

Establishing the **Urban Agenda for the EU** **‘Pact of Amsterdam’**

Agreed at the Informal Meeting of EU Ministers Responsible for Urban Matters on 30 May 2016 in Amsterdam, The Netherlands

On 30 May 2016, in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, upon the invitation by the Netherlands Presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU), the Informal Meeting of Ministers responsible for Urban Matters was held.

The meeting was also attended by the Vice President for Energy Union, the European Commissioner for Regional Policy and Representatives of the European Parliament (EP), the European Committee of the Regions (CoR), the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), the European Investment Bank (EIB), candidate countries for EU membership, Norway and Switzerland, UN Habitat and relevant stakeholder organisations such as EUROCITIES and Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), as well as the European Urban Knowledge Network (EUKN), URBACT, European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion (ESPON), European Council of Spatial Planners (ECTP) and European Council of Spatial Planners (EFAP).

Preamble

The European Union is one of the most urbanised areas in the world. Today, more than 70% of Europe’s citizens lives in an Urban Area¹². The UN projects that by 2050 this percentage will reach 80%³. The development of Urban Areas will have a major impact on the future sustainable development (economic, environmental, and social) of the European Union and its citizens.

Urban Areas of all sizes can be engines of the economy which boost growth, create jobs for their citizens and enhance the competitiveness of Europe in a globalised economy. At present, 73% of all jobs and 80% of people aged 25-64 with a tertiary education are based in European cities, towns and suburbs. Urban Areas are, however, also places where challenges such as segregation, unemployment, and poverty are concentrated.

Considering the above, Urban Areas play a key role in pursuing the EU 2020 objectives and in solving many of its most pressing challenges, including the current refugee and asylum crisis. Urban Authorities⁴ play a crucial role in the daily life of all EU citizens. Urban Authorities are often the level of government closest to the citizens. The success of European sustainable urban development is highly important for the economic, social and territorial cohesion of the European Union and the quality of life of its citizens.

¹ This figure is based on the “degree of urbanisation” definition of an urban area (cities, towns and suburbs): <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/degree-of-urbanisation/overview>

² The term ‘Urban Areas’ is used in the Pact to denote all forms and sizes of urban settlement and their citizens, since the precise definition of a ‘City’ and an ‘Urban Area’ differs from one Member State to another.

³ This projection is based on national definitions which may differ from the “degree of urbanisation” definition. The EU level results, however, are almost identical to results from the “degree of urbanisation” definition.

⁴ The term ‘Urban Authorities’ is used to address the relevant public authorities responsible for the governance of the aforementioned ‘Urban Areas’, be it local, regional, metropolitan and/or national authorities.

The need for an Urban Agenda for the EU

In order to realise the full potential of the European Union and deliver on its strategic objectives, the Urban Agenda for the EU strives to involve Urban Authorities in achieving Better Regulation, Better Funding and Better Knowledge (knowledge base and exchange):

- EU legislation is to a large extent implemented in Urban Areas and has direct and indirect implications for Urban Authorities. EU legislation sometimes has conflicting impacts and its implementation at local level can be difficult. Therefore, EU regulation should anticipate these difficulties.
- Urban Authorities are among the key beneficiaries of EU funding. Access to existing funding is however sometimes administratively burdensome. The Urban Agenda for the EU aims to improve accessibility and coordination of existing funding possibilities and to contribute to their simplification.
- Knowledge on how Urban Areas evolve is fragmented and successful experience can be better valorised, diffused and exploited. The Urban Agenda for the EU therefore intends to enhance a better urban policy knowledge base and the exchange of good practice.

Delivering the full potential of Urban Areas requires a joint approach between both sectoral policies and the different levels of government. A balanced, sustainable and integrated approach towards urban challenges should, in line with the Leipzig Charter on sustainable European cities, focus on all major aspects of urban development (in particular economic, environmental, social, territorial, and cultural) in order to ensure sound urban governance and policy. There is a need to enhance the complementarity of policies affecting Urban Areas and to strengthen their urban dimension. This can be achieved by involving all levels of government, by ensuring coordination and effective interaction between policy sectors, in full respect of the subsidiarity principle and in line with the competences of each level. The Urban Agenda for the EU offers a new form of multilevel and multi-stakeholder cooperation with the aim of strengthening the urban dimension in EU policy. Each stakeholder is free to determine its own level of participation in the Urban Agenda for the EU.

In order to address the increasingly complex challenges in Urban Areas, it is important that Urban Authorities cooperate with local communities, civil society, businesses and knowledge institutions. Together they are the main drivers in shaping sustainable development with the aim of enhancing the environmental, economic, social and cultural progress of Urban Areas. EU, national, regional and local policies should set the necessary framework in which citizens, NGOs, businesses and Urban Authorities, with the contribution of knowledge institutions, can tackle their most pressing challenges.

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), cooperation with 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.

Establishing the Urban Agenda for the EU

Along the road towards the Urban Agenda for the EU many milestones have been reached, as is reflected in the list of declarations from the Ministers responsible for Urban Matters (see annex). The latest one, the Riga declaration (June 2015), provides political support for the development of the Urban Agenda for the EU, acknowledging its potential contribution to balanced territorial and sustainable development and the achievement of common European goals.

Today, the EU Ministers responsible for Urban Matters have reached, at their informal meeting in Amsterdam, agreement on the establishment of the Urban Agenda for the EU as set out in the 'Pact of Amsterdam'. The 'Pact of Amsterdam' describes the main features of the Urban Agenda for the EU. However, the development of the Urban Agenda for the EU is an ongoing process. The Urban Agenda for the EU will be taken forward by Member States together with the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions (CoR), the European

Economic and Social Committee (EESC), the European Investment Bank (EIB), representatives of European Urban Authorities and other relevant stakeholders.

I Objectives and scope of the Urban Agenda for the EU

The Ministers affirm that:

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.
4. The Urban Agenda for the EU will not create new EU funding sources, unnecessary administrative burden, nor affect the current distribution of legal competences and existing working and decision-making structures and will not transfer competences to the EU level (in accordance with Articles 4 and 5 of the Treaty on European Union).

Scope

5. In line with the Council Conclusions of 19 November 2014 (Doc. 15802/14), the Urban Agenda for the EU will fully respect the subsidiarity principle and competences under the EU Treaties. Moreover, the Urban Agenda for the EU is based on the European Council Conclusions adopted on 26/27 June 2014, which state that, in line with the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, the Union must concentrate its actions on areas where it makes a real difference. It should refrain from taking action when Member States can better achieve the same objectives.

The Urban Agenda for the EU focuses specifically on three pillars of EU policy making and implementation:

5.1. Better regulation:

The Urban Agenda for the EU focuses on a more effective and coherent implementation of existing EU policies, legislation and instruments. Drawing on the general principles of better regulation, EU legislation should be designed so that it achieves the objectives at minimum cost without imposing unnecessary legislative burdens. In this sense the Urban Agenda for the EU will contribute to the Better Regulation Agenda. The Urban Agenda for the EU will not initiate new regulation, but will be regarded as an informal contribution to the design of future and revision of existing EU regulation, in order for it to better reflect urban needs, practices and responsibilities. It recognises the need to avoid potential bottlenecks and minimise administrative burdens for Urban Authorities.

5.2. Better funding⁵:

The Urban Agenda for the EU will contribute to identifying, supporting, integrating, and improving traditional, innovative and user-friendly sources of funding for Urban Areas at the relevant institutional level, including from European structural and investment funds (ESIF) (in accordance with the legal and institutional structures already in place) in view of achieving effective implementation of interventions in Urban Areas. The Urban Agenda for the EU will not

⁵ Funding is defined here as the provision of financial resources and/or instruments to finance a need, program or project.

create new or increased EU funding aimed at higher allocations for Urban Authorities. However, it will draw from and convey lessons learned on how to improve funding opportunities for Urban Authorities across all EU policies and instruments, including Cohesion Policy.

5.3. Better knowledge (base and knowledge exchange):

The Urban Agenda for the EU will contribute to enhancing the knowledge base on urban issues and exchange of best practices and knowledge. Reliable data is important for portraying the diversity of structures and tasks of Urban Authorities, for evidence-based urban policy making, as well as for providing tailor-made solutions to major challenges. Knowledge on how Urban Areas evolve is fragmented and successful experiences can be better exploited. Initiatives taken in this context will be in accordance with the relevant EU legislation on data protection, the reuse of public sector information and the promotion of big, linked and open data.

6. The Urban Agenda for the EU will rely on the principle of an integrated approach to sustainable urban development as the guiding principle to achieve the goals of the three policy pillars. The Urban Agenda for the EU will, in addition to the organisations mentioned in the Pact of Amsterdam, make use of existing European policies, instruments, platforms and programmes such as the opportunities offered by Cohesion Policy, including its sustainable urban development strand⁶, Urban Innovative Actions, URBACT, ESPON, the "Covenant of Mayors", Civitas 2020, RFSC (Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities), EUKN. It will make full use of the European Innovation Partnership "Smart Cities and Communities"⁷ as established by the Commission.
7. The Urban Agenda for the EU will foster coherence between urban matters and territorial cohesion, as set out in the Territorial Agenda 2020. The Ministers responsible for Territorial Cohesion and Urban Matters will be periodically informed by the DG meeting on urban matters about the development of the Urban Agenda for the EU.
8. The Urban Agenda for the EU will contribute to the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, notably Goal 11 "Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable" and the global 'New Urban Agenda' as part of the Habitat III process.
9. The Urban Agenda for the EU should be implemented in full transparency. All interested parties should have equal access to information about the state of play of the Urban Agenda and should have equal possibilities to contribute to the Urban Agenda for the EU.

II Priority Themes and cross-cutting issues of the Urban Agenda for the EU

The Ministers agree:

10. That, taking into account the priorities of the EU 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, the initial list of Priority Themes (in no particular order) for the Urban Agenda for the EU is as follows (see Work Programme of the Urban Agenda for the EU for an indicative description of the themes):
 - 10.1. Inclusion of migrants and refugees;
 - 10.2. Air quality;
 - 10.3. Urban poverty;
 - 10.4. Housing;
 - 10.5. Circular economy;
 - 10.6. Jobs and skills in the local economy;

⁶ Article 7 of the ERDF Regulation 1301/2013

⁷ European Innovation Partnership on Smart Cities and Communities established by the Commission Communication no 10.7.2012 (C(2012)4701 final); <http://ec.europa.eu/eip/smartcities/>

- 10.7. Climate adaptation (including green infrastructure solutions);
 - 10.8. Energy transition;
 - 10.9. Sustainable use of land and Nature-Based solutions;
 - 10.10. Urban mobility;
 - 10.11. Digital transition;
 - 10.12. Innovative and responsible public procurement.
11. That these Priority Themes will guide the actions of the Urban Agenda for the EU as listed under 14b, c, and d).
12. That the complexity of urban challenges requires integrating different policy aspects to avoid contradictory consequences and make interventions in Urban Areas more effective. In line with the competences and responsibilities of the different participants and taking into account that the EU does not have competences on some of these issues, the Partnerships shall consider the relevance of the following cross-cutting issues for the selected priority themes:
- 12.1. Effective urban governance, including citizens participation and new models of governance;
 - 12.2. Governance across administrative boundaries and inter-municipal cooperation: urban-rural, urban-urban and cross-border cooperation; link with territorial development and the Territorial Agenda 2020 (well-balanced territorial development);
 - 12.3. Sound and strategic urban planning (link with regional planning, including 'research and innovation smart specialisation strategies' (RIS3), and balanced territorial development), with a place-based and people-based approach;
 - 12.4. Integrated and participatory approach;
 - 12.5. Innovative approaches, including Smart Cities;
 - 12.6. Impact on societal change, including behavioural change, promoting, among other things, equal access to information, gender equality and women empowerment;
 - 12.7. Challenges and opportunities of small- and medium-sized Urban Areas and polycentric development;
 - 12.8. Urban regeneration, including social, economic, environmental, spatial and cultural aspects, also linked to the brownfield redevelopment with the objective of limiting greenfield consumption;
 - 12.9. Adaptation to demographic change and in- and out migration;
 - 12.10. Provision of adequate public services of general interest (within the meaning of Article 14 TFEU in conjunction with Protocol Number 26);
 - 12.11. International dimension: link with the New Urban Agenda (Habitat III) of the UN (to be agreed upon), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs, 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development) of the UN and the Paris Agreement on climate change of December 2015.

III The operational framework of the Urban Agenda for the EU:

The Ministers agree:

13. That the Urban Agenda for the EU is a coherent set of actions of key European actors. It is a new form of informal multilevel cooperation where Member States, Regions, representatives of Urban Authorities, the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Union's Advisory Bodies (CoR, EESC), the EIB and other relevant actors work in partnership.
14. That the actions ensuing from the Urban Agenda for the EU belong to the following categories:
- a. Themes** – The Urban Agenda for the EU will focus on a limited number of Priority Themes (see chapter II).

b. Horizontal and Vertical Coordination – Thematic Partnerships are a new instrument for multilevel and cross-sectoral (horizontal and vertical) cooperation to deliver more effective solutions to urban challenges and ensure a more integrated approach at the level of Urban Areas.

c. Impact Assessments – To reduce conflicting impacts of EU legislation on Urban Areas and burdensome implementation at local and regional level, when assessing territorial impacts, it should be explored if better methods as well as specific tools can be used on issues relevant for Urban Areas. This can be done by taking the possible impact of EU legislation on Urban Areas more into account, both in EU policy making and the legislative process.

d. Knowledge – The exchange of knowledge and experiences as well as monitoring results in Urban Areas will be central to improving and assessing the effects of the Urban Agenda for the EU and relevant EU actions. Therefore, more reliable data on Urban Areas is needed and should be exchanged, while taking into account the relevant EU data protection legislation, the need to minimise administrative burdens and the heterogeneity of Urban Authorities.

The concrete actions under these categories are listed in the Working Programme of the Urban Agenda for the EU.

15. That the governance of the Urban Agenda for the EU will work as follows:
The activities of the Urban Agenda for the EU will be coordinated by the DG meeting on Urban Matters. The DG meeting on Urban Matters will:
1. Ensure that the actions are organised in such a way that they are transparent, conceived with and supported by (representatives of) Member States, Urban Authorities and the European Commission, mutually reinforcing and having the most effective impact on EU policy making;
 2. Report to the Informal meeting of Ministers responsible for Urban Matters and Territorial Cohesion;
 3. Monitor progress on the actions of the Urban Agenda for the EU;
 4. Provide feedback on the Action Plans to the Partnerships;
 5. Give informal guidelines for future developments of the Urban Agenda for the EU;
 6. Evaluate the current and future set of actions of the Urban Agenda for the EU at the latest by 2020;
 7. Review the initial list of Priority Themes which will be revised by the Informal Meeting of Ministers responsible for Urban Matters.
- In the Working Programme, the Operational Framework of the Urban Agenda for the EU is described in more detail. The DG Meeting on Urban Matters will review the Working Programme and suggest amendments to the Ministers responsible for Urban Matters for approval. A report on the amendments made will be submitted to the General Affairs Council (GAC).

IV Partnerships

The Ministers agree:

16. That Partnerships are the key delivery mechanism within the Urban Agenda for the EU.
17. That the aim of the Partnerships is to develop a multilevel and cross-sectoral governance approach in an open and transparent way in order to achieve the wider objective of the Urban Agenda for the EU as listed under Part I and based on a strong involvement of practitioners from Urban Authorities. The Working Programme explains the working method of the Partnerships in more detail.
18. To ensure focus and real impact on the ground, Partnerships should have a bottom-up approach analysing, inter alia, concrete cases in Urban Areas which exemplify bottlenecks and potentials.
19. That each Partnership will formulate an Action Plan with concrete proposals for Better Regulation, Better Funding and Better Knowledge, related to the theme of the Partnership, which can be regarded as non-binding contributions to the design of future and the revision of existing EU legislation, instruments and initiatives.

20. That the input of the Partnerships for future and existing EU regulation with an urban impact will be submitted for consideration, after informal guidance by the DG Meeting on Urban Matters, to the European Commission. Furthermore, these proposals could be brought to the attention of incoming EU Presidencies in view of their possible inclusion in the working programme of these Presidencies.
21. That participation in Partnerships is voluntary.

V Member States

The Ministers agree:

22. To take the appropriate steps for the implementation of the Urban Agenda for the EU and engage, as appropriate, relevant bodies at all levels of government in the implementation of the Urban Agenda for the EU, in line with their respective competences and the principle of subsidiarity.
23. On the need for better involvement of relevant key partners, including representatives of urban and regional authorities, in the preparation as well as the evaluation of EU policy through existing opportunities for consultation available to Member States.
24. To strengthen dialogue with the European Commission about how to improve the exchange of data on Urban Areas at the EU level (including the urban audit), taking into account the need to minimise administrative burdens as much as possible.
25. To promote, as appropriate and in line with the proportionality principle, the improvement of the knowledge base and the proportionate collection of data on urban development issues, referring to different types of urban units at EU level, taking into account the need to minimise administrative burdens as much as possible and using existing tools and instruments.
26. To engage with Urban and Regional Authorities, the European Commission, the European Parliament, the CoR and the EIB, whilst respecting the principle of proportionality, in the debate on improving existing instruments in Cohesion Policy and other EU policies aimed at urban development, the more wide-spread and effective use of financial instruments by Urban Authorities, and the deployment of the European Fund for Strategic Investments in relation to funding in Urban Areas. This includes simplification of rules across funding programmes and instruments.
27. That the Urban Agenda for the EU should be regularly discussed by Ministers responsible for Urban Matters, preferably at least once every 18 months.
28. To take note of the Council Conclusions of 12 May 2016 on the New Urban Agenda prepared in the framework of the third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Development (Habitat III).

VI Urban Authorities

The Ministers agree:

29. That Urban Authorities are invited to take an active role in the Urban Agenda for the EU and to provide the required expertise for all Urban Agenda for the EU actions, since they play a crucial role in the Urban Agenda for the EU, providing political guidance locally and crucial insights on needs as well as expertise on how best to tackle the challenges they face.
30. To encourage Urban Authorities to capitalise on the knowledge and capacity of specialist EU Urban networks in the relevant Partnerships.
31. To call upon Urban Authorities to continue to work together with Regional Authorities, the private sector, local communities, knowledge institutions and civil society in bringing forward the Urban Agenda for the EU.

32. To invite the CoR, as the Union's advisory body formally representing regions and municipalities at EU level, to contribute to the further development of the Urban Agenda for the EU.
 33. To call upon and directly involve EUROCITIES, CEMR and other bodies representing Urban Authorities, to contribute to the further development of the Urban Agenda for the EU and the exchange of good practices, and to make use of the outcome of the Urban Agenda for the EU actions, especially the work of the Partnerships.
 34. To encourage networking and exchange of knowledge between Urban Authorities of Urban Areas of all sizes and between different levels of government.
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VII European Commission

The Ministers agree:

35. To welcome the progress of the European Commission as set forth in the Staff Working Document on the Results of the Public Consultation on the Key Features of an Urban Agenda for the EU.
 36. To call upon the European Commission to play an active role and continue facilitating the implementation of the Urban Agenda for the EU within its existing budgets, including the provision of basic technical assistance to the Partnerships from 1 January 2017 onwards.
 37. To call upon the European Commission to align its actions on strengthening the urban dimension of EU policies to the Urban Agenda for the EU.
 38. To call upon the European Commission to further strengthen in a transparent way its coordination and streamlining of policies directly or indirectly impacting on Urban Areas, in order to enhance the complementarity of the policies and strengthen their urban dimension, in particular in the areas of Better Regulation, Better Funding and Better Knowledge.
 39. To call upon the European Commission to set up a one-stop-shop for matters regarding the Urban Agenda for the EU and the urban dimension of EU policies for the EU and thereby to facilitate full, reliable and customised information for Urban Areas and stakeholders.
 40. To call upon the European Commission to ensure the continuity, coherence and coordination of the Urban Agenda for the EU by supporting, where relevant, the implementation of the set of actions of the Urban Agenda for the EU, particularly the work of the Partnerships.
 41. To call upon the European Commission to respect urban diversity and consider, after guidance by the DG Meeting on Urban Matters, in a transparent manner and where appropriate, the results and recommendations of the Partnerships when drafting relevant proposals for and reviewing EU legislation, instruments and initiatives.
 42. To call upon the European Commission to report back regularly to the Council, for the first time in the course of 2017, on the implementation and results of the Urban Agenda for the EU.
 43. To call upon the European Commission to continue to work with Urban Authorities and their representative organisations through the various existing opportunities for consultation and feedback offered, when developing relevant new policy and legislative initiatives and evaluating existing EU strategies, policies and legislation.
 44. To call upon the European Commission to continue to explore improved assessments of urban impacts, where relevant, as part of the Impact Assessments, using available tools and including stronger stakeholder involvement. These improved Impact Assessments, if applied proportionally, can be important instruments to better incorporate the urban and territorial dimension in new EU initiatives, in line with the objectives of the better regulation agenda.
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VIII European Parliament

The Ministers agree:

45. To thank the European Parliament for its active contribution to the Urban Agenda for the EU and to encourage future cooperation in this field with the Committee on Regional Development (REGI) and the URBAN Intergroup, as well as with other Committees and Intergroups whose scope has a clear urban dimension.
 46. To welcome the emphasis of the European Parliament on the use of better regulation in relation to the strengthening of the urban dimension in EU policy.
 47. To invite the European Parliament to consider, where appropriate, the results and recommendations of the Partnerships after guidance by the DG Meeting on Urban Matters, for the agenda of relevant Committees when discussing relevant new and existing EU legislation.
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IX European Investment Bank (EIB)

The Ministers agree:

48. That the EIB plays an important role, also in cooperation with other international financial institutions and national promotional banks, in the financing of investments in areas covered by the Urban Agenda for the EU, in grant-loan blending for urban investments, and in advising Member States and cities about urban project preparation and financial instruments.
 49. To invite the EIB to support the development of better funding approaches in the urban context, including through financial instruments, in cooperation with the European Commission.
 50. To invite the EIB to contribute to the work of the Partnerships in particular with regard to better funding and better knowledge.
 51. To invite the EIB to reflect, where relevant, the outcomes of the Urban Agenda for the EU as appropriate in its urban lending, grant-loan blending and advisory services approach in the urban context taking into account the need to support sustainable urban development strategies and without jeopardising its financial discipline.
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X Civil Society, Knowledge Institutions and Business

The Ministers agree:

52. To recognise the potential of civil society to co-create innovative solutions to urban challenges, which can contribute to public policy making at all levels of government and strengthen democracy in the EU.
53. To invite the EESC to contribute, within its competence, to the further development of the Urban Agenda for the EU.
54. To invite civil society organisations, knowledge institutions and businesses to provide informed advice on all actions within the framework of the Urban Agenda for the EU aimed at Better Regulation, Better Funding and Better Knowledge.