



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Council Conclusions on the Urban Environment

**2740th ENVIRONMENT Council meeting
Luxembourg, 27 June 2006**

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"The Council of the European Union,

1. RECALLS the 6th Environmental Action Programme and its commitments in particular to develop a Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment with the objective of contributing to a better quality of life and the improved well-being of citizens by encouraging sustainable urban development and by providing a clean and healthy urban environment with high air quality, low noise, clean water, high use of renewable energy and low consumption of space and resources. HIGHLIGHTS that the contributions made by cities and urban areas to combating air pollution and climate change in order to reduce greenhouse gases is essential; this concerns i.a. transport and land use planning as well as the sustainable construction and operation of buildings;
2. EMPHASISES the close link between the TS on Urban Environment and the EU-SDS and the related strategies, especially the TS on Air Quality and the TS on Waste;
3. WELCOMES the Commission's communication on the Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment, in particular its focus on integrated environmental management and sustainable transport, as a valuable contribution towards tackling the environmental challenges that still persist today in urban areas, such as poor air quality, high volumes of traffic and congestion, ambient noise, poor building environment, urban sprawl and the loss of green areas and of biodiversity, waste and waste water; NOTES that the policies and measures in the Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment are focusing on principles, guidance, support and facilitation for Member States and their cities to improve their urban environment;

P R E S S

4. RECOMMENDS the integrated approach of the Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment for cities and their policies in order to achieve a reduction of environmental and health burdens and better environmental quality in our urban areas; CALLS on Member States to strengthen their endeavours to enable cities, by their policies, to achieve high urban environmental and health quality and to consider the possibilities of National Strategic Reference Frameworks (linked to Cohesion Policy) for covering urban environment issues as well as opportunities in the context of the LIFE+ Regulation and funds; ENCOURAGES the Commission to give guidance on how Member States can use these funds to integrate urban environment into their national plans including i.a. innovative and flexible mechanisms for the funding of urban renovation; RECOGNISES the relevance of the 7th FPRD, as well as the importance of promoting eco-innovation through rapid implementation of the ETAP;
5. WELCOMES the approach of the Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment to highlighting the importance of public participation in decision-making and the role that existing voluntary initiatives can play; INVITES the Commission to provide support and impetus for public participation, in particular by actively facilitating and promoting Local Agenda 21 and the Aalborg Commitments;
6. APPRECIATES that the Commission will provide technical guidance in 2006 on integrated environmental management, including environmental objectives, measures and instruments, by giving examples of good practice and referring to the relevant EU environmental legislation; CALLS on the European Union, Member States and their cities, within their respective responsibilities to improve the quality of life in cities and urban areas by promoting and implementing integrated environmental management, with a particular focus on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving energy efficiency and sustainable use of resources in cities, covering in particular environmentally friendly and sustainable transport and land use planning, sustainable urban design as well as sustainable construction and operation of buildings, green public procurement and the promotion of sustainable production and consumption patterns and life-styles among citizens; UNDERLINES the important role of integrated environmental management systems such as EMAS or ISO 14001 for implementation;
7. EMPHASISES that noise, air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions are environmental problems in Europe's cities which especially affect the most vulnerable groups of our society in particular our children; UNDERLINES that synergies should be aimed at highlighting the main commitments on children's health and the environment as well as the EU Environment and Health Action Plan, while implementing the Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment and the WHO-Children Environmental Health Action Plan for Europe (CEHAPE); RECOMMENDS that the implementation of the Thematic Strategy at EU and Member State level should take into account the CEHAPE and its Regional Priority Goals in order to improve the environmental and health situation of children in cities and promote the integration of children's needs in urban policies (in particular in planning settlements, housing and transport);
8. STRESSES that transport is a major source of air and noise pollution, land taking and negative impacts on human health in cities. Efforts must be taken to make urban transport sustainable for environment and health; WELCOMES the fact that the Commission will come forward with guidelines on sustainable transport plans including environmental objectives, measures and instruments for environmentally friendly and sustainable urban transport as well as examples of

P R E S S

good practice; RECOMMENDS that Member States and cities make use of these guidelines in their urban transport policies and ensure that sustainable urban transport plans include environmental objectives and measures to improve and promote urban mobility management, public transport, cycling and walking, alternative fuels (e.g. biogas) and propulsion systems, ultra low emission vehicles and car-sharing, as well as intermodal city freight logistics; EMPHASISES the importance of a proper consideration of environmentally friendly and sustainable urban transport infrastructure needs in the EU-infrastructure frameworks.

9. RECOGNISES that the relation between cities and their hinterland is crucial to tackle environmental problems, e.g. as urban sprawl is expanding and commuter transport as well as tourism and leisure traffic between the urban areas and their hinterland is increasing; RECOMMENDS that Member States and cities improve environmentally friendly transport connections and infrastructure links between the cities and their hinterlands by rail, bus and regional public transport within the scope of their sustainable urban transport plans; Furthermore RECOMMENDS an interregional and intersectoral approach in particular to coordinating transport, urban and regional planning policies involving cities and hinterland authorities in order to combat urban sprawl and promote regional and crossborder cooperations between cities and their hinterland, including leisure and tourist destinations.
10. WELCOMES the promotion of exchange of good practice and demonstration projects on urban issues, the establishment of a thematic portal for local authorities in order to promote the exchange of knowledge and transfer of know-how on urban environment among policy makers and stakeholders, the promotion of capacity building and urban research; INVITES the Commission to consider further activities to develop and promote guidance and tools to improve the quality of the urban environment e.g. by focusing namely on sustainable urban design, planning and construction as well as water issues;
11. CALLS on Member States and cities to implement and facilitate the Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment and its proposed areas for action, in particular the environmental management and sustainable transport plans. ENCOURAGES the establishment of national focal points on urban environment issues (e.g. European Urban Knowledge Network) and the collection of urban environment data and a core-set of indicators, e.g. in the context of 'Urban Audit', to enable progress and the environmental performance of European urban areas to be monitored; INVITES the Commission to assess the results of the implementation of the TS and - if appropriate -to propose a revised strategy by 2010.
12. RECOMMENDS that synergies and cooperations with international activities in the field of the urban environment like the UNECE WHO Transport Health Environment Pan European Programme THE PEP, the WHO CEHAPE and other relevant initiatives as well as city networks should be aimed at."

P R E S S
