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Created in 2000, the Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities is a network of territorial cooperation, based on the particular identity and challenges of the cities of the Atlantic Arc in the European Union. After nearly fourteen years of experience, the Conference of the Atlantic Arc Cities has asserted its position as an Atlantic Urban Forum, facilitating both the cooperation among its members and with other European and Atlantic Arc actors, creating awareness in the European institutions about issues concerning the Atlantic Cities. In this sense, CAAC would like to highlight the vital role played by city networks in the construction of the *urban acquis*. As this network has already described in the position paper "City-Networks and the EU cohesion Policy"¹, international associations of cities are, by its own right "key actors tackling the sustainability challenges of the 21st century." Therefore, as the Atlantic Urban Forum, CAAC welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the EU's consultation on "The urban dimension of EU policies – key features of an EU Urban Agenda". In recent years, CAAC has considerably intensified its efforts to extend and enhance the urban dimension of EU policies, especially concerning territorial cooperation, as stated by the position paper on the Urban Dimension of Macro-Regions² or the 5-year campaign in favor of an Integrated Strategy for the Atlantic Arc³.

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1. What are the main rationales for an EU urban agenda? Where can EU action bring most added value? What elements of urban development would benefit from a more concerted approach between different sectors and levels of governance? (1500 characters)

For cities, full recognition as decision-makers is a fundamental condition of political legitimacy, economic development and functional operability, so as to allow local governments to entirely assume their role in an integrated approach of sustainable development. Cities and their networks have already proven their impact on specific policies, such as energy and climate change mitigation; employment; social innovation; research and development; culture, creative industries and heritage or preservation of biodiversity. Moreover, this consultation echoes the UN Manifesto or the call of the Urban Forum of Medellin for a "new international dialogue on critical issues for modern cities". Thus, the EU action must convey the international sphere to the urban debate in Europe and vice versa.

Secondly, in the light of the new ERDF rules, the achievements of EU urban *acquis* have to be enhanced. Even if they are only slightly mentioned in the position paper that backs this consultation, documents such as the Leipzig Charter and the Reference Framework (the San Sebastian Charter for Atlantic Arc Cities), the Bristol Agreement, the European Territorial Agenda, the Declaration of Toledo or the Covenant of Mayors defend at European level, the importance of cities in the construction of Europe's future and shall constitute the basis for the European Urban Agenda.

¹ <http://es.scribd.com/doc/101215094/City-Networks>

² http://atlanticcities.eu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=104%3Adimension-urbana-de-las-macro-regiones&catid=56%3Amacroregion-atlantica&Itemid=125&lang=en

³ http://atlanticcities.eu/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=56&Itemid=125&lang=en

2. Should an EU urban agenda focus on a limited number of urban challenges? Or, should an EU urban agenda provide a general framework to focus attention on the urban dimension of EU policies across the board, strengthening coordination between sectoral policies, city, national and EU actors? (1500 characters)

It should provide a general framework to focus on the urban dimension of EU policies, under certain conditions. First, it shall not limit the abilities of cities to a closed range of options. There is a wide diversity among the cities' sizes, challenges and strategies and several successful models of development; diversity that has to be respected.

Secondly, it has to be ambitious when defining this "urban dimension", not limiting it to the most obvious policies; a reality check has to be made to recognize the role of cities in fundamental actions of the European Union such as technology, maritime policy, transport or even internal market issues.

Thirdly, coordination has not only to be strengthened, but also simplified. Besides all coordination mechanisms such as monitoring committees and partner forums, legal, political, administrative and fiscal frameworks are many times too burdensome for cities to assume the role they deserve.

In addition, the urban agenda should take into account that cities are not isolated dots in the map of globalization. Cities cooperate between themselves, using different tools that should be included in this general framework. For instance, twin (sister) cities often appear as anecdotal, although some studies explain that it eases economic partnerships. EU projects and territorial cooperation programmes with cities shall be complementary to their local development policies, both individually and collaboratively, reaching economies of scale.

3. Is the European model of urban development as expressed in "Cities of Tomorrow" a sufficient basis to take the work on the EU urban agenda further? (1500 characters)

As said above, the diversity among European Cities has to be respected in order to allow them to fully assume their role as actors and to display the most adapted solutions to the concrete context they face. On the contrary, the different solutions already explored by European cities of all sizes can constitute a basis for dialogue, exchange and synergies.

In this sense, the reports of Cities of Tomorrow represent a scientific contribution to the debate that should not be minimized. The systematization of these reports on types of challenges (social/ economic/environmental/governance) could also help organizing the overall debate and first actions of the EU Urban agenda. However, the approach cannot be limited to a top-down view and should be fed by cities themselves as the first level of contact with citizens and their problems.

Finally, as said above, the political consensus and engagement around the documents that form the urban acquis, has also to be taken into account when defining a model of urban development.

4. How can urban stakeholders better contribute to the policy development and implementation processes at EU level? Do cities need to be more involved in policymaking at regional, national and EU level? How? (1500 characters)

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For the Atlantic cities, the proposals put forward in EU Urban Agenda should define:

- An operational concept of multi-level governance (i.e. as described by the Charter of the CoR), that puts the urban acquis into practice and allows cities as full-fledged actors in EU policy making;
- The facilitation of a real participation of cities in tools such as ITI's or CLLD in the framework of the Partnership Agreements and beyond.
- A more comprehensive approach to proposals like the Forum for Urban development (the Urban development Network) or URBACT, or sectoral agreements like the Covenant of Mayors or the Smart Cities Partnership, so as to ensure that the diversity of European cities is represented.
- The governance of macro-regions and integrated strategies has to be completed by a clear urban dimension that fulfills the search for synergies among different programmes, funds and actors. Cities are eligible as leaders of thematic strategies or as focal points inside the macro-region schemes.

5. What are the best ways to support a stronger urban and territorial knowledge base and exchange of experience? What specific elements of the knowledge base need to be strengthened in order to better support policymaking? (1500 characters)

In order to enhance with transnational practice the existing tools such as EUKN or the "Cities of Tomorrow" reports, the EU Commission should lead an study about cities' participation (and leadership) in EU projects, both concerning territorial cooperation and sectoral policies. Cities are partners of EU projects that not only reflect their expectations, but that also produce policy guidelines, good practice analysis and urban strategies. Cross-fertilisation and integrated approaches have been already put into practice through these projects.

In this sense, networks of cities that cumulate more than 15 years of experience (such as the Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities) or more than 600 cities such as CECICN, constitute natural reserves of significant, accurate and updated knowledge; being at the same time the forums chosen and created by the political will of the cities.

City networks are natural laboratories for mutual comparison and learning of policymaking processes at a transnational scale.



Lastly, a pan-european effort should be made to facilitate tighter cooperation among the Universities that work on urban issues and / or the entities involved on urban research, especially concerning a systematization of R&D projects on the 7th programme /Horizon 2020.

6. What should be the roles of the local, regional, national and EU levels in the definition, development and implementation of an EU urban agenda? (1500 characters)

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So as to assign roles, several EU principles should be especially taken into account:

- Subsidiarity, that will not only help to decide which level of governance is the most appropriate but also to define a framework which is adapted to national contexts
- Cohesion, in its three dimensions: economic, social and territorial, so as to ensure that the EU Urban agenda reflects the ambitions of the Treaties and the expectations and diversity of the territories.
- Cooperation, among the different EU cities, their networks, their universities and counting on the collaboration of the rest of levels of governance.
- Coordination, among the different sectoral policies, aiming for cross-fertilisation, synergies and economies of scale; avoiding duplications and excessive bureaucracy.

These principles should serve to implement an EU Urban agenda which is polycentric and flexible; works inside an equitable multi-level governance system that responds to the need for a greater presence of cities in European decision-making bodies, seeking formulas for this presence. An agenda where cities are real leaders of their own destiny.