

Urban development: guidelines for a urban agenda in the Union

1997/2097(COS) - 28/01/1998 - Economic and Social Committee: opinion, report

Firstly, the Committee feels that some priorities for the urban agenda - relating to competitiveness and employment, economic and social cohesion and sustainable development - should be spelt out in more explicit terms than is done in the Commission communication. Conservation and management of the urban cultural heritage should be paramount. There must be a serious commitment to the regeneration, restoration and conservation of the centres of major historic cities and of smaller towns with a strong cultural identity that must be preserved and strengthened. Secondly, sustainable and integrated development also presupposes a commitment to improving outer suburbs. In the large metropolitan areas in particular, this could provide an opportunity for multi-centred development. This would help to relieve pressure on inner cities, and would give a precise role and socio-economic identity to neighbourhoods which are currently in decline. The problem of how to enhance the quality of city life should also be tackled by boosting new telecommunication and transport technologies to link cities with the rest of their metropolitan area. The role which cities are able to play in the new global economy will depend partly on the ability of the individual administrations to organize strategies for development, provision of infrastructure and services in a competitive manner. At all events, coordination policies will be needed in order to ensure that the pursuit of economic excellence does not prejudice the objectives of social equity and quality of life. Competitiveness should help to find practical solutions to a number of pressing social problems such as youth unemployment and the integration of immigrants and the socially excluded. Special attention should be paid to the structural problem posed by the situation and role of the elderly, whose numbers are set to grow in the next few years throughout the EU. In conclusion, a new "sense of citizenship" must be forged, based on participation and social solidarity.