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LEIPZIG CHARTER on Sustainable European Cities

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LEIPZIG CHARTER on Sustainable European Cities

Agreed on the occasion of the
Informal Ministerial Meeting on Urban Development and Territorial Cohesion
in Leipzig on 24 / 25 May 2007

PREAMBLE

The “LEIPZIG CHARTER on Sustainable European Cities” is a document of the Member States, which has been drawn up with the broad and transparent participation of European Stakeholders. In the knowledge of the challenges and opportunities as well as the different historical, economical, social and environmental backgrounds of European cities, the Member States’ Ministers responsible for Urban Development agree upon common principles and strategies for urban development policy. The Ministers commit themselves

- to initiate a political debate in their states on how to integrate the principles and strategies of the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities into national, regional and local development policies,
- to use the tool of integrated urban development and the related governance for its implementation and, to this end, establish any necessary framework at national level and
- to promote the establishment of balanced territorial organisation based on a European polycentric urban structure.

The Ministers thank the German Presidency for having prepared the report “Integrated urban development as a prerequisite for successful urban sustainability” and the studies “Strategies for upgrading the physical environment in deprived urban areas”, “Strengthening the local economy and local labour market policy in deprived urban areas”, “Proactive education and training policies on children and young people in deprived urban areas” and “Sustainable urban transport and deprived urban areas” with their examples of good practice in Europe. These studies will help cities of all sizes in the effective implementation of the principles and strategies set out in the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities.

The Ministers declare:

We, the ministers responsible for urban development in the Member States of the European Union, consider European cities of all sizes which have evolved in the course of history to be valuable and irreplaceable economic, social and cultural assets.

With the objective of protecting, strengthening and further developing our cities, we strongly support the EU Sustainable Development Strategy, building on the Lille Action Programme, the Rotterdam Urban Acquis and the Bristol Accord. In doing so, all dimensions of sustainable development should be taken into account at the same time and with the same weight. These include economic prosperity, social balance and a healthy environment. At the same time attention should be paid to cultural and health aspects. In this due attention should be paid to the institutional capacity in the Member States.

Our cities possess unique cultural and architectural qualities, strong forces of social inclusion and exceptional possibilities for economic development. They are centres of knowledge and sources of growth and innovation. At the same time, however, they suffer from demographic problems, social inequality, social exclusion of specific population groups a lack of affordable and suitable housing and environmental problems. In the long run, cities cannot fulfil their function as engines of social progress and economic growth as described in the Lisbon Strategy unless we succeed in maintaining the social balance

within and among them, ensuring their cultural diversity and establishing high quality in the fields of urban design, architecture and environment.

We increasingly need holistic strategies and coordinated action by all persons and institutions involved in the urban development process which reach beyond the boundaries of individual cities. Every level of government - local, regional, national and European - has a responsibility for the future of our cities. To make this multi-level government really effective, we must improve the coordination of the sectoral policy areas and develop a new sense of responsibility for integrated urban development policy. We must also ensure that those working to deliver these policies at all levels acquire the generic and cross-occupational skills and knowledge needed to develop cities as sustainable communities.

We strongly welcome the statements and the recommendations set out in the Territorial Agenda of the European Union and the work of the European Institutions which promotes an integrated view of urban issues. We recognize the Aalborg Commitments as a valuable contribution to strategic and coordinated action at a local level and the conclusions of the European Forum for Architectural Policies on Building Culture on 27 April 2007. We take note of the European Charter "Network Vital Cities".

We recommend:

I. Making greater use of integrated urban development policy approaches

For us, integrated urban development policy means simultaneous and fair consideration of the concerns and interests which are relevant to urban development. Integrated urban development policy is a process in which the spatial, sectoral and temporal aspects of key areas of urban policy are co-ordinated. The involvement of economic actors, stakeholders and the general public is essential. Integrated urban development policy is a key prerequisite for implementing the EU Sustainable Development Strategy. Its implementation is a task of European scale, but it is one which must take account of local conditions and needs as well as subsidiarity.

The reconciliation of interests facilitated by an integrated urban development policy forms a viable basis for a consensus between the state, regions, cities, citizens and economic actors. By pooling knowledge and financial resources, scarce public funds can be more effectively used. Public and private investments will be better coordinated. Integrated urban development policy involves actors outside the administration and enables citizens to play an active role in shaping their immediate living environment. At the same time, these measures can provide more planning and investment certainty.

We recommend that European cities consider drawing up integrated urban development programmes for the city as a whole. These implementation-oriented planning tools should

- describe the strengths and the weaknesses of cities and neighbourhoods based upon an analysis of the current situation,
- define consistent development objectives for the urban area and develop a vision for the city,
- coordinate the different neighbourhood, sectoral and technical plans and policies, and ensure that the planned investments will help to promote a well-balanced development of the urban area,
- coordinate and spatially focus the use of funds by public and private sector players and

- be co-ordinated at local and city-regional level and involve citizens and other partners who can contribute substantially to shaping the future economic, social, cultural and environmental quality of each area.

Coordination at local and city-regional level should be strengthened. An equal partnership between cities and rural areas as well as between small-, medium-sized and large towns and cities within city-regions and metropolitan regions is the aim. We must stop looking at urban development policy issues and decisions at the level of each city in isolation. Our cities should be focal points of city-regional development and assume responsibility for territorial cohesion. It would therefore be helpful if our cities would network more closely with each other at European level.

Integrated urban development policy offers us a set of instruments which have already proved their worth in numerous European cities in developing modern, co-operative and effective governance structures. These are indispensable for improving the competitiveness of European cities. They facilitate early beneficial co-ordination of housing, economic, infrastructure and services development by taking account, inter alia, of the impact of existing ageing and migration trends and energy-policy conditions.

Within the scope of an integrated urban development policy, we consider the following strategies for action to be of crucial importance for strengthening the competitiveness of European cities:

❖ **Creating and ensuring high-quality public spaces**

The quality of public spaces, urban man-made landscapes and architecture and urban development play an important role in the living conditions of urban populations. As soft locational factors, they are important for attracting knowledge industry businesses, a qualified and creative workforce and for tourism. Therefore, the interaction of architecture, infrastructure planning and urban planning must be increased in order to create attractive, user-oriented public spaces and achieve a high standard in terms of the living environment, a "Baukultur". Baukultur is to be understood in the broadest sense of the word, as the sum of all the cultural, economic, technological, social and ecological aspects influencing the quality and process of planning and construction. However, this approach should not be limited to public spaces. Such a "Baukultur" is needed for the city as a whole and its surroundings. Both cities and government must make their influence felt. This is particularly important for the preservation of architectural heritage. Historical buildings, public spaces and their urban and architectural value must be preserved.

Creating and safeguarding functional and well-designed urban spaces, infrastructures and services is a task which must be tackled jointly by the state, regional and the local authorities, as well as by citizens and businesses.

❖ **Modernizing infrastructure networks and improving energy efficiency**

An essential contribution to the quality of life, locational quality and the quality of the environment can be made by sustainable, accessible and affordable urban transport with coordinated links to the city-region transport networks. Particular attention should be paid to traffic management and interlinking transport modes, including cycling and pedestrian infrastructure. Urban transport must be reconciled with the different requirements of housing, work areas, the environment and public spaces.

Technical infrastructure, especially water supply, waste-water treatment and other supply networks, must be improved at an early stage and adapted to changing needs in order to meet future requirements for high quality urban living.

Key prerequisites for sustainable public utility service are energy efficiency and economic use of natural resources and economic efficiency in their operation. Energy efficiency of buildings must be improved. This concerns both existing and new buildings. The renovation of housing stock can have an important impact on energy efficiency and the improvement of a resident's quality of life. Particular attention must be paid to pre-fabricated, old and low quality buildings. Optimized and performant infrastructure networks and energy efficient buildings will lower costs for businesses and residents alike.

An important basis for efficient and sustainable use of resources is a compact settlement structure. This can be achieved by spatial and urban planning, which prevents urban sprawl by strong control of land supply and of speculative development. The strategy of mixing housing, employment, education, supply and recreational use in urban neighbourhoods has proved to be especially sustainable.

Cities must contribute to ensuring and enhancing their residents' quality of life and their attractiveness as business locations by making use of sophisticated information and communication technologies in the fields of education, employment, social services, health, safety and security, as well as means for improving urban governance.

Our cities must also be able to adjust to the threat posed by climate change. Well designed and planned urban development can provide a low carbon way of accommodating growth, improve environmental quality and reduce carbon emissions. Cities can achieve these outcomes through innovative prevention, mitigation and adaptation measures which in turn aid the development of new industry and low carbon business.

❖ **Proactive innovation and educational policies**

Cities are places where a lot of knowledge is created and also imparted. The full exploitation of a city's knowledge potential depends on the quality of its pre-school and school education, and on the transfer opportunities provided within the education and training systems, as well as by social and cultural networks. The opportunities for lifelong learning, the excellence of the universities and non-university research institutes and the transfer network between industry, businesses and the scientific community.

Integrated urban development policy can contribute to improving these factors, for example by bringing the stakeholders together, by supporting networks and optimizing locational structures. Integrated urban development promotes social and intercultural dialogue.

Integrated urban development strategies, cooperative urban development management and good governance can contribute towards a purposeful use of the potential of European cities particularly with regard to competitiveness and growth, as well as to reducing disparities within and among neighbourhoods. They provide citizens with an opportunity for social and democratic participation.

II. That special attention is paid to deprived neighbourhoods within the context of the city as a whole.

Cities are faced with major challenges, especially in connection with the change in economic and social structures and globalisation. Specific problems, among others, are especially high unemployment and social exclusion. Within one city, considerable differences may exist in terms of economic and social opportunities in the individual city areas, but also in terms of the varying quality of the environment. In addition, the social distinctions and the differences in economic development often continue to increase which contributes to destabilization in cities. A policy of social integration which contributes to reducing inequalities and preventing social exclusion will be the best guarantee for maintaining security in our cities.

In order to achieve the objectives of social cohesion and integration in cities and urban areas, well-conceived social housing policies can be effective tools. Healthy, suitable and affordable housing can make these neighbourhoods more attractive for both young and old people. This is a contribution to stability in the neighbourhoods.

It is better to spot early warning signs and take remedial action in a timely and effective way. This saves resources. Once an area has begun to decline, the cost of and difficulty in turning it around can be many times more expensive. Government must offer an outlook and incentives for improvement to residents in affected areas. Active involvement of the residents and a better dialogue between the political representatives, the residents and the economic actors is essential to find the best solution for each deprived urban area.

Against this background, we consider the following strategies for action, embedded in an integrated urban development policy, to be of crucial importance for deprived urban neighbourhoods:

❖ Pursuing strategies for upgrading the physical environment

Economic activity and investments on the one hand and high-quality urban structures, a sound built environment and a modern and efficient infrastructure and facilities on the other are closely interlinked. For this reason, it is necessary to improve existing building stock in deprived neighbourhoods with regard to their design, physical conditions and energy efficiency. Improvements in housing standards in new buildings as well as in existing large prefabricated, old and low quality buildings bear the biggest potential for increasing energy efficiency within the EU and thereby combating climate change.

In order to increase the sustainability of investments in upgrading the physical environment, they must be embedded in a long-term development strategy which also includes, inter alia, public and private follow-up investments.

❖ Strengthening the local economy and local labour market policy

Measures to secure the economic stabilisation of deprived neighbourhoods must also exploit endogenous economic forces in the neighbourhood themselves. In this context, labour market and economic policies which are tailored to the needs of the individual neighbourhoods will be the appropriate instruments. The objective is to create and secure jobs and to facilitate the start-up of new businesses. In particular, access opportunities to local labour markets must be improved by offering demand-oriented training. Increased use must also be made of the employment and training opportunities in the ethnic economy.

The European Union, Member States and cities are called on to create better conditions and instruments to strengthen the local economy and thus the local labour markets, in particular by promoting the social economy and providing citizen-friendly services.

❖ **Proactive education and training policies for children and young people**

A crucial starting point for improving the situation in deprived neighbourhoods is the improvement of the education and training situation in the local community in conjunction with proactive policies focused on children and young people.

More possibilities for education and training must be provided and improved in disadvantaged neighbourhoods which are geared to the needs of, and address deficiencies in provision for children and young people living there. By means of a policy focus on children and young people which is tailored to the social area they live in, we must contribute to improving the prospects of the children and young people living in deprived neighbourhoods to participate and realize their ambitions and to ensure equal opportunities on a long-term basis.

❖ **Promotion of efficient and affordable urban transport**

Many deprived neighbourhoods have the additional burden of poor transport connections as well as poor environmental influences which further reduce their attractiveness. The development of an efficient and affordable public transport system will give residents in these neighbourhoods equal opportunity to have the mobility and accessibility of other citizens – which they have a right to expect.

In order to achieve this aim, transport planning and traffic management in these areas must increasingly aim to reduce the negative impacts of transport on the environment and to organise transport in a manner which will better integrate these neighbourhoods into the city and region as a whole. This will also require appropriate networks for pedestrian and cycle traffic.

The better we manage to stabilize deprived neighbourhoods economically, to integrate them socially and to upgrade their physical environment and transport infrastructure, the better the chances are that our cities will remain places of social progress, growth and innovation in the long term.

We emphasize that:

Urban development policy should be laid down at national level and the stimuli for innovative solutions should also be created at national level, as well as at other levels.

Our cities need enough scope for action in order to perform local tasks in a responsible manner and a sound financial basis which provides long-term stability. Therefore it is important too that Member States have the opportunity to use the European structural funds for substantial integrated urban development programmes. The use of these funds should be focused closely on the specific difficulties and potentials as well as take into consideration the opportunities, difficulties and specificities in the Member States. If not already provided for, local authorities should develop the necessary skills and efficiency to implement integrated urban development policies, also with a view to achieving overall quality and sustainability in the built-up environment.

The new EU initiatives, JESSICA and JEREMIE, supporting the establishment of urban development funds and funds for SME, using financial engineering instruments to leverage private capital into the implementation of integrated urban development strategies, offer promising opportunities to enhance the effectiveness of conventional national and European funding sources.

At national level, Government Departments need to recognise more clearly the importance of cities to deliver national, regional and local ambitions, and the impact of their policies upon them. The efforts of different sectoral Government Departments working or having an impact on urban issues need to be better aligned and integrated so they complement rather than conflict .

We emphasize the importance of systematic and structured exchange of experience and knowledge in the field of sustainable urban development. We ask the European Commission to present the outcome of the exchange of good practice on the basis of the guidelines of the Leipzig Charter at a future conference under the auspices of the “Regions for Economic Change” initiative. Alongside this we need a European platform to pool and develop best practice, statistics, benchmarking studies, evaluations, peer reviews and other urban research to support actors involved in urban development at all levels and in all sectors. We will continue to promote and intensify the exchange of knowledge and experience between policy makers, practitioners and researchers at local, regional, national and European level in the future in order to reinforce the urban dimension of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy, the Lisbon Strategy and the European Employment Strategy.

Europe needs cities and regions which are strong and good to live in.