Role of cities in the institutional framework of the Union

2017/2037(INI) - 07/06/2018 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Constitutional Affairs adopted the own-initiative report by Kazimierz Micha UJAZDOWSKI (NI, PL) on the role of cities in the institutional framework of the Union.

Members welcomed the Urban Agenda for the EU as a new model of multi-level governance based on partnership by engaging cities in the review of existing legislation and reflecting on the future shape of policies. They called for the **Urban Agenda to be coordinated, reinforced and formalised**, stating that it should not remain a voluntary process and that the Member States and the Commission should acquire more of its ownership.

Strengthening the role and participation of cities: the report stressed the key role of cities, as well as of all local authorities, in **preparing, designing, financing and implementing** key Union policies, e.g. tackling climate change. Cities might also have an important role in the Union's external policies as a tool of public diplomacy.

Members called for better coordination and integration of the instruments and programmes dedicated to cities in various EU policies, to be achieved by designating a Commissioner responsible for taking a political lead on the matter, so as to give strategic direction to those policies.

New global challenges posed by security and immigration, demographic shift, youth unemployment, challenges relating to the quality of public services, access to clean and affordable energy, natural disasters and environmental protection demand local responses. Members considered it necessary to **reinforce the early and coordinated involvement of cities in EU decision making** within the current institutional set-up of the EU, and suggested strengthening the role played by cities in future policy-making.

The report stressed, in particular, the need to:

- **strengthen the political representation of cities and municipalities in the current EU institutional framework**, and to consider a reinforcement of cities' representation within the Committee of the Regions;
- consolidate the involvement of European associations representing local authorities and urban interests in policy design, such as the EUROCITIES network and the CEMR and others;
- carry out territorial impact assessments of all policy measures and legislation that affect the local level.

Cities as fora for public debate: regions and cities should be recognised as centres with a positive role to play in the development of EU strategies, in which global issues originate locally and are solved locally. Cities can thus have a **legitimising role**, and can contribute to awareness-raising campaigns on EU citizens' rights.

In order to become centres of debate on the future of the Union and its policies, municipalities must appoint a councillor in charge of European affairs. a network should be established for local councillors with such a mandate.

Members proposed that the **citizens' consultation process be arranged by Parliament and the Committee of the Regions**, in cooperation with those European city councils recognised as fora for European debate. Councils of cities recognised as European debating fora should be responsible for providing universities, local schools and other educational institutions, as well as the media, with their extensive professional and public experience.

Members suggested the establishment of a **pilot programme** of 54 European debate fora – ensuring a balanced territorial representation and the representation of cities of different size – to be held in non-capital cities of the Member States.

Lastly, they stressed the need for the exchange of good practices between European cities.