Urban dimension in the context of enlargement

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In July 2006, the Community Strategic Guidelines for Cohesion were adopted, which stated that in future the main priority of the Cohesion Policy would be to create jobs and stimulate growth. At the same time the Cohesion policy promotes an “integrated approach” to development and recognises the need to deliver not only on growth and jobs but also on social and environmental goals. This Commission Staff Working Document focuses on the Cohesion Policy and its role vis-à-vis Europe’s cities and the contribution of urban spaces to stimulating growth and jobs in the regions. The purpose of this working document is to offer Member States, regional authorities and local authorities some points for discussion when preparing the new round of Cohesion Policy programmes. Towns, cities and metropolitan areas, after all, drive economic growth in Europe thereby creating innovation and employment.

For further information on related matters, see:

- **AVC/2006/0131**: A summary of the proposed Strategic Guidelines.

- **AVC/2004/0163**: A summary of Council Regulation 1083/2006/EC laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund.

- **AVC/2004/0166**: A summary of Council Regulation 1084/2006/EC establishing a Cohesion Fund.

In the past Cohesion Policy has contributed significantly to urban regeneration, funding, in particular, improved transport networks, waste water treatment plants and energy efficiency schemes. It has done so together with a number of other financial institutions including the European Investment Bank (EIB); the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD).

In this Paper, the Commission has identified four key issues which challenge the EU’s urban environment and which require urgent attention. They are: Transport, accessibility and mobility; Access to services and amenities; the natural and physical environment; and the cultural sector.

Access and mobility.

Accessibility is crucial in terms of access to markets. At the same time cities are expected to ensure clean, efficient, affordable and effective intra-urban mobility – both within the city centre and with the urban and rural periphery. The proposed guidelines for action include, *inter alia*:

- Making the best use of all the transport infrastructure, seeking co-ordination between the various transport modes and the promotion of the least polluting modes of transport.

- Linking cities in peripheral locations to major airports and other Trans-European Transport Networks (TENs) axes.

- To co-ordinate transport planning, construction and land-use. New projects should form part of an integrated transport strategy for the urban area. Issues requiring further attention include road safety, noise reduction and improved air quality.

- Improving the affordability, efficiency and effectiveness of public transport.

- Promoting the use of cycling, walking and other "soft" forms of transport.

- Taking account of those unable to drive such as the old, young and those with mobility impairments.

Access to service facilities.

Well-working and affordable health, social, training and public administration services are vital to urban competitiveness, business location and quality of life. In summary, the guidelines for action include:

- Investing in modern, efficient and affordable services with easy on-line access.

- The provision of good child-care services.

- Helping disadvantaged groups access key services such as healthcare and social services.

- Requiring cities to rely on new technologies to bring innovative and effective solutions to public services.

The Natural and Physical Environment.

City and urban residents want to live and work in cities where both the natural and built environment are of the highest quality. Important factors include clean air, quiet and clean public spaces and green spaces. Although housing in itself has not previously been eligible for funding under the Structural Funds, the new provisions state that, under certain conditions, the new Member States may seek approval for housing funding, where it is estimated that some 40% of citizens live in communist-era housing. Many homes need renovation due to low energy efficiency, poor maintenance and related health problems. Further, certain housing-related activities will be eligible for funding in all of the Member States. These include: rehabilitation of common spaces, demolition of deteriorating buildings, security and crime prevention measures, energy and water efficiency, support of social inclusion measures such as proximity to health and education centres. Also requiring attention under this heading are actions which improve urban air quality and action to reduce noise pollution. The proposed guidelines for action include:

- Rehabilitating derelict brown field sites and renovating public spaces.

- Co-ordinating land use policies between all actors be they operating at a Community, national, regional or local level.

- Investing in actions which help achieve compliance on EU legislation relating to air quality, waste-water treatment, waste management, water supply and environmental noise. Investing in programmes which reduce congestion, transport demand and public transport networks.

- Investing in the effective use of energy in urban areas.

Culture.

A long term cultural vision can act as an essential link in a city's plans for economic and social development. Cultural, artistic and scientific activities should be part of an integrated approach to city planning and urban regeneration – including the use of vacant brown field sites. The Commission, therefore, sets out the following guidelines:

- Promoting vibrant cultural activities based on the availability of facilities.

- Promoting an active cultural policy to help bridge the divides between communities.

The document also sets out a list of other policies which are eligible for funding under the Cohesion Policy and which require attention when preparing the new round of programmes. Thus, focus needs to be given to: supporting innovation entrepreneurship and the knowledge economy; supporting SME's and micro-enterprises; promoting and stimulating more jobs but also better jobs; improving employability by raising levels of educational achievements and training; promoting social inclusion and equal opportunities; offering increased security; and managing migration.