



THE NETWORK
OF MAJOR
EUROPEAN
CITIES

EUROCITIES POLITICAL ACTIVITIES
JANUARY-SEPTEMBER 2006

Document prepared for Executive Committee Politicians

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This document will serve as the basis for the political section in the Report of Activities 2006

January in EUROCITIES

EUROCITIES meets Commissioner for Transport, Jacques Barrot

On 20 January, a EUROCITIES delegation met with European Commission Vice President, Jacques Barrot (Transport). The objective of the meeting was to discuss the involvement of cities in EU transport policies. The EUROCITIES delegation included EUROCITIES President (Richard Leese), the Chair of the EUROCITIES Mobility Forum (Rudolf Schicker - Executive City Councillor of the City of Vienna) and EUROCITIES CEO (Catherine Parmentier). **Outcome of the meeting:** Commissioner Barrot has agreed to a sectoral dialogue with EUROCITIES on transport in urban areas, addressing in particular the contribution that cities can make to counter the increasing problems of accidents, pollution and air quality.

February in EUROCITIES

EUROCITIES event in European Parliament with EP Intergroup Housing-Urban

EUROCITIES and the European Parliament Intergroup on Urban and Housing organized a successful event in the European Parliament in Strasbourg on the theme of the integration of migrants and the role of cities. Speakers included the Chair of the Intergroup, Jean-Marie Beaupuy MEP, EP Rapporteur on the issue, Stavros Lambrinidis MEP and Commissioner Spidla (Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities). The Commissioner spent two hours at the meeting and a number of EUROCITIES political representatives made interventions in the discussion.

Following the event a number of follow-up letters were sent out. In response, Mr. Franco Frattini, Vice President of the European Commission (Justice, Freedom and Security) expressed recognition of the urban dimension of migration and integration policies, by stating “I am convinced that the role of urban authorities in developing and delivering integration policies and practice is crucial.”

In February, EUROCITIES published the following:

- Letter to Member States in Response to the “Bristol Accord”
- EUROCITIES Response to Commission working paper 'Cohesion Policy and cities'
- EUROCITIES Response to the Communication on a Common Agenda for Integration

March in EUROCITIES

Creation of an interservice group on urban development within the Commission

On the initiative of Commissioner Danuta Hübner (Regional Policy), and in response to the European Parliament report on “The urban dimension in the context of enlargement” (2005 Beaupuy), an “**interservice group on urban development**” has been created within the Commission. The objective of this group is to coordinate the work that each Directorate General (DG) from the Commission does on the urban dimension. There are currently 10 DGs participating in this group. This is something that EUROCITIES has been requesting for some time.

Inspired by EUROCITIES mapping exercise, the Commission interservice group has decided to draft a **guide on the urban dimension of Commission policies** which will be organised by DG and then by unit/theme, and will contain: a briefing on existing EU legislation, information about the Community programmes and available funding, references to cities networks and urban exchange projects, and useful web sites.

EUROCITIES delivers message to Austrian EU Presidency and European Commission on Lisbon

For the first time, a meeting was held with local and regional governments ahead of the Spring Council in March 2006. This “**Lisbon Territorial Dialogue**” meeting involved **Commission Vice President Günther Verheugen** (Enterprise and Industry) and **Commissioner Danuta Hübner**, as well as a representative of the **Austrian Presidency**. The meeting, hosted by the Committee of the Regions, gave local and regional authorities the opportunity to present their views on the Lisbon Strategy, in advance of the Spring Council Summit. EUROCITIES was represented by the **Mayor of Ljubljana, Danica Simsic**. The interventions almost all criticised the lack of involvement of the local and regional levels in the drafting of the National Reform Programmes. Both Commissioners agreed that the local and regional levels were the ones with the potential to deliver, but underlined that the European Commission could only give recommendations to the Member States and was unable to insist on broader consultation of local and regional authorities.

Barroso Cabinet in discussion with EUROCITIES on a possible political meeting in 2007

On **15 March**, EUROCITIES met with members of the cabinet of **President Barroso to discuss Services of General interest** and the possibility of organising a joint seminar with all the Commissioners and services of the Commission concerned by the issue. **Outcome of the meeting:** The cabinet representative agreed to discuss the idea of a seminar with President Barroso and all the services concerned; the seminar could take place in early 2007 (EUROCITIES represented by: Marie Ranty)

EUROCITIES meets new Head of Urban Unit in DG Regio

On **28 March**, EUROCITIES Office met with **Marco Orani**, the new **Head of Unit on urban actions in DG REGIO**. ***Outcome of the meeting:*** Both parties agreed to cooperate in lobbying the Member States and regions to ensure urban measures are included in the operational programmes. DG REGIO is also keen to cooperate with EUROCITIES in working with the new Member States to ensure as far as possible that the Structural Funds are used to develop an integrated approach to urban development. (EUROCITIES represented by: Catherine Parmentier, Marie Ranty)

Charter of Rights of Citizens in the Knowledge Society - the EP catches up with the cities

EUROCITIES provided the members of European Parliament Committee on Industry, Transport, Research and Energy (ITRE) with the **EUROCITIES Charter of Rights of Citizens in the Knowledge Society**, as an example of the use of charter to ensure the development of an inclusive society. The European Parliament has adopted the suggestion to develop a charter of rights for citizens in the knowledge society, which it included in its resolution on the **i2010 initiative** from the European Commission. The European Parliament:

“Proposes that, to achieve good governance and ensure full citizenship to all European individuals in the information society, a Charter of eRights should progressively be adopted by public administrations in Europe as a shared set of principles and guidelines defining the framework within which all citizens can enjoy those rights;... considers that the Charter should also include the rights of all citizens to be able to understand and interact with the administrations involved and therefore to participate equally in decision-making and policy-making processes”.

In March, EUROCITIES published the following:

- EUROCITIES Statement to the Spring Council 2006
- Letter to Commissioner Hübner on financial allocations for Structural Funds

April in EUROCITIES

Commissioner Figel positive on role of cities in 2008 Year on Intercultural Dialogue

On 13 April EUROCITIES wrote to Commissioner Jan Figel (Education and Culture) on the subject of the forthcoming Year of Intercultural Dialogue. In his response Commissioner Figel states that “**EUROCITIES, as a network of large cities across Europe, could indeed make a valuable contribution to helping achieve the objectives of the Year**” and adds that his services would be very keen to develop contacts with the network. The letter underlines that evaluations of previous campaigns have concluded that there was inadequate funding of communication campaigns targeting citizens and that any initiative on intercultural dialogue needs to be tailor-made to suit national and regional circumstances and to build on local experience and success stories. For this reason they intend to “**closely involve civil society - including city networks - in the conception and implementation of the campaign**”.

Spidla Cabinet meets EUROCITIES on Social Affairs priorities

On 19 April, EUROCITIES met a member of the **Cabinet of Commissioner Spidla**, Mr Jan Jarab. **Outcome of the meeting:** Mr Jarab stated his commitment to raise awareness of the urban dimension within the cabinet and with the Head of Unit responsible for the 2007 Year of Equal Opportunities and the PROGRESS programme. He also agreed to explore with the Commissioner the establishment of a Territorial Dialogue in the field of integration. (EUROCITIES represented by: Catherine Parmentier, Vanda Knowles, Heidi Jakobsen)

DG Education and Culture keen to cooperate with EUROCITIES

On 24 April EUROCITIES met with Mrs Alice Copette, **Head of the Unit “Dissemination and valorisation of results” of DG Education and Culture** in order to present our activities and to exchange on how to increase the involvement of cities in the activities of DG EAC. **Outcome of the meeting:** A clear interest in closer cooperation with EUROCITIES, including in future funding programmes. (EUROCITIES represented by: Vanda Knowles, Julie Hervé)

EUROCITIES President and Commissioner Hübner address Urban Forum in Brussels

On 26 April EUROCITIES President Richard Leese gave a speech in the plenary session of an Urban Forum co-organised by the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions. Also speaking in the plenary were Chair of the Intergroup, **Jean-Marie Beaupuy MEP** and **Commissioner Danuta Hübner** (Regional Development).

Following the event Richard Leese and Danuta Hübner had an informal meeting, on the request of the Commissioner, during which EUROCITIES was able to raise a number of

issues with the Commissioner.

In April, EUROCIDITIES published the following:

- Letter to Commissioner Figel in response to the Commission's proposal for 2008 as "European Year of Intercultural Dialogue"
- Letter to European Parliament in support of the proposal for the European Commission to ratify the UNESCO Convention on cultural diversity.
- EUROCIDITIES Response to the Thematic Strategy on Urban Environment
- EUROCIDITIES Response to the Thematic Strategy on Prevention & Recycling of Waste
- EUROCIDITIES Statement on the review of the Sustainable Development Strategy
- EUROCIDITIES Response to the draft directive on the promotion of clean vehicles

May in EUROCIDITIES

EUROCITIES ensures co-financing eligibility for cities in MEDPACT programme

Working Group EUROMED, with the support of both the policy department and the project unit in the Secretariat, lobbied the Commission to change their interpretation of the eligibility of staff costs for co-financing in the MEDPACT programme. The original interpretation would have prevented most interested cities from participating in this programme. Following the lobby, the European Commission now considers staff costs of European project partners as eligible co-financing. This means that the investments of European cities in projects under this programme through the working time of staff members will be adequately recognised. This is also an important success with a view to the programming of the financial instrument for the European Neighbourhood Policy.

Working together with DG REGIO

On 2 May, EUROCIDITIES Office met with **Graham Meadows, Director General of DG REGIO**. ***Outcome of the meeting:*** He acknowledged the fact that urban issues are increasingly higher on the EU agenda; He underlined that EUROCIDITIES and DG REGIO could cooperate to bring together some regional programmes in order to achieve common results, it would thus be easier to measure the results of Cohesion Policy. ***Outcome of the meeting:*** EUROCIDITIES would be invited to preparatory meetings for the interservice group on urban development. (EUROCITIES represented by: Catherine Parmentier, Vanda Knowles, Marie Ranty)

Barrot Cabinet in discussion with EUROCIDITIES on possible political meeting in 2007

On **10 May**, EUROCIITIES Secretariat met with Armelle Lidou from the **Cabinet of Commissioner Barrot (Transport)**. This was a follow-up to the political meeting between the Commissioner and Richard Leese in January 2006. **Outcome of the meeting:** The proposal is to hold a **dialogue meeting between the Commissioner and his staff and EUROCIITIES politicians and experts** on the proposed **Green Paper on Urban Transport**, in advance of publication. The likely date is March/April 2007. (EUROCITIES represented by: Catherine Parmentier, Vanda Knowles)

EUROCITIES meets with DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities

On **16 May** EUROCIITIES met with Mr Stefan Olsson (Head of Unit for Anti-discrimination and relations with civil society, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal opportunities). Although the Year of Equal Opportunities 2007 will not provide for transnational activities, it is possible that **EUROCITIES will be eligible to apply for a large-scale initiative under the new PROGRESS instrument 2007-2013**. **Outcome of the meeting:** The Commission will propose EUROCIITIES as a partner for the opening event of the Year of Equal Opportunities 2007, which will take place in Berlin under the German Presidency and will involve an "Equality Summit". (EUROCITIES represented by: Kent Andersson, Chair of Social Affairs Forum, Ola Nord, City of Malmö, Vanda Knowles, Heidi Jakobsen)

Austrian Presidency invites EUROCIITIES to Informal Environment Ministerial

EUROCITIES was invited to participate in an **Informal meeting of the EU Ministers of the Environment under the Austrian Presidency** on 19 May, to present its views on the Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment. Unfortunately on this occasion, due to unforeseen circumstances, EUROCIITIES had to cancel attendance at the last minute. Nevertheless the invitation itself was the result of a successful lobbying initiative by the Environment Forum, as part of the developing work on actively engaging EU Presidencies also through each EUROCIITIES Forum.

Dimas Cabinet in discussion with EUROCIITIES on possible political meeting in 2007

On 22 May, EUROCIITIES met with Pierre Schellekens, **Commissioner Dimas' Deputy Head of Cabinet** responsible for climate change. This is a follow-up to the letter to EUROCIITIES from Commissioner Dimas earlier in the year and the objective was to discuss how a **political event with EUROCIITIES on climate change** could be organized. **Outcome of the meeting:** The Commissioner is keen to hold a political meeting with EUROCIITIES late 2006/early 2007 on adaptation. Follow up contacts have confirmed January 2007 as the likely date and an agenda for the meeting is being developed. (EUROCITIES represented by: Vanda Knowles, Eva Banos)

In May, EUROCIITIES published the following:

➤ EUROCITIES Response to the Commission's Green Paper on Mental Health
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June in EUROCITIES

Urban Dimension of European Research

On 15 June 2006, the European Parliament plenary adopted its legislative resolution on the proposed 7th Framework programme for research and development. The resolution retained a majority of the amendments proposed by EUROCITIES, which had been successfully included in the report prepared in the EP Committee on Industry, Research and Energy with the help of the EP Intergroup Urban-Housing. The amendments aimed at increasing the opportunities for urban research within the Cooperation programme under the following themes: Information and communication technologies, Environment, Transport, Socio-economic sciences and humanities. For example:

Chapter Cooperation/ICTs added: *"for governments at all levels:.."*

Chapter Cooperation/Environment added: *"..fostering the integration of cultural heritage in the urban setting."*

Chapter Cooperation/Socio-Economic Sciences and Humanities added: *"...sustainable urban planning, ..the role of cities and metropolitan regions,.."*

Chapter Cooperation/Socio-Economic Sciences and the Humanities: *"..demographic change for urban development;.."*

The Competitiveness Council reached political agreement in an extraordinary meeting on 24 July 2006, approving a majority of those amendments voted by the Parliament reinforcing the urban dimension of European research.

Territorial dialogue - Thematic dialogue with Commissioner Figel

EUROCITIES was represented by the Mayor of Eindhoven, Alexander Sakkers, in the thematic territorial dialogue on 20 June 2006 with Commissioner Ján Figel (Education, Training, Culture, and Multilingualism). The meeting was devoted to "The European Policy of Education and Culture: its contribution to the success of the Lisbon Strategy - the role of regions and cities".

July in EUROCITIES

The Community Strategic Guidelines and the Communication on "cities and cohesion"

EUROCITIES gave its input to the draft Community Strategic Guidelines (CSG) in late 2005 and to the European Commission working document on “cities and cohesion” in February 2006. The final version of the CSG was published in July 2006 and it contains a stronger urban dimension than the first draft thanks to EUROCIITIES lobbying. The working document was transformed into a communication on “cities and cohesion”, which complements the CSG. The European Commission has taken on board most of EUROCIITIES’ comments while drafting this communication.

EUROCITIES also contributed extensively to the drafting of the **CoR opinion on Cohesion Policy and cities**, adopted on 26 April 2006. As a result, the opinion underlines the key contribution of cities to the Lisbon Strategy, that Member States should involve cities in the drafting of the National Frameworks and Operational Programmes, that there should be a fourth priority on the urban dimension in the final version of the Community Strategic Guidelines, etc.

EUROCITIES is now working informally with the European Commission, sharing information from members on those Member State Operational Programmes that have a weak urban dimension, ahead of their approval by the European Commission.

Services of General Economic Interest - partial success in complex dossier

EUROCITIES lobbied both the EP and the Commission on the **Services Directive and asked for SGEIs to be excluded from the scope of the Directive**. The lobbying was only partly successful. In the EP report of 16 February 2006 and in the new Commission’s proposal (which was drafted following the vote in the EP and published on 4 April 2006), only some of the local public services are excluded: transport, electronic services, social services, healthcare and education. However, Services of General Economic Interest, which were defined broadly as “services that correspond to an economic activity and are open to competition”, were not excluded. Another positive development, which EUROCIITIES also supported, was that the controversial notion of ‘the country of origin principle’ was replaced by ‘the freedom to provide services’: a Member State must ensure free access to, and free exercise of, a service activity carried out on its territory by providers from other Member States; but national authorities may restrict the provision of services for reasons of public policy, public security, environment and public health. In July 2006, the Council adopted a text that is close to the proposal of the Commission. The final state of play in this dossier will only be known once the final decision is taken by the European Parliament in mid-November 2006. EUROCIITIES is still lobbying the Parliament to ensure the final text is more in line with its views.

Structural Funds - ERDF Article 8 and General Regulation Article 36

The EUROCIITIES lobbying towards national governments and MEPs on the **structural funds regulations** has provided some positive results. The lobbying on article 8 of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) regulation and article 36 of the general regulation was

successful (the regulations were formally adopted in July 2006). The Council and the EP agreed on the formulation of article 8 on “sustainable urban development”, which does include all of the points asked for by our members. Furthermore, Article 36, dealing with regional operational programmes, states that the programmes may include the list of cities chosen for addressing urban issues and the procedures for sub-delegation to urban authorities.

European Neighbourhood Policy opens the door for cities

On 6 July 2006, the European Parliament plenary adopted its legislative resolution on the ENPI Regulation largely in line with the report prepared in the EP Foreign Affairs Committee and still including some of the amendments proposed and supported by EUROCITIES, regarding in particular the need for flexibility when applying the co-financing rule for non-state actors and the extension of the possibility of exchanges between public sector experts to the local level. Informal contacts took place between the Council, the Parliament and the Commission before the vote, with a view to reaching agreement and thereby avoiding the need for a second reading and conciliation. The amendments adopted correspond to what was agreed between the three institutions, and the Council is therefore expected to adopt the legislative act in the autumn 2006 without any second reading. The regulation will apply from 1 January 2007.

EUROCITIES success with EP resolution on 2008 Year of Intercultural Dialogue

An amendment suggested by EUROCITIES on the 2008 Year of Intercultural Dialogue was adopted by the European Parliament in its June plenary session. The amendment underlines the important role that cities should play in the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (2008) as well as the need for structured cooperation with cities and local governments. The EUROCITIES amendments were supported by the members of the EP Urban-Housing Intergroup.

“In order to achieve the objectives set out in Article 2, the action established by this Decision shall be implemented primarily by means of structured cooperation with cities and with local government in the first instance, since they shoulder the bulk of the challenge of immigration and integration...”

The Head of Unit in the Commission responsible for the 2008 Year of Intercultural Dialogue initiative attended the EUROCITIES Culture Forum in June and was very supportive of the idea that EUROCITIES would submit a proposal for a major European project under this programme. EUROCITIES has since set up a Task Force on Intercultural Dialogue, composed of members of the Social Affairs Forum and the Culture Forum, to take the lead in preparing the project proposal.

Further success for cities with EP on Integration of immigrants in the European Union

Building on the success of the EUROCITIES European Parliament event in February on the role of cities in the integration of migrants, EUROCITIES has continued to work with the European Parliament on the Lambrinidis report on “Strategies and means for the integration of immigrants in the European Union”. In its final resolution, adopted in plenary session in July, the European Parliament states clearly:

“...local, regional and national authorities play an essential role and ... their responsibilities in areas such as town planning, housing and education impact on the integration process; ... such authorities should become more closely involved in the European debate; ... through the Community Structural Funds the European Union provides important support for initiatives taken at these levels... local, regional and national authorities (and especially urban centres, where the majority of immigrants is concentrated) should have the ability and funds to determine and implement precise integration measures...”.

The profile of EUROCITIES members in this dossier will be further strengthened by our involvement in the conference ‘**Integrating Cities**’, organised by the city of **Rotterdam**, which is being held in cooperation with **Commissioner Frattini (Justice, Freedom and Security)**, and will involve **Commissioner Figel** as well as a number of EUROCITIES political representatives.

EUROCITIES is also pursuing this area of work through **two project bids**: one to the INTI programme, in partnership with the Migration Policy Group, to help fund the implementation of some of the initiatives contained in the EUROCITIES Contribution to Good Governance on the Integration of Migrants; the second also as a member of a Consortium again with the Migration Policy Group, to run the European Commission’s integration website.

September in EUROCITIES

EP agrees with EUROCITIES on need for stronger Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment

On the 26th of September the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment. The Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment intends to improve the overall environmental performance of cities. The strategy introduces among other tools the concept of long term environmental and transport planning.

Like EUROCITIES, the European Parliament stresses the need for better horizontal coordination and implementation of existing and new European environmental law. Also, like EUROCITIES, the European Parliament

“...regrets that, contrary to the intentions of the 6th EAP, there are no legally binding measures and deadlines proposed by the Commission to address the goals set by the Sixth Action Programme”.

Furthermore, the European Parliament has called upon the Commission to actively support cities in their long term planning with plans and implementation guidance, training, research and best practice exchange. The European Parliament asked the Commission and the European Investment Bank to green their financial arrangements and programmes.

The Guidance documents promised by the Commission in the areas of Sustainable Urban Transport Plans and Integrated Environmental Management are due in December 2006. EUROCITIES members have participated in Commission meetings developing these documents as experts, and the Commission is also relying on the deliverables from two projects involving EUROCITIES, PILOT and Liveable Cities, to develop its policy in this area.

State Aids - success in raising the ceiling of the de minimis aid threshold

EUROCITIES position paper on **State Aid** from September 2005 asked for **the increase in the de minimis aid threshold**. On 13 March 2006, the European Commission proposed to exempt a higher number of small subsidies from the notification obligation under EC Treaty state aid rules and to raise the ceiling of the current “de minimis” regulation from €100,000 to €150,000 (Subsidies which do not exceed this threshold are not state aid and do not require prior notification to the Commission). EUROCITIES also wrote to **Commissioner Neelie Kroes** (Competition) to ask for further simplification of the legislation on state aid for regeneration of deprived urban areas (as a survey carried out among members showed that the increase of the *de minimis* aid threshold was very positive but that other measures were needed). Following the results of a public consultation, the latest proposal by the European Commission presented in September 2006 is that subsidies of €200,000 or less should not constitute state aid. This proposal is likely to be adopted later in the year.

In September, EUROCITIES published the following:

- EUROCITIES Response to the White Paper on a European Communication Strategy
- Letter to the Finnish Presidency to follow-up on the consultation on Freight Logistics
- Letter to EP, Member States and Commission on the Proposed Directive on Ambient Air
- Letter to the European Commission in response to 4th Progress Report on Cohesion

- Letter in response to Commission's Vademecum on State Aids and regeneration of deprived urban areas
- Letter to Finnish Presidency in view of High Level Group on Governance
- Letter to the German Presidency on the development of a Territorial Agenda for the EU