Concept Paper
Implementation of a European Urban Development Platform in the Funding Period 2014-2020

1. PROPOSAL OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION: ESTABLISHMENT OF AN URBAN DEVELOPMENT PLATFORM

In Article 8 of the ERDF Draft Regulation for the Structural Fund Period 2014-2020 (as published in October 2011) the European Commission proposed the establishment of an “Urban Development Platform”

→ to promote capacity-building and networking between cities and exchange of experience on urban policy at Union level in areas related to the investment priorities of the ERDF and to sustainable urban development.

→ to facilitate the practical implementation of the urban dimension (and the new instruments) in direct dialog with cities that are implementing ITIs or innovative measures.

→ with a maximum number of 300 cities in total (and 20 cities per member state).

REACTIONS / CRITICAL ISSUES

The proposed urban development platform is being viewed with scepticism by the European Parliament and Council as well as by various stakeholders. The main critical issues are:

- duplication of structures / no creation of a new forum / yet too many different city networks

- instead linkage of existing city networks (in the European Council, Germany explicitly mentioned the German-Austrian URBAN network in this context)

- risk to overstrain the available capacities and motivation of cities

- the platform should be open to cities that carry out integrated urban development projects financed through ERDF and not be limited to cities that implement ITIs and innovative measures (in some member states there will probably not be as many ITIs)

- The dialogue between cities not only on European level but also on national level is of great importance to exchange on the respective national legal framework in regards to integrated urban development measures in the national languages.
2. PROPOSAL FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLATFORM: CONNECTING NATIONAL CITY NETWORKS ON EUROPEAN LEVEL

→ Connecting (existing) national city networks on European level and thus fostering the direct dialogue between the European Commission and cities that are carrying out ERDF-funded integrated urban development projects

→ Facilitating the establishment of national ERDF networks in member states in which such structures do not yet exist and empowering existing national city networks

→ Tasks of the European Urban Development Platform: Direct dialogue between the European Commission and cities on the implementation of the urban dimension (and the new instruments) in the respective ERDF Operational Programmes of the member states and exchange on good practices in integrated urban development (e.g. via the Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities RFSC)

→ Tasks of the National City Networks: Exchange on the respective national legal framework in regards to EU-funded integrated urban development (in national languages)
3. EXAMPLE FOR A NATIONAL CITY NETWORK: THE GERMAN-AUSTRIAN URBAN-NETWORK

→ Based on the Community Initiative URBAN in the past funding periods, the German-Austrian URBAN-Network supports German and Austrian cities in implementing integrated urban development measures which are financed by EU Structural Funds.

→ The regular network conferences and working group meetings provide an important platform for intense exchange of experiences, knowledge transfer and political awareness. Thereby, the direct dialog between all four levels (the European, the federal, the regional and the municipal level) provides considerable added value to all parties concerned.

→ Structure: 12 German and 2 Austrian cities representing the Länder (and also representing regional ERDF networks) currently take part in the network.

→ In the funding period 2014-2020, the German-Austrian URBAN-Network intends to support cities in implementing ITI, CLLD or innovative measures.