Role of cities in the institutional framework of the Union

2017/2037(INI) - 03/07/2018 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted, by 499 votes to 70, with 102 abstentions, a resolution on the role of cities in the institutional framework of the European Union.

Urban dimension of EU policies: Members recalled that the majority of the EU population (more than 70 %) live in urban areas. According to the **Leipzig Charter**, European cities are considered ‘valuable and irreplaceable economic, social and cultural assets’ and should assume responsibility for territorial cohesion.

Parliament recognised that the involvement of cities in the EU’s decision-making process is facilitated through their representation in the **Committee of the Regions**.

It observed that the EU is incrementally strengthening the urban dimension of a number of its policies, as is shown, e.g., by the ‘smart cities and communities’ concept (the European Innovation Partnership) and by such initiatives as the Urban Community Initiative I (URBAN I), URBAN II, sustainable urban development, the Urban Development Network, Urban Innovative Actions, the European Capital of Culture, the European Green Capital and the European Capital of Innovation, the Covenant of Mayors and the Urban Agenda for the EU (**Pact of Amsterdam**), which creates a platform of cooperation between Member States, regions, cities, the Commission, Parliament, the Union’s advisory bodies with a view to making an informal contribution to the design and revision of both future and existing EU legislation.

Strengthening the role and participation of cities: Parliament stressed the key role of cities and local public authorities in the **preparation, design, financing and implementation** of major Union policies, such as the fight against climate change. Cities may also play an important role in the Union's external policies as a public diplomacy tool.

Members called for better coordination and integration of urban instruments and programmes into EU policies, which could be achieved through the appointment of a Commissioner with a political leadership role.

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. Cities have proved their capacity to efficiently manage integrated actions for sustainable urban development. 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.

Parliament 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 Council of European Municipalities and Regions 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.

The resolution 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.