesion policy**, Members call for participatory planning dynamics in partnership with associations and citizens to guarantee the necessary connection between general policies and specific territorial spaces, by enhancing their peculiarities, identities, memory and history and by reinforcing the sense of belonging to the community and trust in institutions.

They reiterate the need to **coordinate the use of funds to ensure an integrated approach** to the dysfunction of demographic development, progressive ageing and urban concentration. Structural fund projects can help provide solutions to serious problems and should focus on people and pay particular attention to the underprivileged in this society, e.g. children, young people, women and the elderly.

Welcoming the steps taken to promote networks between cities and the exchange of experience and good practices, the committee points out that these steps should be further strengthened. It calls for the

expansion of existing instruments for this purpose, while underlining that existing programmes and bodies should be used before new structures are created. It also welcomes the provision that at least 5% of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) resources be made available for integrated actions for sustainable urban development, to be delegated to cities for management. However, Members emphasise that this figure is a minimum target and should be used to support the development in functional urban areas. They oppose rigidity in the use of the above resources in the implementation of integrated territorial investments (ITI), and consider that Member States should be given the possibility of implementing the integrated actions for sustainable urban development through a specific operational programme or a specific priority axis.

The committee goes on to call for:

- decisive actions in the fight against energy inefficiency, through the functional re-designation of buildings and the construction of more resource efficient dwellings;
- reducing congestion, contamination and noise in such a way as to make the city more competitive as regards environmental problems;
- an improvement of the administrative capacity – e.g. through increased use of technical assistance – of local and regional authorities, and of economic and social actors, in the management of the structural funds, for the purpose of real multilevel governance, in order to ensure that objectives are met;
- a sustainable mobility management model, integrated with town planning, that comprises more public facilities and systemic logistics networks appropriate to the needs of the urban distribution of goods and services, with appropriate attention given to green transport needs.

Lastly, Members highlight the opportunity to create networking between pilot projects on sustainable urban development financed by the ERDF and the new multiannual Horizon 2020 programme, in order to guarantee innovative solutions and replicable strategies in urban regeneration.