



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

of 21.10.2011

**on the research joint programming initiative "Urban Europe - Global Urban
Challenges, Joint European Solutions"**

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THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Article 181 thereof,

Whereas:

- (1) Sustainable development of European urban areas is a major societal issue while experiencing intensifying global trends such as urbanisation. According to forecasts, by 2050 nearly 70 percent of the global population will live in cities, up from around 50 percent today¹. The figure for Europe is higher: some 83 percent of the population (nearly 557 million) are expected to live in cities by 2050.
- (2) Urbanisation involves a wide range of inter-linked challenges, including social deprivation and segregation, urban sprawl and congestion, safety and security issues, environmental degradation, pollution and effects of climate change. These developments put pressure on society and pose an unprecedented challenge to resilience, management and governance of urban systems in Europe and in the world.
- (3) At the same time, Europe should exploit the advantages of urbanised space. Urban areas are the drivers of growth in the European economy. Urban agglomerations and networked cities have turned into spearheads of development, not only from a socio-economic perspective but also from technological and geo-political perspectives. Cities are 'innovation hubs' themselves, where knowledge, policy and practice come together to create innovative ideas, employ new technology and benefit from fresh insights into challenges and drivers of as well as solutions to urban development. There is also increasing evidence that networks of major urban centres, often referred to as 'global cities', exert a growing influence at the international scale, while at the same time the importance of small and medium sized cities has to be acknowledged because of their impact, notably in terms of regional development. Europe is characterised by a high urban density and by a large number of small and medium-sized cities the assets of which must be taken into account from an economic, social and cultural perspective.

¹ <http://www.un.org/esa/population/unpop.htm>

- (4) The Europe 2020 strategy puts forward three mutually reinforcing priorities the smart, sustainable and inclusive growth². Sustainable urban development could significantly contribute to achieving these aims. In its flagship initiative ‘Innovation Union’ set out in the Commission Communication of 6 October 2010 ‘Europe 2020 Flagship Initiative Innovation Union’³, one of the potential Innovation Partnerships is ‘smart, liveable cities combining energy efficiency, clean transport and fast internet’. Cities can contribute to inclusive growth, notably in combating social polarisation and poverty, avoiding social segregation and addressing the issues of ageing. The European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion⁴ sets out to reach the EU target of reducing poverty and social exclusion by at least 20 million by 2020. It will help to identify best practices and promote mutual learning between municipalities.
- (5) There is an urgent need to strengthen the knowledge base on integrated urban development across its research interfaces of economy, society, mobility and ecology, in order to support evidence-based policy making.
- (6) Coordination is needed to address the above-mentioned challenges, to capitalize on the opportunities and to facilitate high quality research collaboration aimed at providing research evidence that underpins urban areas as a complex network system with high interdependencies of the related economic, technological, social and ecological subsystems and with a long-term forward-looking perspective.
- (7) At its meeting of 26 May 2010⁵, the Competitiveness Council identified and substantiated a set of potential joint programming initiatives (hereinafter JPIs), including ‘*Urban Europe – Global Urban Challenges, Joint European Solutions*’, as areas where joint research programming would provide a major added value to the current, fragmented efforts by Member States and to the existing Union initiatives. It therefore adopted conclusions recognising the need to launch a joint programming initiative on the subject and inviting the Commission to contribute to its preparation.
- (8) Member States have confirmed their participation in such a JPI by the sending of formal commitment letters.
- (9) Joint programming of research on sustainable urban development would provide for coordination of research and innovation in this area, contributing significantly to construction of a fully operational ERA on research and innovation regarding urban development and strengthening Europe's leadership and competitiveness of research in this field.
- (10) Urban development is an important cross-thematic area within the Union funding programmes for research and innovation. Activities within this JPI need to be closely coordinated with the other related activities in the context of existing and future funding programmes and initiatives on research and innovation.

² Communication from the Commission, “*Europe 2020 - A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth*”, Brussels, COM(2010) 2020

³ COM (2010) 546

⁴ Communication from the Commission, *The European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion: A European framework for social and territorial cohesion*, Brussels, COM(2010) 758 final

⁵ 10246/10.

- (11) Therefore, and in order to achieve the goals set out by this Recommendation, Member States should cooperate with the Commission in order to ensure coordination and development of synergies with the existing research and innovation schemes by exploring related Commission initiatives such as the Smart Cities and Communities Initiative as well as other related initiatives, to avoid duplication and overlapping.
- (12) In order for the Commission to be able to report to the European Parliament and to the Council, Member States should report regularly to the Commission on the progress made on this JPI,

HAS ADOPTED THIS RECOMMENDATION:

1. Member States are encouraged to develop and maintain a common vision on how cooperation and coordination in the field of research at Union level can contribute to achieving sustainable urban development in all its forms⁶.
2. Member States are encouraged to develop a common strategic research agenda establishing medium to long-term research needs and objectives in the area of urban development in a context of increasing globalisation. The strategic research agenda should contain an implementation plan establishing priorities and timelines and specifying the action, instruments and resources required for its implementation.
3. Member States are encouraged to include the following actions, as part of the strategic research agenda and of the implementation plan:
 - (a) identifying and exchanging information on relevant national programmes and research activities;
 - (b) reinforcing capacities in joint foresight as well as technology assessment;
 - (c) exchanging information, resources, best practices, methodologies and guidelines;
 - (d) identifying areas or research activities that would benefit from coordination and furthering such coordination;
 - (e) identifying areas or research activities that would benefit from joint calls for proposals or pooling of resources;
 - (f) defining the modalities for research to be undertaken jointly in the areas referred to in point (e);
 - (g) ensuring coordination, development of synergies with the existing and future funding programmes and initiatives on research and innovation in the Union and avoiding duplication with existing and future Union initiatives in this area;
 - (h) considering the changing needs of cities and urban population when defining the objectives for research programmes on urban development;

⁶ <http://www.jpi-urbaneurope.eu>

- (i) sharing, where appropriate, existing research infrastructures or developing new facilities such as coordinated databanks or the inventory and development of models for studying urban processes;
 - (j) encouraging better collaboration within the public sector and between public and private sectors, as well as open innovation between different research activities, education and business sectors related to urban development while ensuring a broad involvement of relevant stakeholders such as local authorities and civil society;
 - (k) exporting and diffusing knowledge, innovation and interdisciplinary methodological approaches, as well as identifying and addressing obstacles in the research and innovation system that prevent innovative solutions with a societal benefit from getting to the market faster;
 - (l) feeding with appropriate scientific information the policy-making level at local, regional, national and Union level;
 - (m) creating networks between centres dedicated to urban research, including centres that are outside the ERA.
4. Member States are encouraged to maintain and further develop an efficient common management structure in the field of research on the urban development challenge, with a mandate to establish common conditions, rules and procedures for cooperation and coordination and to monitor the implementation of the strategic research agenda.
 5. Member States are encouraged to jointly implement the strategic research agenda via their national research programmes in accordance with the guidelines for Framework Conditions on Joint Programming developed by the Council high level group on Joint Programming⁷.
 6. Member States are encouraged to cooperate with the Commission with a view to exploring related Commission initiatives to assist Member States in developing and implementing the strategic research agenda and to coordinate the JPI with other Union initiatives in this field, such as R&D supported by the funding programmes for research and innovation, notably in the fields of socio-economic sciences and humanities, transport, energy, environment, ICT, security, health, as well as other research and innovation initiatives such as other related JPIs, EIT Knowledge and Innovation Communities and European Technology Platforms.
 7. Member States are encouraged to liaise closely with the Strategic Forum for International Science and Technology Cooperation (SFIC)⁸, in developing and implementing a possible international dimension in the strategic research agenda and ensure coherence with SFIC initiatives with and towards third countries.

⁷ ERC-GPC 1311/10. Joint Programming in Research 2008-2010 and beyond – Report of the High Level Group on Joint Programming to the Council of 12 November 2010 – Annex II

⁸ The SFIC has its origins in the Council Conclusions of December 2008 where the Council called upon the Member States and the Commission to form a new partnership for international science and technology cooperation. It is established by the Council as a dedicated configuration of the ERAC.

8. Member States are encouraged to report regularly to the Commission on the progress made on this JPI through annual progress reports.

Done at Brussels, 21.10.2011

*For the Commission
Máire GEOGHEGAN-QUINN
Member of the Commission*