

Urban development: guidelines for a urban agenda in the Union

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This was the main conclusion of the report on an urban agenda for the EU drawn up by Pasqualina NAPOLETANO (PES, I) and adopted by the Committee. The report calls for the creation of a balanced, ecologically sound, urban environment. In adopting the report, which follows on from a public hearing held on 5th February 1998, the committee has endorsed the following demands: -account should be taken of calls by local, regional and social leaders for the development of a European urban strategy based on the principles of subsidiarity and closer partnership and designed to harmonise and coordinate the impact of EU policies on the urban environment; -urban policy should be based on social justice and environmental sustainability, in order to make the urban environment an effective tool for combatting exclusion, unemployment and speculation in environmental and energy resources and the housing stock; - there should be unrestricted application of the Treaty provisions on the right to vote for EU residents and (with due regard for Member States' national laws) third-country nationals; -the URBAN initiative should be continued rather than abandoned as proposed by the Commission. URBAN has been extremely useful in terms of the regions it reaches (of 49 regions which have received support under the programme, 15 have an unemployment rate of over 30%) and the funding it has provided (Ecu 850m for 115 towns between 1994 and 1999). Contrary to the Commission's wishes, the amount of funding should be increased; -the drafting and adoption of the European Spatial Development Perspective should be speeded up; -the Structural Funds (new Objective 2) should include a specific emphasis on urban issues, with priority for integrated urban measures (mainstreaming); -pilot projects and innovatory measures, currently financed under Article 10 of the ERDF, should be continued and strengthened; -a monitoring centre for spatial development should be set up to provide reliable and comparable data on the Member States.