Basic information

2006/2061(INI) INI - Own-initiative procedure	Procedure completed
Thematic strategy on the urban environment **Subject** 3.70.20 Sustainable development 4.70.04 Urban policy, cities, town and country planning	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
ENVI Environment, Public Health and Food Safety	HEGYI Gyula (PSE)	29/11/2005

Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
ITRE Industry, Research and Energy	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
TRAN Transport and Tourism	Ó NEACHTAIN Seán (UEN)	24/01/2006
REGI Regional Development	KALLENBACH Gisela (Verts /ALE)	22/02/2006

Council of the European Union

Council configuration	Meetings	Date
Environment	2740	2006-06-27

European Commission

Commission DG	Commissioner
Environment	DIMAS Stavros

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
11/01/2006	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2005)0718	Summary
16/03/2006	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
21/06/2006	Vote in committee		Summary

27/06/2006	Resolution/conclusions adopted by Council		Summary
30/06/2006	Committee report tabled for plenary	A6-0233/2006	
25/09/2006	Debate in Parliament		
26/09/2006	Decision by Parliament	T6-0367/2006	Summary
26/09/2006	Results of vote in Parliament		
26/09/2006	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2006/2061(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 55
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	ENVI/6/33973

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee draft report		PE371.854	05/04/2006	
Committee opinion	TRAN	PE370.280	24/04/2006	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE372.197	17/05/2006	
Committee opinion	REGI	PE371.922	01/06/2006	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A6-0233/2006	30/06/2006	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T6-0367/2006	26/09/2006	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Non-legislative basic document	COM(2005)0718	11/01/2006	Summary
Document attached to the procedure	SEC(2006)0016	11/01/2006	Summary

Thematic strategy on the urban environment

2006/2061(INI) - 27/06/2006

The Council adopted conclusions on urban environment. Firstly, it welcomes the Commission's communication on the Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment, in particular its focus on integrated environmental management and sustainable transport, as a valuable contribution towards tackling the environmental challenges that still persist today in urban areas, such as poor air quality, high volumes of traffic and congestion, ambient noise, poor building environment, urban sprawl and the

loss of green areas and of biodiversity, waste and waste water. It notes that the policies and measures in the Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment are focusing on principles, guidance, support and facilitation for Member States and their cities to improve their urban environment.

Secondly, calls on Member States to strengthen their endeavours to enable cities, by their policies, to achieve high urban environmental and health quality and to consider the possibilities of National Strategic Reference Frameworks (linked to Cohesion Policy) for covering urban environment issues as well as opportunities in the context of the LIFE+ Regulation and funds. It equally recognises the relevance of the 7th FPRD, as well as the importance of promoting eco-innovation through rapid implementation of the ETAP.

The Commission is encouraged to give guidance on how Member States can use these funds to integrate urban environment into their national plans including i.a. innovative and flexible mechanisms for the funding of urban renovation. It is also invited to provide support and impetus for public participation, in particular by actively facilitating and promoting Local Agenda 21 and the Aalborg Commitments.

The Council welcomes the fact that the Commission will come forward with guidelines on sustainable transport plans including environmental objectives, measures and instruments for environmentally friendly and sustainable urban transport as well as examples of good practice. It recommends that Member States and cities make use of these guidelines in their urban transport policies and ensure that sustainable urban transport plans include environmental objectives and measures to improve and promote urban mobility management, public transport, cycling and walking, alternative fuels (e.g. biogas) and propulsion systems, ultra low emission vehicles and carsharing, as well as intermodal city freight logistics.

The Council invites the Commission to consider further activities to develop and promote guidance and tools to improve the quality of the urban environment e.g. by focusing namely on sustainable urban design, planning and construction as well as water issues.

Member States and cities are called upon to implement and facilitate the Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment and its proposed areas for action, in particular the environmental management and sustainable transport plans. The Council encourages the establishment of national focal points on urban environment issues (e.g. European Urban Knowledge Network) and the collection of urban environment data and a core-set of indicators, e.g. in the context of 'Urban Audit', to enable progress and the environmental performance of European urban areas to be monitored. The Commission is invited to assess the results of the implementation of the TS and - if appropriate -to propose a revised strategy by 2010.

Lastly, it recommends that synergies and cooperations with international activities in the field of the urban environment like the UNECE WHO Transport Health Environment Pan European Programme THE PEP, the WHO CEHAPE and other relevant initiatives as well as city networks should be aimed at.

Thematic strategy on the urban environment

2006/2061(INI) - 26/09/2006 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report drafted by Gyula **HEGYI (PES, HU)** in response to the Commission communication on the Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment (TSUE). The resolution was adopted by 448 votes in favour to 49 against with 110 abstentions. (Please see the summary of 21/06/2006.)

Thematic strategy on the urban environment

2006/2061(INI) - 11/01/2006 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE : to promote a thematic strategy on the urban environment.

CONTEXT : urban areas play an important role in delivering the objectives of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy. In urban areas the environmental, economic and social dimensions meet most strongly. Cities are where many environmental problems are concentrated, but they are also the economic drivers, the places where business is done and investments are made. Four out of five European citizens live in urban areas, and their quality of life is directly influenced by the state of the urban environment. A high quality urban environment also contributes to the priority of the renewed Lisbon Strategy to make Europe a more attractive place to work and invest.

CONTENT : the measures offered under this Strategy aim to contribute to a better implementation of existing EU environment policies and legislation at the local level by supporting and encouraging local authorities to adopt a more integrated approach to urban management and by inviting Member States to support this process and exploit the opportunities offered at EU level.

If implemented at all levels, the Strategy will ultimately contribute to improve the quality of the urban environment, making cities more attractive and healthier places to live, work and invest in, and reduce the adverse environmental impact of cities on the wider environment, for instance as regards climate change.

The integrated approach to environmental management at the local level and to transport in particular, based on effective consultation of all stakeholders, is key to successful implementation of environment legislation and to achieve long lasting improvements in environmental quality and performance. There is a need to support local authorities in adopting these management techniques.

In this context, the Commission will :

- provide technical guidance in 2006 on integrated environmental management, drawing on experiences and giving good practice examples. Reference will be made to the most relevant EU environmental legislation e.g. air, noise, water, waste and energy efficiency directives;

- provide technical guidance in 2006 on the main aspects of transport plans based on the recommendations of the 2004 Expert Working Group and give best practice examples;

- offer support for the exchange of good practice and for demonstration projects on urban issues for local and regional authorities through these instruments. Member States, regional and local authorities are encouraged to exploit these opportunities;

- evaluate the pilot (end 2006) and consider whether it can be used as a building block for a “European framework programme for the exchange of experience on urban development” under the proposed Cohesion Policy 2007-2013;

- assess the feasibility of establishing a thematic portal for local authorities;

- use the new LIFE+ Regulation and other instruments to support capacity building for local and regional authorities on urban management issues, and it encourages Member States to initiate such activities;

- encourage Member States to exploit these opportunities to address the problems facing their urban areas and give the National Strategic Reference Frameworks an appropriate urban focus;

- offer support for further urban research and will actively involve local authorities and endeavour to make material developed for them available in many languages to facilitate use at the local level.

The Commission states that this strategy is cross-cutting, covering many environmental media and issues. It will contribute to the implementation of the priorities of the 6th EAP and other environmental policies, including the other Thematic Strategies. Different environment policies (air quality, noise etc) ask that abatement plans be drawn up. By placing these plans in the context of a local integrated framework as proposed in this strategy, synergies between many policy areas can be developed, giving improved results, both for the environment and for the overall quality of life in the urban area.

Thematic strategy on the urban environment

2006/2061(INI) - 11/01/2006 - Document attached to the procedure

COMMISSION’S IMPACT ASSESSMENT

For further information regarding the context of this issue, please refer to the summary of the Commission’s Communication to the Council and the European Parliament on a Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment – COM(2005)0718.

1- POLICY OPTIONS AND IMPACTS

1.1- Option 1: Baseline scenario: The situation without the Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment. The likely evolution of the challenges facing urban areas in the absence of the Urban Environment Strategy is assessed. The impacts of existing policies and new initiatives such as those announced in other Thematic Strategies are taken into account.

1.2- Option 2:Scenario for the Thematic Strategy: A package of initiatives to facilitate the use of best practice techniques in the integrated management of the environment. The Thematic Strategy will comprise a package of initiatives to support Member States and local authorities in adopting integrated approaches to the management of the urban environment and ultimately improve the environmental performance of urban areas.

CONCLUSION: The preferred approach identified through the Impact Assessment is **to encourage the widespread adoption of known and proven techniques** by facilitating the exchange of good practice and information, providing guidance on key issues and making available opportunities for Commission support for specific projects and activities. The initiatives proposed contain a high degree of flexibility to reflect the diversity of urban areas across Europe.

IMPACT

Environmental:

▪ Environmental management plans bring benefits in better administrative functioning (decisions with large environmental impacts may be avoided) and in issues such as recycling, green purchasing, improvements to green space and nature conservation. Benefits in areas such as air quality and noise exposure are generally considered to be ‘small’ in scale. Benefits of other measures are likely to be positive and deliver improvements in the quality of the urban environment for instance through facilitating the implementation of the existing legislation.

▪ The scale of benefits from sustainable urban transport plans differs according to a variety of factors. Large benefits are reported for the management of urban transport issues and for issues such as safety and use of public transport. Introducing transport plans brings benefits in addition to measures adopted under air quality legislation since they achieve a wider range of benefits than improving air quality alone.

▪ The measures considered in the Scenario for the Strategy that are obligatory (i.e. the possible Directives) would result in wider use of these management techniques since all large European cities that do not have environmental management plans, sustainable urban transport plans and management systems would be required to adopt them. This would result in between 109-378 new environmental management plans, between 205-297 sustainable urban transport plans and between 310-408 new management systems.

Economic:

▪ The voluntary measures in the Scenario for the Strategy do not impose additional costs. The likely costs that would be incurred should an authority decide to implement the guidance are reasonable and better planning can lead to better use of existing resources with only a marginal increase in costs. Other economic impacts relate to the improved attractiveness of the urban area and its ability to attract employment and investment. Whilst this cannot be quantified, it is a recognised impact.

▪ The measures for obligations to establish environmental management plans, sustainable urban transport plans and management systems would give rise to clear costs to public authorities. It is not expected that the obligations would give rise to direct costs to business or industry.

▪ Some of the measures that may be included in the plans may give rise to costs for business (e.g. road pricing) but since the obligations would not prescribe which measures have to be set out in the plans, these costs are not directly attributable to the possible imposition of the obligations. The objective is to influence the way that existing and future funds are spent, rather than provide new resources for new investment in urban environment measures.

Social: The measures relating to the guidance on management plans and systems could create jobs. Responses to the Commission's survey reveal that:

▪ 40% of local authorities employed additional staff to help establish and operate the environmental management system,

▪ 45% employed additional staff to develop the environmental management plan, and

▪ 55% of authorities employed additional staff to develop the sustainable urban transport plan.

There may be some double counting in the percentages for the environmental management plan and the environmental management system. Many local authorities have also used external experts in establishing their plans and systems. Measures relating to obligations would be more likely to create jobs.

One of the objectives of the sustainable urban transport plan would be to provide better access to shops and services for those without private transport. This is reported as a 'small' benefit. Improvements in the energy performance of buildings or the quality of the urban environment would bring positive impacts, particularly for the poorer and disadvantaged groups who suffer most from these issues.

To the degree that the Scenario for the Strategy brings additional benefits to existing policies (such as air quality and exposure to noise), it will also deliver positive impacts on human health. However, the impact on human health and safety cannot be quantified.

2- FOLLOW-UP

To monitor the effectiveness of this Strategy, up-to-date, accessible urban data are needed. The Commission, with the help of the EEA, and in close cooperation with the Member States, will work to improve European data on urban environment issues without increasing the burden for national, regional or local authorities, in order to evaluate the environmental performance of European urban areas over time. This will be done in the context of INSPIRE (Infrastructure for Spatial Information in Europe) and a link with the GEO and GMES initiatives. The Commission will undertake a further Urban Audit in 2006 and publish a report in 2006 based on indicators describing the living conditions in a number of EU cities, covering economic, social and environmental aspects. To ensure that the views of all urban environment stakeholders are collected and that the process is transparent, a consultation exercise will be organised in 2009 as part of a review of the 6th Environment Action Programme in 2010.