

UBC Policy Positions

“Urban Agenda for the EU”

I. Introduction

The Urban Agenda for the EU acknowledges the polycentric structure of Europe and the diversity (social, economic, territorial, cultural and historical) of Urban Areas across the EU. Furthermore, the Urban Agenda for the EU acknowledges the importance of Urban Areas of all sizes and contexts in the further development of the European Union.

A growing number of urban challenges are of a local nature, but require a wider territorial solution (including urban-rural linkages) and cooperation within functional urban areas. At the same time, urban solutions have the potential to lead to wider territorial benefits. Urban Authorities therefore need to cooperate within their functional areas and with their surrounding regions, connecting and reinforcing territorial and urban policies.

Key objectives of the Urban Agenda for the EU

1. The Urban Agenda for the EU aims to realise the full potential and contribution of Urban Areas towards achieving the objectives of the Union and related national priorities in full respect of subsidiarity and proportionality principles and competences.
2. The Urban Agenda for the EU strives to establish a more effective integrated and coordinated approach to EU policies and legislation with a potential impact on Urban Areas and also to contribute to territorial cohesion by reducing the socioeconomic gaps observed in urban areas and regions.
3. The Urban Agenda for the EU strives to involve Urban Authorities in the design of policies, to mobilise Urban Authorities for the implementation of EU policies, and to strengthen the urban dimension in these policies. By identifying and striving to overcome unnecessary obstacles in EU policy, the Urban Agenda for the EU aims to enable Urban Authorities to work in a more systematic and coherent way towards achieving overarching goals. Moreover, it will help make EU policy more urban-friendly, effective and efficient.

The challenges with regard to safety and security in public spaces are many. They include access to good quality and non-segregated basic services (such as education, health and

social care, and law enforcement), societal resilience and community empowerment and enhancing the protection of buildings and infrastructure. Urban authorities, who are familiar with local challenges, are amongst the most important players when it comes to ensuring that actual and perceived security issues are addressed.

Culture and cultural heritage are vital assets for regional competitiveness and social cohesion and help to shape the identity of cities and regions. Furthermore, cultural participation has a significant impact on residents' quality of life, contributing to their wellbeing and sense of belonging. Cities are perceived as laboratories of cultural innovation; they play a key role in enabling citizens and communities to benefit from culture and cultural heritage, while simultaneously mobilising stakeholders and authorities to act in support.

Cities are centers for driving positive change and development, supporting the move towards a sustainable society. Many of the challenges we face today – social segregation, air pollution, provision of affordable housing, and climate change – are being tackled in cities.

II. Positions

1. Integrated urban development

- 1.1. UBC stands for good urban governance at various levels of administration (local, regional, national) and between different actors (elected officials, civil servants, citizens' groups etc.). This fosters civic engagement and ensures inclusive participation in integrated planning and public finance management.
- 1.2. UBC insists on the social dimension of urban development through inclusive and safe cities in order to better address urban poverty, security, inequalities, forced displacement, migration and social exclusion.
- 1.3. UBC strongly believes in encouraging adequate, affordable and green housing, and slum upgrading promoting both relevant urban policies and strategies and physical upgrading;

2. Innovative and resilient cities

- 2.1 UBC strives for green and resilient cities through the sustainable use of natural resources and protection and enhancement of natural capital (energy efficiency and biodiversity in cities), and the transition towards a low-carbon, climate-resilient and circular economy. This reduces the risk of and vulnerability to natural disasters and the ecological, economic and health impacts of pollution.

- 2.2 UBC stands for prosperous and innovative cities with a focus on sustainable growth and job creation, fostering a responsible business environment and making it attractive to invest in the 'green economy' and in clean technology.
- 2.3 UBC focuses on boosting investments through innovative and financial arrangements by bringing together different sources of funding (blending, private-public partnerships/external investment plan, private-sector facility) to finance large-scale infrastructure investment and maintenance that is consistent with a low-carbon, climate-resilient and circular economy.
- 2.4 UBC supports 'smart cities' through interventions that turn digitalisation into a positive force to create employment and to promote socially responsible entrepreneurship.

3. Inclusive communities

- 3.1. UBC will work on further enhancing job creation, with a specific focus on women and youth, by addressing educational needs and stimulating an enabling environment for the private sector, in particular local firms promoting inclusive and social enterprises (micro and small to medium-sized) and innovative market solutions;
- 3.2. UBC will keep fostering gender equality and women's and youth empowerment in city's development and advocating for better educational and employment opportunities focusing on women and youth as drivers for transformation of society and democratization;
- 3.3. UBC will work on continuous strengthening the access to basic services and network infrastructures, such as water, sanitation, waste (including recycling), energy (including efficiency), and public transport;

4. Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees

- 4.1. UBC strives for sustainable enhancing refugees who stay in their host cities to be enabled to live in dignity and be provided with access to employment and essential services such as education, housing and health care. They need to be encouraged to integrate into their new societies and to become fully fledged citizens of these municipalities.
- 4.2. UBC stresses that integration is not only a task for refugees who have to learn to live in new social environments, but also for the inhabitants of the receiving cities who have to learn new lessons about multicultural living together. The concerns of the inhabitants about the massive influx of refugees should be

taken into consideration. All involved parties in refugees' integration, such as local authorities and NGOs should be strongly supported.

- 4.3. UBC will work on further mainstreaming the integration of marginalised and vulnerable groups, including forcibly displaced persons and vulnerable migrants, to tackle inequalities such as land rights, tenure security, while also addressing protection and humanitarian needs;