

Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on ‘The role of urban regeneration in the future of urban development in Europe’

(2010/C 267/07)

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

- considers that when making strategic choices for the forthcoming programming period (2014-2020) the EU should recognise the strategic importance of urban regeneration and ensure that the urban dimension is given more priority in all its policies, with a view to making cities laboratories again, this time with a much fuller agenda, to help the EU out of the economic and financial crisis;
- proposes that an initiative be launched called ‘Urban regeneration for smart, sustainable and inclusive EU cities’. The EU’s cities can become the location of choice for implementing the seven flagship initiatives set out in the Europe 2020 Strategy;
- invites the Commission to closely analyse the mainstreaming of the URBAN Community Initiative in the ERDF Operational Programmes and to produce a specific mid-term evaluation of the results. In the light of this evaluation, it could be deemed necessary to reinforce the specific character of urban regeneration initiatives within the Structural Funds during the next programming period and also to improve its coordination with other policies within a European Urban Agenda;
- stresses that in those areas affected by urban decay, the city should once more be made an attractive place to live, capable of fulfilling everybody’s aspirations irrespective of their income levels; believes that distressed urban areas must not and cannot be abandoned, as they are a source of untapped talent and represent a waste of resources in terms of human and physical capital that lies idle when it could be put to productive use and contribute to overall economic growth;
- considers aggravation of social inequality to be a major challenge in most urban areas. In this regard, the new territorial cohesion objective added in the Lisbon Treaty should spur all levels of government to take these disparities into account in all urban sectoral policies, within the framework of integrated urban regeneration strategies.

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I. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Contribution of cities to development and transition from urban renovation to urban regeneration

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

1. believes that cities and city regions (as the conurbations of cities and their neighbouring municipalities) are crucibles of imagination and creativity and have within them both the opportunities for addressing the economic and financial problems facing the European Union and also the means to combat social exclusion, crime and poverty. However, the CoR believes that these must be recognised within Structural programmes to enable change and regeneration to take place;

2. recognises that the contribution of cities and urban centres ⁽¹⁾ to sustainable development of and between all levels of governance is becoming increasingly important. Cities are centres for culture, business, education, research and development, knowledge-intensive services and the financial sector, they are crossing points for the regional and international movement of goods and people and make a substantial contribution to integrating groups of people of different origins;

3. notes that some urban areas have been blighted by of environmental, economic and social problems, but also notes many examples of successful urban regeneration in Europe, funded with assistance of the EU;

4. underlines the fact that in many cases the concentration of the population in cities, which is to be attributed to illegal building and internal migration, happened so quickly that local authorities were unable to plan and cope. Social problems intensified and population groups were marginalised, so that their considerable employment and social skills were underutilised. In the developed world, run-down neighbourhoods have become an integral part of the urban fabric and are factors in social exclusion and increasing insecurity;

5. notes that, changes in economic structures, relocation of production activities and the introduction of new technologies, particularly in the goods transport sector (e.g. unitisation), have rapidly degraded infrastructure and land, (ports, railway stations), with far-reaching effects on the way neighbourhoods and whole cities are able to function socially and economically, confronting them with entirely new challenges;

⁽¹⁾ City regions (as the conurbations of cities and their neighbouring municipalities) need to be considered throughout this opinion.

6. stresses that urban renewal policies should form the basis for an appropriate model, with a broad base of activities covering forms of intervention ranging from regeneration of urban spaces to rehabilitation of existing housing stock. The new model of the sustainable city should rely on an innovative integrated approach to urban renewal that, in line with the Leipzig Charter, addresses environmental, social and economic issues, a model that does not advocate unlimited growth or building on greenfield sites, but focuses instead on controlling growth, preventing urban sprawl, revitalising the existing urban housing stock and social fabric, improving urban eco-efficiency, upgrading industrial zones and promoting more sustainable forms of transport, land-use planning at various levels (regional, county, local) and mixed use development as key points of reference;

7. notes that at the end of the 20th century there was an urgent need for measures to improve cities on a more targeted, cross-sectoral basis. The complexity of the issues called for a multi-faceted approach, which in turn created the need to frame urban regeneration programmes, whose goals, methods and tools were to a large extent integrated within a context of the wider geographical realities and economies of scale. The Committee believes that distressed urban areas must not and cannot be abandoned, as they are a source of untapped talent and represent a waste of resources in terms of human and physical capital that lies idle when it could be put to productive use and contribute to overall economic growth;

Role of local and regional authorities in urban development and relevance of the CoR

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

8. stresses that local and regional authorities should play a decisive and primary role in designing, implementing, monitoring, supporting and evaluating integrated urban regeneration strategies and in improving the urban environment in general. The diversity of European towns and cities calls for locally developed solutions and essentially for action at local level. Through numerous EU programmes and initiatives a great wealth of knowledge on urban development has been built up at European level and in individual cities. The Committee believes that local authorities should be encouraged to make use of all the knowledge accumulated at European level and in particular the 'urban acquis';

9. sees abundant opportunities for urban regeneration and believes that urban regeneration strategies must address the multiplicity of factors that are at the origin of the challenges faced by some urban areas. The Economic downturn in recent years may have had a proportionally greater impact on certain urban areas that due to their socioeconomic structure are slower to adapt than other areas of cities. Urban regeneration programmes should seek innovative ways of turning the agglomeration effects of central urban areas to the advantage of local populations;

10. believes that cities, working closely with their surrounding areas, bring major benefits to both people and businesses, not only as economic powerhouses and centres of trade and commerce, but in promoting individual freedoms, and as centres of creativity, research and excellence. On the other hand, cities face problems due to factors such as lifestyle and demographic changes, and even more commonly inappropriate urban development models. Urban regeneration and sustainability are currently at the forefront of the agenda for numerous local and regional authorities in the EU that are seeking to achieve sustainable growth as well as a modern infrastructure (with an emphasis on technological infrastructure), high levels of business attractiveness and a clean and healthy environment;

11. believes that many models of best practice already exist but are not sufficiently disseminated or implemented. The CoR therefore reiterates its call for a virtual network to disseminate good practice among Europe's cities and regions. The CoR has been closely associated with initiatives like the Covenant of Mayors and the European Green Capital Award, and has participated in the follow-up activities relating to the EU Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities in the framework of the Urban Development Group (UDG) of EU Member States. The Committee of the Regions has also recently adopted opinions on related issues, such as how cities and regions can contribute to achieving the European climate change and energy goals, the actions needed to promote energy efficiency and the EU Action Plan on Urban Mobility;

EU action in developing Europe's cities

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

12. believes that although there is no explicit provision for urban policy in the EU treaties, there has been considerable progress since 1990 in the area of urban development, in terms both of programmes and of know-how regarding action in cities. Throughout this period, cities have operated as open laboratories, with remarkable results, despite the limited funding available;

13. stresses that the EU can play a crucial role in supporting urban regeneration strategies. Drawing on the 'urban acquis', the Commission should be encouraged to increase its efforts to make

all existing knowledge and supporting actions on urban development available at local level in a coherent and structured way. This should include all EU policies that have a direct impact on urban development, in particular cohesion, employment, environment, broadband, transport and social policy;

14. welcomes the recently updated guide to the urban dimension in European Union policies for the period 2007-2013, published by the Interservice Group on Urban Development of the European Commission, and invites the Commission to explore the idea of updating and formalising a European Urban Agenda attached to a new framework for action or action plan for urban development that includes integrated urban regeneration among its top priorities whilst at the same time respecting the diverse contexts in which they would need to be applied;

15. supports all existing initiatives contributing to sustainable urban development, and in particular to integrated urban regeneration, in the context of cohesion policy, namely the urban strand of the Structural Funds, the Urban Audit, the Urban Atlas, the URBACT programme and the JESSICA initiative. Nevertheless, the Committee invites the Commission to closely analyse the mainstreaming of the URBAN Community Initiative in the ERDF Operational Programmes and to produce a specific mid-term evaluation of the results. In the light of this evaluation, it could be deemed necessary to reinforce the specific character of urban regeneration initiatives within the Structural Funds during the next programming period and also to improve its coordination with other policies within a European Urban Agenda;

16. welcomes the new approach to financing urban regeneration initiatives represented by JESSICA, especially since it establishes a clear link between funding and the need to develop integrated urban development plans, but would emphasise that grants are also a useful and necessary instrument for addressing market failures in the context of urban development. The Committee also expresses its concern regarding the visibility of JESSICA, the level of awareness among local and regional authorities, and perceived problems of implementation at Member State level;

17. believes that changes introduced to the Structural Funds regulation regarding the eligibility of energy efficiency and renewable energy investments in housing should be strongly supported. Nevertheless, support for housing, as established in the latest amendment to the ERDF regulation relating to the eligibility of housing initiatives in marginalised communities, should be more widely publicised, and must be placed firmly within the framework of an integrated urban development programme. The Committee therefore suggests that support for housing in seriously deprived areas should also be given via the Structural Funds. Good-quality housing is an essential precondition for the success of urban regeneration programmes. Financial support should only be provided in the framework of integrated programmes and under strict conditions to ensure that it benefits the local population in need and does not contribute to gentrification;

Sustainable urban regeneration

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

18. observes that the EU's cities are invited to work with the Union in efforts to overcome the economic and financial crisis, while also contributing towards deeper European integration. The three dimensions identified by the Spanish presidency as the basis for developing the debate on the role of urban regeneration in urban development are the pillars of sustainable development. The implementation of urban regeneration programmes should be fleshed out with thematic priorities where necessary, in order to set the issue in the current socio-economic context. More specifically, the Committee considers that the main items on the agenda should be issues such as urban governance and the role of local and regional authorities, funding of urban regeneration, the contribution of ICT to urban regeneration, the importance of local authority systems and procedures in the planning and implementation of urban regeneration programmes, the role of innovation in urban regeneration, and the contribution of urban regeneration to the development of external links and the internationalisation of cities. Therefore, it is clear that local and regional authorities have a vital role to play when it comes to working on urban regeneration, from land-use to urban planning and implementation, stressing the importance of regeneration over new urban development and the improvement of existing areas of cities over urban expansion;

The economic dimension of urban regeneration – contribution to smart growth

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

19. stresses that economic change in recent years, especially with the internationalisation of the economy, can affect proportionally more old or inner-city urban areas, which are slower to adapt than other areas of cities owing to their socio-economic structure. In this regard, cohesion policy measures are based on the idea that spatially unbalanced growth not only damages social cohesion but also constrains economic growth. This is even truer at local level and has recently been highlighted again, for instance in the Barca report;

20. underlines the need to stimulate innovative economic activities by providing appropriate environments and incentives, state-of-the-art infrastructure and fully-trained human capital;

21. considers that preserving both the material and immaterial cultural heritage by regenerating city centres with maximum respect for the historical and architectural heritage, adds value to the image, prestige and attractiveness of cities and promotes

cultural diversity, which plays a major economic role in the development of a knowledge-based economy and industrial growth, while promoting local development by supporting specialised, often highly skilled local employment;

22. points out that urban regeneration projects themselves, in terms of procedures and also results, should produce, incorporate and disseminate knowledge and innovation;

23. underlines that urban regeneration strategies must address the multiplicity of factors that are at the origin of the economic decay of some urban areas. The functional obsolescence of buildings, outdated infrastructure and accessibility problems are some of the most relevant. Many firms leave the city in search of lower operating costs and additional space, and many employees have followed their firms in search of a better quality of life (social services and transport) or a lower cost of living (lower rents and more favourable property prices). In order to meet the demands of firms willing to establish themselves in regenerated areas, urban regeneration programmes should seek innovative ways of using the available space and improve the delivery of services by cities, turning the agglomeration effects of central urban areas to their advantage;

24. notes that urban mobility problems, mainly congestion, plague many urban areas in Europe and that the solution cannot be reached just by building better infrastructure or pouring more money into public transport companies. Urban mobility increases the possibilities on offer to residents and businesses, and as such is both a factor promoting economic competitiveness and a driver of social cohesion. Efficient and affordable public transport should be available to all citizens, as it plays a key role in breaking the isolation of deprived areas. Given the grave environmental strain placed on urban areas, measures to promote environmentally friendly urban transport (research and demonstration projects for low- and zero-emission vehicles and moves to foster modal shift, including, for instance, car-sharing and the encouragement of inner-city bicycle use) are increasingly important. The Committee also re-states its support for development of sustainable urban mobility plans for, at least, the larger cities; it advocates the introduction of incentive measures at an EU level whereby European funding of urban transport projects would be contingent upon the existence of such plans and the adoption of public-private partnership mobility agreements;

25. stresses the need to take action to strengthen local entrepreneurship, by offering incentives to specific population groups, setting up business support agencies and organising appropriate events, recognises in this context the important role that can be played in helping the economy through smart growth by supporting women entrepreneurs;

The environmental dimension of urban regeneration – contribution to sustainable growth

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

26. notes that within the environmental dimension of urban regeneration high priority must be given to three major issues: climate change, combating the pollution of natural resources caused by human activities and generally using those resources more efficiently, and protection of habitats;

27. is convinced that even though Europe is already highly urbanised, the trend towards the expansion of urban areas is expected to continue in some zones, particularly in the most dynamic large and medium-sized agglomerations. As cities expand they could potentially destroy some resources and cause soil and water quality to deteriorate. Integrated urban regeneration programmes have the potential to stop or even reverse this trend by containing urban growth and regenerating the urban environment;

28. stresses that on the other hand, climate change and sea level rise due to human emissions of greenhouse gases are expected to accelerate during this century, posing a growing challenge for coastal urban areas, in particular, which will bear heavy costs, since massive resources are needed, inter alia, for coastal and flood defence measures. This also highlights the importance of the work of the Urban Development Group on a reference framework for sustainable European cities, which as well as more traditional environmental concerns in urban areas intends to address the climate change dimension and the problems posed by mitigation of and adaptation to its effects;

29. gives high priority to combating the pollution of natural resources caused by human activities, which is a key concern in urban regeneration, placing particular emphasis on actions that support pollution prevention. The Committee equally stresses the importance of taking care to gauge and limit the use of materials that harm the natural environment, by looking at their entire life-cycle (production, use, disposal);

30. underlines that retrofitting existing buildings with a view to improving energy efficiency is one of the most cost-effective ways of meeting the Kyoto commitments on climate change; it is estimated that CO₂ emissions from buildings and energy-related costs can be cut back by 42 %;

31. notes that cities are responsible for 70 % of greenhouse gas emissions and that the Leipzig Charter calls for cities to reduce their carbon footprints, conserve their resources and biodiversity, economise on energy and promote access to key public services.

There is therefore a need for immediate measures to limit cities' energy consumption, firstly by managing energy properly, and secondly by using renewable energy sources. Complementary measures should be taken to boost energy performance in the construction sector;

32. welcomes the Covenant of Mayors, involving almost 3 000 European cities pledging to exceed the three '20 % targets', an EU minimum legal requirement to be met by 2020. This initiative, as well as the European Green Capital award, was launched by the European Commission and has been endorsed and supported by the Committee of the Regions, which is also seeking to expand the Covenant to include the regional level;

33. acknowledges the important role of green areas and water bodies in urban regeneration programmes. Green areas and water bodies make an essential contribution to improving the climate of towns as they have a 'cooling' effect on the city, provide fresh air, filter pollution and reduce noise. Green recreation areas also contribute to urban liveability, thereby enhancing social cohesion. Greener cities are a target that everybody should focus on;

34. notes the increased scarcity of water resources globally and calls for urban regeneration programmes to address water conservation, particularly conservation of drinking water, effective management of water resources and alternative methods of capturing water. The water footprint of cities must be reduced;

35. considers the aesthetic quality of the built environment to be a crucial factor in cities' ability to compete internationally, their attractiveness and the quality of life of their inhabitants, and recommends that measures taken should include architectural and artistic activities;

36. recognises the value of the habitats surrounding or close to cities and sets great store by their protection and management, as an important gauge of urban regeneration, in connection with measures to raise environmental awareness and provide information to the general public;

37. notes the strong links between cities and their surrounding regions, especially dynamic peri-urban areas, and the need for those links to be managed;

Social aspects of urban regeneration – contribution to inclusive growth

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

38. believes that in many cities socio-demographic change has provoked a movement of people from their dwellings in older urban areas to new and more peripheral housing estates, urban

areas on the fringes of cities or simply new towns close to big agglomerations. The reasons include the availability of cheaper and more attractive housing, better quality of life and a wider range of services. In recent decades, people with above-average incomes have deserted the city and they are only slowly coming back thanks to the success of some urban regeneration programmes. The Committee therefore stresses that in those areas affected by urban decay, the city should once more be made an attractive place to live, capable of fulfilling everybody's aspirations irrespective of their income levels;

39. stresses that housing has traditionally been, and remains today, a key concern for urban regeneration, one of the main objectives of which is to secure better living conditions for the most disadvantaged;

40. considers aggravation of social inequality to be a major challenge in most urban areas. Inequalities between neighbourhoods are the outcome of socio-spatial ghettoisation, which is sometimes due to inappropriate housing policies, and of service provision that is restricted to wealthy areas and does not reach deprived suburbs. In this regard, the new territorial cohesion objective added in the Lisbon Treaty should spur all levels of government to take these disparities into account in all urban sectoral policies, within the framework of integrated urban regeneration strategies. The Committee therefore stresses that a sustainable city must be based on urban solidarity, where exclusion and discrimination are actively combated by strengthening social cohesion between neighbourhoods, socio-occupational categories genders and people of different backgrounds. Urban solidarity must be a reflection of our ambition to build an inclusive and more cohesive European society;

41. believes that a special effort should be made to integrate migrants effectively into city life, this being the way to resolve related problems;

Partnership for urban regeneration

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

42. underlines that urban regeneration programmes must always involve the public, private and non-profit sectors and put local communities at the heart of those partnerships. Although urban regeneration is always an ongoing and never-ending process, it is impossible to apply 'one size fits all' solutions; the broad involvement of stakeholders will help with learning from others' successes and avoiding repeated mistakes. Local and regional authorities play a key role here in bringing together different economic and social actors and in developing targeted actions. Land-use and urban planning documents can serve as platforms via which all administrations can bring together and concert policies;

Thematic priorities

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

43. considers that the transition from urban renovation, where the focus is on the physical and human environment, to urban regeneration programmes should take place during the next planning period by broadening the scope of intervention to include a series of thematic priorities, with a view to ensuring that the European cities of the future can meet their citizens' expectations, providing infrastructure and environments that utilise workers' skills and employment opportunities, that they are viable and attractive environments for living, working and leisure, and that they offer optimum opportunities for all without exception, using natural resources as sparingly as possible, since they will be operating in a competitive low-carbon economy;

Governance of urban regeneration strategies

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

44. emphasises that urban regeneration must be seen as a continuous and integrated process based on a long-term vision for sustainable urban development. Good governance of urban regeneration programmes must start from the analysis phase. Robust data on the economy, social features and environment of the affected areas must be gathered from reliable sources using well-designed and comparable indicators. In this context, the work of the European Commission's Urban Audit and the ongoing work on the reference framework for sustainable European cities are especially relevant;

45. points out that new ways of organising urban policy are needed whereby urban regeneration policies are designed at local and regional level with support from the national and the European level, and believes that local authorities must take the lead in developing policies on cohesion, integration and cooperation and thus safeguarding natural resources and eco-efficient development of their areas, as well as fostering and enhancing dialogue among many forms of cultural diversity. In order to maximise the efficiency of public policy, many local and regional authorities have already developed new forms of urban governance that bring urban regeneration programmes closer to the ground. Integrated urban policies involve partners other than public authorities and often involve the population of the affected areas through various participatory systems that in some countries have taken the form of contracts or covenants. The Committee believes that the purpose of greater public involvement and the role given to urban communities is to allow the emergence of the social capital needed for the success of urban development policies;

46. believes that urban regeneration programmes should ensure optimum use of all media (print and electronic) that help to raise awareness, and provide information and publicity, as well as mechanisms for involving the general public (local referenda, public meetings, on-line democracy, etc.). Urban regeneration programmes should become part of the learning process of EU urban development and contribute to raising public awareness of urban issues and the opportunities that are arising;

47. recognises that, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, urban regeneration and development issues are more efficiently dealt with at local level; believes, however, that EU support can provide a clear benefit in the field of urban development, where a need is demonstrated for the EU to facilitate solutions to urban problems affecting economic, social and territorial cohesion in the EU. The Committee therefore considers that urban regeneration and development policies should build upon the 'European urban acquis' which consists of existing legal instruments, policy initiatives, as well as mechanisms for the exchange of experience and best practice between cities. It notes that policies developed in this area should also respect the proportionality principle and be cognisant of the wider territorial framework;

48. points out that EU funding can be especially useful when encouraging local authorities to cooperate across a functional urban region. It means that joint financial responsibility can be assumed across the whole region for population groups and city districts threatened by exclusion. EU funding instruments should be made available to functional urban regions on condition that local authorities are required to cooperate effectively in allocating their own resources;

Funding urban regeneration

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

49. points out that the purpose of planning development is to meet certain needs rather than to shape the future. The financial resources for funding urban regeneration programmes must be central to the discussion, as a factor that will contribute to the viability of programmes and their effectiveness. Issues to be addressed include the mix of central and local funding, whether programmes should be funded on a systematic or case-by-case basis, the mix of public funding and private capital, local taxation, loans, evaluation of the benefits of renovation and sharing of costs between users and beneficiaries, sources of funding, and the strategic value and significance of public subsidies. Particular attention will have to be paid to the mechanisms used to fund and implement urban regeneration programmes. While instruments such as the Urban Development Funds (UDFs) or the three Js (JESSICA, JEREMIE and JASPERS) are expected to help here, it is too early to draw conclusions about their specificity and effectiveness;

50. considers that the contribution of voluntary work to urban regeneration programmes has yet to be properly assessed. Finally, with a view to future action, developing and reinforcing the concept of entrepreneurship, both at local authority level and within urban regeneration programmes, should be a discrete area for research;

Contribution of ICT to urban regeneration

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

51. believes there is a shared view that the communications and information revolution has had major implications for the organisation, functioning and form of European cities. It is particularly important to ensure that urban regeneration programmes include measures designed to develop technical information and communications infrastructure to high specifications and to develop applications and content that improve people's lives and the functioning of public services, enhance public sector service provision and encourage use of these applications;

52. believes that the burgeoning opportunities are inevitably matched by dangers: the protection and security of applications and transactions, the protection of personal data, and respect for citizens' privacy and personal integrity are critical issues that require more work. At the same time, use of ICT in the sphere of urban safety raises major issues about the way democracy functions. The urban regeneration agenda must include this emerging debate and find solutions for the problems it raises;

53. notes that by means of wired and wireless infrastructure the more advanced ICT applications even create virtual environments (ambient city, digital city, ubiquitous city), places where citizens interact and do business. The digital city is a parallel world to which the urban regeneration agenda should give consideration;

Innovation and learning in urban regeneration

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

54. believes that support for innovation will bring improved results and contribute to the economic sustainability of cities, and that urban regeneration programmes should therefore provide environments, infrastructure and incentives that encourage innovation;

55. similarly, the Committee considers that setting up training facilities among a city's economic actors should be a strategic priority of urban regeneration;

56. also believes that urban regeneration should strengthen the links between education, business and research and innovation, and promote new innovative businesses;

Importance of local authority systems and procedures in the planning and implementation of urban regeneration programmes

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

57. considers that identifying the need to implement an urban regeneration programme, its planning, monitoring of its implementation, any revisions and the final evaluation presuppose the existence of an authority with minimum management and administrative capacity. That capacity is not provided by all local and regional authorities. Where this is the case, it is absolutely essential for urban regeneration programmes to include capacity-building measures for local authorities. Examples include the development of management information systems (MIS) and geographical information systems (GIS) that facilitate operations and improve decision-making procedures, as well as the introduction of certification procedures (ISO, EMAS, etc.), which improve public service provision. Measures that ensure a citizen-centred approach to planning local authority operations should be at the heart of urban regeneration planning. Improving local and regional authority procedures not only presents a challenge but is also a precondition for the implementation of urban regeneration programmes, and must therefore be addressed in the context of urban regeneration;

Contribution of urban regeneration to the development of external relations

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

58. notes that promotion of cities (city marketing) and highlighting their identity (city branding) are part and parcel of the work of local and regional authorities. In an increasingly globalised world, competition between cities for capital, investment and skilled labour is intensifying. Cities set out their development plans so as to be able to claim funding and resources with which

to secure prosperity for their citizens. Competition for the organisation of major sporting, commercial and cultural events ('big events') is only one, though the most obvious, example of rivalry between cities;

59. on the other hand, observes that cooperation between cities is developing in parallel with competition. Networking, whether thematic or geographical, has expanded hugely, particularly in the EU thanks to targeted Community measures (URBACT, INTERACT, town twinning, etc.). Exchange of best practice has proved an especially useful tool. Actions that contribute to the internationalisation of European cities should be another discrete sphere for initiatives relating to urban regeneration;

II. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

60. considers that when making strategic choices for the forthcoming programming period (2014-2020) the EU should recognise the strategic importance of urban regeneration and ensure that the urban dimension is given more priority in all its policies, with a view to making cities laboratories again, this time with a much fuller agenda, to help the EU out of the economic and financial crisis;

61. proposes that an initiative be launched called 'Urban regeneration for smart, sustainable and inclusive EU cities'. The EU's cities can become the location of choice for implementing the seven flagship initiatives set out in the European Commission's communication 'A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth' ⁽²⁾;

62. considers that now is the time to take such a decision. The debate on the budget for the next programming period, and adjustment of the budget of the current programming period, must explicitly include the issue of funding for urban regeneration.

Brussels, 9 June 2010

*The President
of the Committee of the Regions*
Mercedes BRESSO

⁽²⁾ COM(2010) 2020 final.