“Fostering Urban Sustainable Development - Potentials and Challenges for National and European Policy”

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10th ESDN Workshop – Background and Discussion Paper

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Introduction

The 10th ESDN Workshop will take place in Brussels on January 28, 2014. This Discussion and Background Paper provides an overview of the workshop topic and general background information on the workshop.

The workshop will facilitate an international exchange of overarching strategic policy initiatives focusing on urban sustainable development (SD) on the EU, Member State and local level, covering environmental issues, regional development, economic and social policy fields. Accordingly, the workshop will foster networks of experts in EU, national and local administrations to encourage stronger co-operations and alliances between EU, national and local policies for urban SD. The outcomes of the workshop will suggest options to link policy levels and governance structures for urban SD (e.g. by new initiatives of EU and national governments fostering urban SD or new cooperative networking between cities and between cities, other levels of governance and intermediaries). The workshop will also seek to provide an orientation for SD policy-makers in the debate around urban sustainable development and future policy options towards sustainable cities. In addition, it should bring together actors from different fields to discuss and learn from their respective experiences to develop suggestions to better serve SD objectives.

The workshop will focus on questions such as: How to connect urban SD and sustainable cities to European and national policy strategies? How can sustainable cities foster SD and resilience? What is the international, European and national perspective on sustainable cities? What role will sustainable cities play in the framework of the SDGs? How to facilitate networks and the exchange of best practices among cities towards a transformation to sustainable cities? How to foster multi-level governance and coordination for achieving urban SD objectives? Which policy instruments and institutions can be designed in order to enhance urban SD?

The next chapter will provide an introduction on the concept of urban SD. The following chapter introduced how urban SD is approached at the global and European level in terms of programs, initiatives and city networks. Finally, we sketch a short outline on the different sessions at the workshop.
1 The concept of urban sustainable development

In this chapter of the Discussion Paper, we provide an overview of the concept of ‘urban sustainable development’. Firstly, we portray the reasoning and the trigger behind this workshop. Secondly, we look at terms and concepts, and will define the main idea of urban SD. We also describe the main features, challenges and potentials that make it possible to narrow down the concept. Thirdly, we reflect on the necessity of multi-level governance approaches to manage the development and transformation of cities and urban areas towards a more sustainable future.

1.1 Introducing the overall picture

Let us start by reflecting on the following statements derived from the “World Urbanization Prospects: The 2011 Revision” by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA, 2012):

- Between 2011 and 2050, the world population is expected to increase by 2.3 billion, passing from 7.0 billion to 9.3 billion (UNDESA, 2011). At the same time, the population living in urban areas is projected to gain 2.6 billion, passing from 3.6 billion in 2011 to 6.3 billion 2050. Thus, the urban areas of the world are expected to absorb all the population growth expected over the next four decades while at the same time drawing in some of the rural population.
- Most of the population growth expected in urban areas will be concentrated in the cities and towns of the less developed regions. Asia, in particular, is projected to see its urban population increase by 1.4 billion, Africa by 0.9 billion, and Latin America and the Caribbean by 0.2 billion.
- Population growth is therefore becoming largely an urban phenomenon concentrated in the developing world (David Satterthwaite, 2007).
- Urbanization is expected to continue rising in both the more developed and the less developed regions so that, by 2050, urban dwellers will likely account for 86 per cent of the population in the more developed regions and for 64 per cent of that in the less developed regions.
- Overall, the world population is expected to be 67 per cent urban in 2050.

When reading these bullet points, it becomes immediately clear how crucial cities and urban areas will be in the future and how important it is to reflect on the processes of urbanisation, especially in the context of sustainable development. In 2050, if in a world of 9.3 billion people, two thirds of them will be living in urban areas, we need to make sure that those cities and urban areas are sustainable and independent from business-as-usual paths of development and growth, mainly because pressure on environmental and social systems is mounting.

It is important to highlight, though, that, cities are already considered as engines of growth and development (Keivani, 2010); they already contribute up to 55% of gross national product (GDP) in low-income countries, 73% in middle-income countries and 85% in high-income countries (UN-Habitat 2006). However, cities consume 75% of the world’s resources and produce 80% of CO₂ emissions (UN-Habitat 2005). For instance, in the developing world, UN-Habitat (2006) estimated that almost a billion people
are living in slums, approximately one third of city dwellers. Consequently, as Revi and Rosenzweig (2013) put it, cities have an extraordinary potential for transformational change due to their: (a) concentration of economic activity; (b) potential for social transformation; (c) high levels of annual investment in infrastructure and buildings; (d) high degree of innovation; (e) nimble local governments; (f) connection to surrounding rural and natural environments; (g) ability to reduce eco-footprints by densification; and, (h) suitability for systems-based solutions.

In line with Williams (2010), we therefore stress that an ‘integrated approach’ to urban sustainable development is necessary and required if we want to tackle the “huge urban challenges” ahead. Furthermore, we argue that an effective integration needs to take into account all the diverse dimensions that characterise urban challenges and potentials under the guidance and steering of urban sustainable development.

1.2 Defining Urban Sustainable Development

Numerous concepts seem to be out there that relate to cities and sustainable development; though, many terms are used often interchangeably and questions emerge: what is ‘sustainable urban development?’ What is ‘sustainable cities’? And what about ‘green cities’? Or what ‘urban sustainability’? For instance, very similarly to the issues related to the concept of sustainable development, the notion of sustainable cities seems to many of us “immediately appealing, yet complex and intangible” (Williams, 2010, p.129).

Therefore, defining urban SD should be considered as very much context-dependent: the diversity of cities and urban realities makes it difficult to define what ‘urban sustainable development’ is in general and in a comprehensive way that is also able to include all the numerous issues related to it.

We define urban sustainable development as the extent of all those practices and activities that:

- Relate with sustainable development within cities (e.g. promotion of organic farmers markets, access to sustainable mobility, reduction of electricity consumption in buildings, recycling and waste prevention, attention to inclusive urban development, etc...);
- Take into consideration the processes of urbanisation of cities in light of sustainable development (e.g. reduction of urban sprawl, construction of bike lanes, promotion of pedestrian areas, provision of affordable housing for disadvantaged residents, etc...);
- Reflect on the throughput of cities with a sustainable development perspective (e.g. prevention of landfilling, attention to water consumption, etc...)

In other words, urban SD refers to everything related to SD in an urban context. Additionally, urban SD is seen as intrinsically connected to and influenced by the broader economic and political frameworks that in many ways shape cities (Bulkeley and Betsill, 2005). However, we want to argue here that urban sustainable development also needs to be seen as the sum of on-going transformative processes, all working to help transitioning cities (or urban areas) towards a more sustainable future. These processes that happen at the urban level will have effects not only on the city itself, but also ‘outside’ the city and, hence, have a more widespread effect – locally, regionally, nationally, and globally – thus, requiring a multi-level governance approach. Moreover “problems of translating the policy rhetoric of urban
sustainability into practice cannot be explained by factors confined to a local arena of governance, or by struggles between the central and local state, but reflect argumentative struggles occurring in multiple sites and spaces to define and defend particular notions of what urban development ought to be (Bulkeley and Betsill, 2005, p.51).

1.3 The main features of urban sustainable development

Adding to our broad definition of what we mean by ‘urban SD’, we also need a number of features that can be considered general enough to comprehend the largest number of cities/urban areas possible. In many ways, these features can be retrieved from the overwhelming literature on sustainable development, but need to be tied down to the urban contexts. In this effort, we find the conceptualisation offered by UN-DESA (2013) very useful of what sustainable cities should take into consideration. Figure 1 below shows the four pillars that would enhance the sustainability of cities: i) Social development, ii) Environmental protection, iii) Economic development, and iv) Effective urban governance, including various examples for each pillar.

![Fig.1: Sustainable Cities](image)

In order to complement this picture, the paper by Keivani (2010) addresses a number of challenges that cities and urban areas face and will continue to face, and which are all very relevant for urban SD (2010). We here try to summarise these challenges and reflect upon them, adding a visual representation that aims to help to present the arguments (Fig.2): the three coloured lines represent how three exemplary cities could be evaluated in respect to urban SD.
Six topics can be described that assist in describing urban SD:

Firstly, from the social perspective, “cities are prone to huge intra-urban social inequalities” (Keivani, 2010, p.7). In many cases, social issues and inequalities – such as, for instance, low income, poverty, crime, or social exclusion of particular sectors of society – are common features in cities in the more developed world as well as in the developing world. Nevertheless, the degree of these issues is, of course, much stronger and more problematic in the ‘South’.

Secondly, in the context of economic development, “cities in the North are struggling with the after effects of large-scale economic restructuring (…) striving to reinvent themselves” (Keivani, 2010, p.8). In the South, cities are more attentive towards “addressing severe levels of income poverty through sustained policies for local economic development and income generating opportunities for low-income households” (p.8).

As with regard to environmental protection, there are many issues to be addressed although they might be again different in magnitude depending on the context of the city. In general, it is a fact that cities are by far the largest contributors to GHGs emissions, they are therefore decisive actors towards global warming and climate change, and, hence, triggering the increase of climate instability, floods, heat waves or hurricanes that impact back on cities and their citizens. Consequently, at the city level, great efforts must be concentrated to reduce GHG emissions and tackle pressures of climate change (Keivani, 2010, p.9).

As fourth block of challenges to urban sustainable development, many issues relate with the need of ensuring access to utilities and basic infrastructure. This issue is especially felt in the cities of the developing world, where “lack of access to basic utilities is not only a major impediment to sustainable economic growth and productivity but also a major cause of urban inequity and ill health” (Werna et al. 2009).
As a fifth aspect, Keivani argued that urban form and spatial development have “major consequences on the sustainable development encompassing not only environmental issues but also social and economic aspects” (2010, p.11). Therefore, planning and urban development have to be taken into account very consciously if we want to encourage and enhance urban SD.

Finally, multi-level governance and institutional development are of crucial importance in all the aspects described above and, therefore, are essential requirements for addressing the main challenges of urban SD. We will treat this aspect in more detail in the next section (1.4).

1.3.1 An urban SDG for the post-2015 agenda

The Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), an initiative launched by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon in August 2012, has recently released its report suggesting that one sustainable development goal (SDG) should be dedicated to urban areas and cities to highlight their importance. The title of the suggested SDG is “empower inclusive, productive, and resilient cities”:

Make all cities socially inclusive, economically productive, environmentally sustainable, secure, and resilient to climate change and other risks. Develop participatory, accountable, and effective city governance to support rapid and equitable urban transformation. (SDSN, 2013, p.30)

For the SDG, these three targets were proposed:

a) End extreme urban poverty, expand employment and productivity, and raise living standards, especially in slums;

b) Ensure universal access to a secure and affordable built environment and basic urban services including housing; water, sanitation and waste management; low-carbon energy and transport; and mobile and broadband communication;

c) Ensure safe air and water quality for all, and integrate reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, efficient land and resource use, and climate and disaster resilience into investments and standards.

1.4 Multi-level governance for urban SD: effective integration and holistic approaches

From the facts and figures outline above, it becomes clear that local governments are important actors for urban SD, but there also exist important links with other tiers of government in a multi-level governance regime to achieve urban SD in a broader sense. Partnerships and coordination are, therefore, of great importance between the different tiers of government (e.g. national, regional, macro-regional or international) and other forms of organisation within society (e.g. districts administrators, city networks, private sector, civil society organisations, NGOs, etc.). But also transparency, accountability and participation are crucial, especially for raising trust, increasing engagement, and the empowerment of citizens.

Bulkeley and Betsill (2005) suggested “to step beyond the local as a frame of reference, and to engage with the processes which shape local capacity and political will for sustainable development at multiple sites and scales of governance (...)” (our emphasis, p.48). Therefore, they argue that “taking a multilevel
governance perspective entails engaging with the multiple tiers of government and spheres of governance through which urban sustainability is being constructed and contested” (p.48).

Keivani (2010) also addresses multi-level governance and institutional development as crucial aspects of urban SD. Furthermore, Keivani points at two other important aspects: on the one hand, subsidiarity as necessary approach to ensure effective urban management, together with the competence and coordination among vertical levels of government. On the other hand, Keivani refers to “horizontal levels of governance” both in terms of transnational and intra-city linkages and patterns of governance between different city government structures as well as power relations and networked interaction between different public, private and community actors in decision making and policy setting at local and metropolitan levels and the way that they feed into higher levels of decision-making” (Keivani, 2010 p.12; see also McGuirk, 2000; Rakodi 2004a; Rakodi, 2004b; Corfee-Morlot et al., 2009). This aspect is especially critical for ensuring an inclusive, responsive and accountable governance process.

Revi and Rosenzweig (2013) also stressed the need for multi-level governance, particularly by mentioning city governance and emphasising how strongly “metropolitan areas and urban local governments will be at the center of decision-making” (p.5). Particular attention is dedicated to linking and working with different stakeholders (e.g. national governments, local authorities, businesses, knowledge institutions, and civil society) that together “must mobilize the needed financial, institutional and human resources across a broad range of urban issues, such as jobs, housing, services, and infrastructure” (p.5). Interestingly, in regard with the European Union, the national level is still “largely responsible for urban policy, and more generally for setting the frameworks within which local authorities function. However, national ministers responsible for urban policy have been collaborating at European level for nearly 20 years, resulting in some common ‘intergovernmental’ approaches” (Mills, 2013, p.2). This is an important example to emphasise how crucial the interconnections are both vertically and horizontally, and the coordination and cooperation with actors outside of traditional government institutions, such as e.g. communities, NGOs, or private sector.
2 A guide through urban SD initiatives

This chapter provides an overview of international and European policy efforts on urban sustainable development and the work of various city networks on this topic. Firstly, we present several concrete initiatives and institutions engaged in urban sustainability on a global and European level. In the second part of this chapter, we illustrate several city networks, differentiating again between city networks acting on a global and on a European scale.

2.1 The international level

In this section, we portray UN bodies and contexts in which urban sustainable development is taking shape on the international level. In general, sustainable development is one of the corner-stones within the UN-system. Various UN institutions and initiatives capture the urban dimension of SD thus highlighting its importance in this context. Many documents, mechanisms, initiatives, policy briefs and institutions at the UN level have been dealing with urban sustainability topics already since many decades.

2.1.1 UN Bodies dealing with urban SD

UN Habitat is the main institution responsible for urban SD within the UN system and for implementing the Rio+20 contents on sustainable cities, besides UN bodies like UN DESA, UNEP and UN Global Compact.

UN-HABITAT

The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) is the UN lead agency on urban sustainable development and related work in this area can be traced back several decades. It is mandated by the UN General Assembly and has the mission to promote socially and environmentally sustainable human settlements development and the achievement of adequate shelter for all. Furthermore, the focus of UN-HABITAT is on urban areas in developing countries, especially emphasising poverty and sanitation issues. The main documents outlining the mandate of UN-HABITAT are the Vancouver Declaration on Human Settlements (1976), Habitat Agenda (1996), Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlements (1996), the Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements in the New Millennium (2001), and Resolution 56/206 (2002).

To address urban SD challenges, UN-HABITAT’s Governing Council in 2005 asked the agency to prepare a Medium-Term Strategic and Institutional Plan. The vision of the plan is to help create by 2013 the necessary conditions for concerted international and national efforts to minimize the growth of slums and to set the stage for the subsequent reduction in and reversal of the number of slum dwellers. The plan’s overall strategic goal is to support governments and their development partners to achieve more

2 http://www.unhabitat.org/downloads/docs/1176_6455_The_Habitat_Agenda.pdf
4 http://www.unhabitat.org/content.asp?cid=2071&catid=1&typeid=25&subMenuid=0
5 http://ww2.unhabitat.org/about/documents/gae.pdf
sustainable urbanization. It aims to promote policy and institutional reform in order to have impacts at the appropriate scale.

Moreover, UN-HABITAT has currently 5 priority themes: governance; environmental planning and management; urban economy; education, training and research; and urban planning. UN-Habitat’s initiatives on these themes include projects\(^6\) (e.g. Local Government Association And Urban Development Capacity Building Project in Iraq and Governance And Development Support Programme in Afghanistan) to reports\(^7\) (e.g. UN-HABITAT Climate Change Strategy 2010-2013 to programmes made in cooperation with other UN bodies (e.g. Sustainable Urban Development Network, Best Practices and Local Leadership etc.).

Currently, much emphasis in the context of urban SD is put into the upcoming 3\(^{rd}\) United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development ("HABITAT III"), which will take place in 2016. After the United Nations General Assembly convened the Habitat I conference in Vancouver in 1976, its commitments on sustainable human settlements were reconfirmed at the Habitat II in Istanbul in 1996. The Habitat Agenda was adopted as a global plan of action for adequate shelter for all. In 2016, world leaders aim to elaborate on the contents of the first two conferences by taking further steps at Habitat III. The third conference should offer the opportunity to member states to discuss a New Urban Agenda focussing on policies and strategies. It will address following key elements:

- **National Urban Policy** as an instrument to establish a connection between the dynamics of urbanisation and the overall process of national development;
- **Laws, institutions and systems of governance** which create the normative basis of action underlying the process of urbanisation; and
- **Urban economy** in order to strengthen urban economic development worldwide.

This conference is a recent proof that the importance of urban sustainability is further increasing within the UN. With Habitat III, the UN hopes to bring the relevant actors together and to link results with national legislation in order to provide boost and ownership to implementation of urban sustainable development.

**UN-DESA**

The [United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA)](http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/publications/policy_briefs/policybrief40.pdf) is involved in several joint initiatives on sustainable cities and policy briefs on smart cities. For instance, the "**Integrated Strategy for Sustainable Cities**"\(^8\) is a policy brief on the integrated approach to build sustainable cities that involves the coordination of objectives and programmes between different city stakeholders as well as the linkages between and within socio-economic sectors. UN-DESA also manages the [UN Office for SD (UNOSD)](http://www.unosd.org/index.php?menu=17) and together they organised an "**International Symposium on Sustainable Cities: Empowering...**"
Local Governments through Capacity Building and Knowledge Sharing” which took place in Incheon, Republic of Korea.

UN-DESA has an own Division for Sustainable Development dealing with sustainable cities and human settlements. The Division for Sustainable Development (DSD) provides leadership in promoting and coordinating implementation of the sustainable development agenda of the United Nations mainly referring to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). The homepage of this division provides information on Sustainable Development Action Networks which are action-oriented communities where stakeholders may collaborate and share information on certain sustainable development topics in order to implement concrete policies, plans, programmes projects in support of the objectives of the network. One of the Sustainable Development Action Networks is on Sustainable Cities. In order to provide information for potential project partners, UNDESA presents projects of stakeholders related to sustainable cities online. Moreover, it organises events, such as the special event on Sustainable Cities with Local Authorities Major Groups.

**UNEP**

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has an urban environment unit which aims to integrate the urban dimension in UNEP’s work dealing with issues that have a local and international dimension, such as air pollution, coastal areas, waste, biodiversity and climate change. Also, in cooperation with other partners, UNEP supports governments to address key urban environmental issues at national, regional and global levels, runs several urban key programmes, such as the “Sustainable Cities Programme” with UN-Habitat, and also works closely with city networks, such as Cities Alliance and GEO-Cities. Another example to mention is the “Global Initiative for Resource-Efficient Cities” which aims to reduce pollution levels, to improve resource efficiency and to reduce infrastructure costs in cities on a global scale.

**UN Global Compact**

The UN Global Compact is a strategic policy initiative for businesses that commit themselves to aligning their operations with principles in the areas of human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption. It is also considered as a practical framework for the development and implementation of sustainability policies and practices offering work streams, management tools and resources in order to help advance sustainable business models and markets.

In terms of urban SD, the Global Compact Cities Programme represents a large corporate responsibility initiative providing a framework for translating UN principles on Human Rights, Labour Standards, Environment and Anti-Corruption into day-to-day urban governance and management. The Cities Programme supports a holistic approach to sustainability that considers, plans for and measures impact across four social domains: the economic; ecological; political; and cultural dimension.

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2.1.2 International policy documents related to urban SD

**Local Agenda 21**

Local Agenda 21 specifically refers to sustainable development in local communities and cities. It is a comprehensive action plan with global, national and local considerations set up by organisations of the UN System, governments, and major groups in every area in which humans have impacts on the environment. The Local Agenda 21 is the result of Agenda 21, which was decided at the UN Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The “local” refers to the municipal implementation of Agenda 21.

Chapter 7 of Agenda 21 deals with “Promoting Sustainable Human Settlement Development” and provides objectives, programme areas, activities and means of implementation around the topic of human settlements. The following aspects point out the most important objectives of the document (UNCED, 1992):

- to improve the social, economic and environmental quality of human settlements and the living and working environments of all people, in particular the urban and rural poor (paragraph 7.8);
- to ensure sustainable management of all urban settlements, particularly in developing countries, in order to enhance their ability to improve living conditions of residents (paragraph 7.15);
- to provide for the land requirements of human settlement development through environmentally sound physical planning and land use (paragraph 7.28);
- to ensure the provision of adequate environmental infrastructure facilities in all settlements by the year 2025 (paragraph 7.38);
- to adopt policies and technologies and to exchange information on them in order to enable the construction sector to meet human settlement development goals (paragraph 7.68);
- to improve human resource development and capacity-building in all countries by enhancing the personal and institutional capacity of all actors, particularly indigenous people and women, involved in human settlement development (paragraph 7.76).

Europe has led the way in realizing Local Agenda 21 (LA 21) initiatives. Since 1992, more than 5,000 European communities have launched LA 21 initiatives. However, they are marked by national differences in the rate at which LAs 21 are implemented. Following the Rio Conference in 1992, the “European Campaign for Sustainable Cities and Towns” has been launched in Aalborg in 1994. On the basis of the Rio Agenda 21, the issue of realisation at the local level was treated in greater details and specifically for Europe. The final document, the Aalborg Charter, has since been signed by several thousand European communities that have thus committed themselves to realizing Local Agenda 21 processes.

**Rio +20 Outcome Document**

In 2012, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) Rio+20 produced the outcome document, ‘The Future We Want’. The document includes four paragraphs to ‘Sustainable cities and human settlements’ within the fifth chapter of ‘Framework for action and follow-up’. These paragraphs emphasize the UN commitment to and the importance of sustainable cities:
• “Cities can promote economically, socially and environmentally sustainable societies. In this regard, we recognize the need for a holistic approach to urban development and human settlements” (para.134);
• “We commit to promote an integrated approach to planning and building sustainable cities and urban settlements” (para.135);
• “We emphasize the importance of increasing the number of metropolitan regions, cities and towns that are implementing policies for sustainable urban planning and design, involvement of multiple stakeholders, important role of municipal governments in setting a vision for sustainable cities” (para.136); and
• “We recognize that partnerships among cities and communities play an important role in promoting sustainable development” (para.137).

After Rio+20, the UN launched a process to develop a set of **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** building on the experience of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In this process, a Sustainable Development Goal on Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements specifically for cities has been also proposed\(^\text{12}\) (for more details, please see chapter 1.3.1 above).

### 2.2 The European activities

Within the EU policy system, responsibilities on urban sustainable development are shared by several Directorate Generals and included in various policy documents, also comprising initiatives on sustainable cities. Thus, various parallel policy mechanisms exist which are not always directly linked to each other, but pursuing the same or similar objectives. Furthermore, funding schemes as well as tools are provided by EU institutions to enhance sustainable development in European urban areas.

In the following sections, we provide an overview of how urban sustainable development issues and activities are addressed in various EU policy strategies, by different EU institutions, and by funding schemes.

#### 2.2.1 Policy strategies

**Europe 2020 Strategy: European Innovation Partnership Smart Cities and Communities**

As part of the Europe 2020 framework, urban sustainable development issues are addressed in as part of the Innovation Union Flagship Initiative. In 2012, the European Commission launched the **European Innovation Partnership Smart Cities and Communities (EIP SCC)**\(^\text{13}\) which is one of the EIPs launched within the Innovation Union Flagship Initiative. The Partnership follows the Smart Cities and Communities Initiative which was launched in 2011. The EIP SCC is a partnership across the areas of **energy, transport, and information and communication**, with the objective to enhance progress in areas such as energy production, distribution and use, mobility, transport and information and communication technologies. With the aim of coming up with scalable and transferable solutions to contribute to the EU’s 20/20/20 climate action goals, it looks to reduce high-energy consumption, green-house-gas emissions, bad air quality and congestion of roads. The EIP SCC focus will thus **support existing and**

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\(^{12}\) See for instance: http://urbansdg.org

\(^{13}\) http://ec.europa.eu/research/innovation-union/index_en.cfm?pg=eip
**future EU initiatives for urban areas in the field of environment and climate policies.** It ultimately looks to establish strategic partnerships between industry and European cities to develop the urban systems and infrastructures of tomorrow. With the aim of boosting the development of smart technologies in cities, the European Commission pools research resources from energy, transport and ICT supporting demonstration projects in cities. Each demonstration project financed under the same scheme must combine all the three sectors in order to create synergies.

The EIP SCC consists of the High Level Group and the Smart Cities Stakeholder Platform. In the High Level Group, there are high level representatives from industry, research and cities. Each High Level member elects an associate from their company/organisation to support them in their work (Sherpa Group). Together they are responsible for the Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP), which helps define how concepts promoting Smart Cities are put into practice. It also looks at how the European Commission can support these measures during the next Research Framework Programme – Horizon 2020. The Smart Cities Stakeholder Platform is the collaborative, networking and knowledge sharing tool of Smart Cities and Communities. It collects and analyses input from all stakeholders in order to: give advice to the High Level Group to feed into the Strategic Implementation Plan; and provide detailed feedback to stakeholders who can use it to create their own activities and projects. Ultimately the High Level Group and the Smart Cities Stakeholder Platform work together to encourage and support Smart Cities concepts to be embraced on a wide scale.

**The 6th and 7th Environmental Action Programme**

Besides the Europe 2020 Strategy, there are various European policy mechanisms that have at least one section dealing with urban sustainable development or sustainable cities. For instance, the 7th Environmental Action Programme sets a strategic agenda for environmental policy-making with objectives to be achieved by 2020. It identifies cities as crucial engines for addressing environmental problems and risks. Thus, in order to enhance the sustainability of EU cities, the 7th EAP includes the goal for the majority of cities in the EU to be implementing policies for sustainable urban planning by 2020. The main responsible body to support these targets within the European Commission is DG Environment. However, other DGs are involved in urban initiatives, such as DG Energy, DG Digital Agenda, DG Regional Development and DG for Regional and Urban Policy.

**EU Sustainable Development Strategy**

The renewed EU Sustainable Development Strategy of 2006 includes several key challenges and required actions. Sustainable transport is one of these key challenges in the EU SDS and ensuring transport systems meeting society’s economic, social and environmental needs. In the EU SDS, one of the actions to tackle transport systems is to develop and implement urban transport plans and systems taking into account technical guidance provided by the Commission and considering closer cooperation between cities and surrounding regions. Moreover, the EU SDS in the section on mobilizing actors and multiplying success refers to the role of cities in SD (para 29):

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“With regard to the important role of local and regional levels in delivering sustainable development and building up social capital, it is the overall aim to build sustainable communities in urban and rural areas where citizens live and work and jointly create a high quality of life. Approaches like the Local Agenda 21 and other processes with broad public participation must be further strengthened and promoted. Municipalities, cities and towns should be invited to sign and implement the Aalborg Commitments. Networks at different levels should support these activities.”

2.2.2 EU institutions and examples of projects

Within the European Commission, several Directorate-Generals (DGs) of the European Commission have responsibilities that include urban SD and sustainable cities, including various programmes and projects.

**DG Regional and Urban Policy**

The mission of the [DG for Regional and Urban Policy](https://ec.europa.eu/regionales/en) is to strengthen economic, social and territorial cohesion by reducing disparities between the levels of development of regions and countries of the EU.

Examples of DG Regio projects related to urban sustainability are:

- [URBACT](https://ec.europa.eu/regionales/regionale-aktiviteter/urbact) is a European exchange and learning programme promoting sustainable urban development. It tries to enable cities to work together to develop solutions to major urban challenges, reaffirming the key role they play in facing increasingly complex societal changes. Furthermore, the project helps cities to develop pragmatic solutions that are sustainable, and that integrate economic, social and environmental dimensions.

- [JESSICA Joint European Support for Sustainable Investment in City Areas](https://ec.europa.eu/regionales/jessica) is an initiative of the European Commission developed in co-operation with the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB). Its mission is to promote sustainable urban development and regeneration through financial engineering mechanisms. JESSICA supports projects in areas, such as urban infrastructure, heritage or cultural sites, redevelopment of brownfield sites, university buildings and energy efficiency improvements.

DG Regio also funds sustainable urban projects mainly through its [Structural Funds scheme](https://ec.europa.eu/regionales/en), the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Cohesion Fund:

- [ERDF](https://ec.europa.eu/regionales/erdf) aims to strengthen economic and social cohesion on the European Union by correcting imbalances between its regions. The ERDF focuses its investments on several key priority areas. This is known as ‘thematic concentration’: (a) Innovation and research; (b) the digital agenda; (c) support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs); and (d) the low-carbon economy. Since many years, sustainable development is included in the Structural Funds regulation as a cross-cutting theme that has to be included in all programming documents. The ERDF also gives particular attention to specific territorial characteristics. ERDF action is also in fact designed to reduce economic, environmental and social problems in [urban areas](https://ec.europa.eu/regionales/en), with a special focus on sustainable urban development. At least 5% of the ERDF resources are set aside for this field, through ‘integrated actions’ managed by cities.
The Cohesion Fund is aimed at Member States whose Gross National Income (GNI) per inhabitant is less than 90% of the EU average. It aims to strengthen economic and social disparities and to promote sustainable development, and it is now subject to the same rules of programming, management and monitoring as the ERDF and ESF though the Common Provisions Regulation. Among its investment priorities (Art.4), the Cohesion Fund takes into consideration the urban environment and supports:

1) the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors by, among others, “promoting low-carbon strategies for all types of territories, in particular for urban areas” (our emphasis);
2) climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management;
3) the environment and promoting resource efficiency by, among others, “taking action to improve the urban environment, to revitalise cities” (our emphasis); and,
4) sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructures.

DG Environment

DG Environment has the objective to protect, preserve and improve the environment for present and future generations. Among these, the policy on sustainable development also takes into consideration the theme of ‘sustainable cities and the ‘urban environment’. The division on SD policy undertakes work on smart cities and developed the Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment, which was adopted in 2006 with the collaboration of the EU Expert Group on the Urban Environment and several other stakeholders. Moreover, DG Environment deals with the urban environment by linking main European Commission policies on urban issues, such as air pollution, noise, clean urban transport, energy efficiency in buildings and urban regeneration.

Support for cities is provided by projects or tools and urban environment data. In order to illustrate what is done, two projects are exemplified:

- The European Green Capital Award enables cities to inspire each other and share examples of good practices in situ. The award is given to cities that as a consistent record of achieving high environmental standards, can act as a role model to inspire other cities, and promote best practices to all other European cities. It is the result of an initiative taken by 15 European cities and the Association of Estonian cities in 2006 which was launched by the European Commission in 2008.
- European Mobility Week Award scheme rewards the local authority that raise public awareness of sustainable mobility issues and make achievements towards sustainable urban transport. The winning city is chosen by an independent panel of transport experts.

DG Environment makes funding available through two different programmes:

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17 http://ec.europa.eu/environment/urban/thematic_strategy.htm
18 http://ec.europa.eu/environment/european-green-capital/about-the-award/
19 http://www.mobilityweek.eu/home/
1) The **LIFE fund** is the European Union’s financial instrument supporting environmental and nature conservation projects throughout the Union and in some candidate and neighbouring countries. As part of this funding scheme, projects on urban SD can also be funed. Since 1992 LIFE has co-financed some 2,750 projects for a total of €1.35 billion.

2) The **Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme – Entrepreneurship and Innovation Programme (CIP-EIP)** supports projects in eco-innovation through three initiatives: financial instruments, network of actors and pilot and market replication projects.

### DG Energy

DG Energy has launched initiatives that address smart cities and are exemplified here:

- **CONCERTO Initiative** aims to demonstrate that the energy-optimisation of districts and communities as a whole is more cost-effective than optimising each building individually, if all relevant stakeholders work together and integrate different energy-technologies in a smart way. It started in 2005 and has co-funded more than 175 Million Euro, 58 cities and communities in 22 projects in 23 countries. CONCERTO is an initiative within the European Research Framework Programme (FP6 and FP7);

- **The Platform Smart Cities and Communities** has been set up on behalf of DG Energy as part of the Smart Cities and Communities Initiative under the SET-Plan to make information accessible on potential technologies to enable cities and local governments to find and finance suitable technological solutions. In finding suitable technologies, four working groups are involved in following topics: Energy Supply Networks, Mobility and Transport, Finance Group, Smart City Roadmap Group and ICT4 Smart Cities Group. The objective is to develop formalized information of technology solutions. Moreover, the Platform is a key component of the European Commission’s strategy to support Smart Cities.

### DG Transport and Mobility

**DG Transport and Mobility** is responsible for the work on a series of inter-modal transport issues and addresses a wide range of transport themes, such as passenger rights, security and safety, sustainable transport and clean and urban transport. Within the theme **Clean and urban transport**, DG Transport is responsible for the **Urban Mobility Package**20, which reinforces supporting measures in the area of transport by: (i) Sharing experiences, show-casing best practices, and fostering cooperation; (ii) Providing targeted financial support; (iii) Focusing research and innovation on delivering solutions for urban mobility challenges; and,(iv) Involving the Member States and enhance international cooperation.

The main initiatives by DG Transport on smart cities are:

- The **CIVITAS Initiative** helps cities across Europe to implement and test innovative and integrated strategies, which address energy, transport and environmental objectives. So far, projects in 59 cities have been or are being supported. The annual CIVITAS Forum brings together practitioners and politicians from the CIVITAS cities. The initiative runs until 2016 and thanks to an EU-funded investment of well over EUR 200 million, the project has guided cities to

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introduce improvements measures. Examples include a public transport ticketing system in Tallinn, Estonia, a 100% clean bus fleet in Toulouse, France, waterborne goods transport in Bremen, Germany and a new traffic control system in Bologna, Italy;

- The Eltis project facilitates the exchange of information, knowledge and experiences in the field of urban mobility in Europe. Eltis supports the creation of urban transport systems, which use less energy and produce fewer emissions, while improving the competitiveness of urban areas and the mobility and quality of life of its citizens. Created more than 10 years ago, Eltis is now Europe's main portal on urban mobility. It organizes regular events and frequently provides best practice examples of European cities in terms of sustainable transport.

**DG Connect**

The DG for Communications Networks, Content and Technology (DG CONNECT) works with digital technologies that can help deliver the growth that the EU needs. ICT for Sustainable Growth is a Forum within the Digital Agenda Flagship Initiative that addresses energy efficiency, water management and climate change adaptation. It deals with several policy areas such as energy efficiency of the ICT Sector, Energy Efficient Buildings, Smart Grids, Waste Management and Smart Sustainable Cities. In regard of Smart Sustainable Cities, ICT is identified as a significant means to enable a better use of energy in buildings, transport, street lightning and in other areas.

2.2.3 Tools and mechanisms

Tools and mechanisms to enhance urban sustainable development in a multi-level governance approach comprise ‘knowledge exchange platforms’ and ‘top-down implementation projects’. In this section, top-down exchange platforms are described.

**Reference Framework for European Sustainable Cities (RFSC)**

The RFSC is a joint initiative of EU Member States, the European Commission and European organisations of local governments and serves as online toolkit for European local authorities that work towards integrated sustainable development approaches. It contributes to urban sustainable development by helping cities to promote their work and by providing space and support to the community of cities.

**European Urban Knowledge Network**

The European Urban Knowledge Network is an inter-governmental urban network and was launched at the informal ministerial conference on urban policy “Cities Empower Europe” in 2004. The aim was to develop a pilot project for a European urban knowledge exchange network with the voluntary participation of Member States and the support of URBACT.

2.3 City networks on urban SD

In the following sections, we present a selection of city networks that operate on the global or European level, and that focus exclusively or include sustainable development issues. For an overview of more city networks, and a more in-depth description of the ones you find below, please see ESDN Case Study No. 15.
2.3.1 Global networks

The most important city networks operating at a global scale are **ICLEI** (Local Governments for Sustainable Development), **UCLG** (The Global Network of Cities, Local and Regional Governments), **Cities Alliance** and **C 40 Cities**. Please note that ICLEI has a global and a European section and thus will be considered as a global as well as a European network in this chapter.

**ICLEI (Local Governments for Sustainable Development)** is a membership association consisting of 12 mega-cities, 550 large cities and urban regions, 450 small and medium-sized cities and towns in 86 countries dedicated to sustainable development. It receives its mandate from its members’ local governments and municipal organizations and is managed by an ICLEI Council, Global and Regional Executive and a Management Committee. Beyond its global outreach, ICLEI has a European section with its own European Secretariat. The global alliance encompasses a number of initiatives: 1) a network of local governments that facilitates city-to-city cooperation; 2) thematic networks that bring together cities; 3) self-assessment tools for cities, such as Local Authorities Self Assessment of Local Agenda 21, 4) tools like eco-budget etc.

**UCLG (The Global Network of Cities, Local and Regional Governments)** is present in 140 UN member states. Its members include individual cities and national associations of local governments. More precisely, over 1,000 cities across 95 countries as well as 112 Local Government Associations are direct members of UCLG. This city network has a decentralised structure with 7 regional sections covering Africa, Asia-Pacific, Euro-Asia, Europe, Latin America, Middle East and West Asia, North America, and one metropolitan section. These regional and metropolitan sections are independent legal entities which conduct their own regional activities. UCLG supports international cooperation between cities and their associations, and facilitates programmes, networks and partnerships to build the capacity of local governments.

**Cities Alliance** is a global partnership for urban poverty reduction and the promotion of the role of cities in sustainable development. Members comprise local authorities, national governments, NGOs and multi-lateral organisations, such as the EU, UN-Habitat and the World Bank. This network’s objectives are to support cities in enhancing national policy frameworks to address urban development needs, developing and implementing local inclusive strategies and plans and developing mechanisms to engage citizens in city or urban governance.

**C 40 Cities** is a global network of large cities taking action to address climate change by developing policies and programs that generate measurable reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and climate risks. It offers direct access, peer-to-peer exchange and research and communities to cities. More precisely, it helps cities to advance significant climate policies and initiatives through increased local capacity. Moreover, it provides expertise to cities to design and implement climate policies and projects. Through creating networks, C 40 is building a community of practice to identify solutions, share lessons learned and provide assistance to policymakers to adapt approaches to local conditions.

Besides the mentioned networks, there are several others, such as **Eco Compact Cities Network** and the **World Mayor Council on Climate Change**, which aim to foster knowledge exchange on topics and projects related to sustainable development.
2.3.2 European networks

City networks also operate on a European scale in order to reflect European objectives on urban sustainable development. Among the most well-known European networks are the Covenant of Mayors, Eurocities, ICLEI Europe and CEMR (Council of European Municipalities and Regions).

The Covenant of Mayors has been portrayed by European institutions as an exceptional model of multi-level governance. It was launched in 2008 by the European Commission and interacts with a wide range of projects, policies and initiatives from European institutions. Its operating office is lead by several city networks, such as Energy Cities, Climate Alliance, Eurocities. It aims to meet the EU’s goal of a 20% CO₂ reduction by making signatories to commit to territorial Sustainable Action Plans. In order to reach this goal, the Covenant of Mayors offers assistance towards the implementation of Sustainable Energy Action Plans.

Eurocities was founded by the mayors of six cities in 1986 and is a network of large European cities (all over 250,000 inhabitants). It covers a wide range of urban topics and activities ranging from culture, economy, environment, knowledge society, mobility to social affairs. However, it focuses on climate actions, social inclusion projects and recovery in terms of sustainable economic development. Its main aim is to provide broad exchange of knowledge and experiences to cities also serving as a political platform for politicians. In order to gain membership to Eurocities, individual member cities have to pay a membership fee.

ICLEI Europe is the European section of the global city network ICLEI. It deals with a great number of areas related to sustainability, including biodiversity, climate change and adaptation and mitigation, but also with urban governance issues. ICLEI Europe represents local governments in all relevant policy processes for sustainability in Europe and works together with other European networks, the European Commission, the Committee of the Regions and many other organisations involved in formulating EU policies and strategies. Since 1992, its secretariat is situated in ICLEI’s member city Freiburg, Germany.

CEMR or Council of European Municipalities and Regions was founded by European mayors in 1951 and is the oldest and most wide-ranging European association of local and regional governments from 40 European countries, including all levels of territories: local, intermediate and regional. Its aim is to enhance the local and regional contribution by influencing European policy and legislation in all areas related to municipalities and regions and providing a form for debate between local and regional authorities via their national representative associations. The areas of CEMR related to sustainable development covered have a more local character and include air quality, energy efficiency, employment and local life.

For some concrete examples on how urban SD is applied in practice, please see the ESDN Case Study No.16. It focuses on the experiences of three cities: Copenhagen, Newcastle and Vienna.
3 Workshop sessions

The workshop will have various sessions and each will focus on different aspects of urban sustainable development.

After welcomed addresses and an overview of the workshop objectives, the opening and orientation session will include a keynote on important policy topics, visions of sustainable cities, and multi-level governance challenges. The main aim of this session is to provide background information and a general framing of the workshop topic.

In the second session, representatives of various city networks, that focus on or include urban SD in their work, will provide opening statements, followed by discussions among the speakers and with the workshop participants. Each speaker will focus on: (a) aspects of SD that the network focuses on and how this frames their work and structure; (b) how they cooperate with other political levels (EU, national) and other city networks; and (c) three key insights on successful governance to achieve urban SD/sustainable cities.

This is followed by a group work exercise, in which the workshop participants are invited to discuss important insights and drivers for successful governance to achieve urban SD.

After the lunch break, various speakers will provide an overview of global and European policies, programs and initiatives on urban SD. The speakers will talk about: (i) what makes cities particularly important for SD; (ii) what their policies, programs or initiatives offer for cities in order to achieve urban SD; and (iii) how to achieve a good collaboration between the different political levels for urban SD/sustainable cities. This is, again, followed by discussion among the speakers and with the workshop participants.

In the final plenary discussion, the workshop participants are invited to reflect on how to improve multi-level governance collaboration for urban SD.
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