

The EU Urban Agenda

More and more people are living, working and spending their leisure time in cities. Cities also offer space to establish businesses, and innovation flourishes in an urban environment. With the current (European) trend towards urbanisation, the importance of cities and urban areas is set to continue to grow. At the same time, growth is accompanied by complex issues, including an ever greater risk of segregation, increased criminality and environmental problems.

Through the EU Urban Agenda, national governments, cities, European institutions and other stakeholders will be working together for a sustainable, innovative and economically powerful Europe that offers a good quality of life.

Why an EU Urban Agenda?

International research has revealed that cities are of huge importance to Europe. They are the powerhouses of economic growth, innovation and employment opportunities. Cities are the living environment for 72% of all Europeans. This percentage is expected to rise to 80% by 2050. The developments in the cities are increasingly indicative for the quality of human life. Cities are facing ever greater social challenges in respect of the environment, transport and social cohesion. The EU Urban Agenda aims to address those challenges.

Cities are the place where European sectoral legislation comes together (in sometimes conflicting ways) and is being implemented. To fully exploit the potential of urban areas the urban dimension should be stronger embedded within the EU policies. This explicitly does not mean new or more competences for the EU, but a better working method, focused on cooperation between the EU, member states and cities.

What is the EU Urban Agenda?

The EU Urban Agenda aims to promote cooperation between member states, the European Commission and cities in order to stimulate growth, liveability and innovation in the cities of Europe. It is a new working method to ensure maximum utilisation of the growth potential of cities and successfully tackle the social challenges. Part of this new approach includes the development of a range of European partnerships. Within these partnerships, the European Commission, Member States and European cities will work together to ensure that the urban dimension is strengthened in EU policies through:

1. Improving the development, implementation and evaluation of EU legislation ('Better Regulation');
2. Ensuring better access to and utilisation of European funds;
3. Improving the EU urban knowledge base and stimulating the sharing of best practices and cooperation between cities.

The Dutch national Urban Agenda and the EU Urban Agenda

Next to the EU Urban Agenda, a national Urban Agenda is being developed in the Netherlands. The Dutch national government is developing "city deals" on different urban issues with cities. The Dutch national Urban Agenda and the EU Urban Agenda are complementary to one another. Increasingly, urban issues are transnational in nature and mutually comparable. The Dutch national Urban Agenda can provide examples of innovative cooperation for other Member States. Dutch cities can also learn from other European cities about how to deal with urban challenges. At the same time, within the national Urban Agenda, European regulations can be identified that restrict Dutch urban areas in their competitive and innovative capacity. These cases can be included in the dialogue within the EU Urban Agenda, aimed at improving EU policy.

The role of the EU Urban Agenda during the Dutch Presidency of the Council of the European Union

During the first half of 2016, the Netherlands will hold the Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

- On May 30, 2016, a Ministerial meeting will be held in Amsterdam, attended by European Ministers responsible for urban development. The aim is to have an agreement among these ministers about the start of the EU Urban Agenda and launch the first partnerships.

During the Dutch EU-presidency several meetings will be organised, linked to the EU Urban Agenda.

- On April 14, the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment and the Ministry of Economic Affairs will organise an innovation event: the Innovation Fair 2016 'Cities of the future', consisting of a network of 4000 entrepreneurs, policy makers, academics and citizens with promising innovative initiatives.
- On April 21, the City of Amsterdam will be hosting a meeting for mayors of European capital cities.
- On May 30, the Committee of the Regions will host a high level conference with European local and regional politicians about the EU Urban Agenda.
- On May 30, a City Makers Summit will be held, to enable European social innovators from different European cities to come together to exchange experiences and deliver input for the EU Urban Agenda.

What can you do?

Experiences and knowledge from European cities are of huge importance. The Member States of the European Union, European cities and European institutions will develop partnerships together. An ongoing search is underway for expertise from stakeholders that can help make these partnerships a success and strengthen the urban dimension of EU-policy. Stakeholders are hereby requested to deliver input for better European regulations, better access to European funds and/or improving and helping initiate sharing best practices and cooperation.

What challenges is your organisation or project facing when it comes to EU policies? Where do you see specific opportunities? And what are the possible improvements? We would like to invite you to make a contribution to this new form of cooperation within the EU Urban Agenda.

For more information about the EU Urban Agenda, European partnerships and how you can make a contribution, please visit www.urbanagenda.nl.