

**Opinion of the European Committee of the Regions — New European Bauhaus: Beautiful, Sustainable, Together**

(2022/C 301/04)

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<b>Reference document:</b>	Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: New European Bauhaus — Beautiful, Sustainable, Together COM(2021) 573

#### **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS (CoR),

#### **Introducing the New European Bauhaus**

1. welcomes the European Commission's interdisciplinary initiative on the New European Bauhaus (NEB), which helps to deliver the EU Green Deal by adding a vital cultural dimension and bringing it closer to citizens. The NEB does so by creating beautiful, sustainable and inclusive spaces and places, products and ways of living which bring out the facilitation of partnerships and the benefits of the environmental reconfiguration and transition using tangible experiences at local level;
2. acknowledges the enthusiasm and groundswell of support for the NEB from a range of friends, actors, civil society organisations, networks, collectives, regional hubs and platforms and Living Labs, along with the ongoing interest in and work on stimulating creativity and participating in, connecting and shaping the value and principles of the future NEB;
3. is pleased that the role of LRAs in implementing the principles of the NEB is acknowledged, as they are well placed to contribute to policy development and the implementation of the NEB, in line with the subsidiarity principle;
4. considers that throughout the EU, cities and regions are at the forefront of culture-led development, and that the local and regional levels have key responsibilities for sustainable urban, regional and cultural policies; therefore, local and regional elected representatives are pivotal when it comes to making the NEB more accessible and engaging members of the public in the transformation process in order to advance the implementation of the NEB;
5. strongly supports the NEB as a key opportunity to harness the creative potential of regions and municipalities, and thereby create accepted and sustainable solutions that will make the Green Deal a success;
6. acknowledges the cross-disciplinary nature of the NEB which is woven into a range of EU programmes and funding strands; however, outlines that continued buy-in from current and future partners will be needed;
7. reaffirms the first key principle of the NEB endorsing a multi-level and place-based approach. In this regard, the CoR points out that change is happening at local and regional level, where a sense of place is also anchored;

8. is pleased that the Commission's vision is for rural areas to be represented in the NEB. The various declarations<sup>(1)</sup> and the Rural Pact provide a framework for the future of rural development policy and action in Europe and are a crucial tool for the NEB to connect with rural areas, which can also be considered as 'testing grounds' for small-scale transformative projects;

9. stresses that the NEB has the potential to be an important instrument in the recovery, providing jobs locally and promoting a mindset change to sustainable and efficient territorial planning, which will affect and improve societal behaviour and mobility;

#### **Areas of concern**

10. is concerned that the Communication remains vague on how LRA engagement will be ensured; the CoR calls for specific proposals on how LRAs and the CoR will be involved in the implementation of the initiative, at the same time taking into account the principle of geographical balance, thus representing local and regional authorities of the whole EU;

11. stresses that the CoR, together with the other EU institutions, should be part of the enabling network of NEB key partners which will develop and test policy and funding instruments;

12. calls for the involvement of the CoR and other EU institutions in the High Level Round Table on NEB;

13. points out that the subsidiarity and proportionality principles will determine at what level the EU and the Member States will make use of the policy tools and legislative measures proposed for the implementation of the NEB;

14. emphasises that COVID-19 will continue to have an impact in the medium and longer term and that this should be acknowledged in the implementation of the NEB; notes that the pandemic's negative effects on poverty, social issues and employment must be noted in the implementation of the NEB;

15. calls on the Commission to ensure that local and regional authorities are at the centre of the strategy, providing technical assistance, appropriate funding and flexibility. The success of the NEB will depend on sustainability and feasibility, taking into account the differences between rural areas and cities;

#### **Financing the New European Bauhaus**

16. calls for sufficient resources from state budgets and EU cohesion policy programmes to be allocated at local and regional level. However, calls for a balance to be struck between creative synergies within the NEB cultural movement and the parameters of EU-funded programmes;

17. considers that additional funds could be used to pay for external assistance to help with knowledge exchange and to explore the competences of existing public sector staff in a reciprocal and fluid exchange with private, local and third-sector actors;

18. believes previous experiences, awards and resources that focus on quality, aesthetics and community issues in a circular way could provide incentives for investors and crowd-funders;

19. calls for public-private partnerships and investments in the broader field of culture and cultural heritage, as called for in Europa Nostra's Venice Call to Action<sup>(2)</sup>;

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<sup>(1)</sup> Such as the Cork 2.0 Declaration 2016: A Better Life in Rural Areas.

<sup>(2)</sup> *Venice Call to Action, For a New European Renaissance* which seeks to 'enable closer and stronger synergies between the business community and the wide cultural, heritage and creative ecosystem, among others through strengthening a strategic alliance between the European heritage movement and the European Investment Bank and its institute'.

20. points out that the Recovery and Resilience Facility is also an opportunity to support the NEB within the Member States and local authorities;

21. points out that NEB should be aligned with the 2021-2027 MMF and the EU Urban Initiative and adequate funding to cover the operational costs of local and regional authorities contributing to the NEB should be available; calls for ambitious roadmaps for the implementation of the NEB to be used within the framework of the SDGs;

22. asks that geographical balance, as well as the climate, economic, social and cultural diversity of the EU be taken into account, as well as funding opportunities and the allocation of funds, when designing and implementing NEB strategies, projects and actions and territorial cohesion should remain one of the key objectives;

### **Indicators**

23. stresses that local and regional authorities should, in the limits of their competencies, monitor to what extent national governments use the NEB in the various programmes, tools and procedures and expects the European Commission to present clear indicators for such monitoring;

24. is concerned that there are no indicators in the current EU funding cycle (2021-2027) and this is a missed opportunity for measuring success;

25. considers that the NEB core principles should be developed in partnership with local and regional governments and considers that the NEB core principles should be mainstreamed as quality criteria for EU funding programmes with a direct or indirect impact on the built environment, urban and rural development, cultural heritage and cultural landscapes;

26. suggests that a NEB regional scoreboard should be created to establish a strong regional monitoring policy that will ensure that the NEB is implemented at all levels and that regional investments act on the NEB's principles;

27. notes that LRAs are responsible for large stocks of local public buildings and urban public spaces and play an important regulatory and funding role in the renovation of these buildings and urban areas. Accordingly, LRAs should focus on identifying regulatory bottlenecks and contribute to simplifying regulation and devising new regulatory approaches;

28. highlights that the CoR has been involved in developing and supporting climate, energy and environment strategies at local and regional levels. The Green Deal Going Local Working Group could be used to promote the NEB principles and to monitor success;

29. underlines that dialogue between LRAs on open innovative concepts and processes, interdisciplinary approaches and competences is crucial. This should include the NEB on the CoR's Knowledge Exchange Platform (KEP), the Science Meets Regions programme and cooperation projects funded by other EU programmes;

30. emphasises that the NEB should promote gender equality. Gender equality should be a cross-cutting criterion and is a powerful and necessary factor in the sustainable and balanced development of cohesion policy;

### **The NEB Festival, prizes and lab concept**

31. welcomes the first NEB prize and suggests that synergies be identified with existing awards for housing, cultural heritage, contemporary architecture and landscapes. Also calls for good practices from the 2018 European Year of Cultural Heritage to be shared;

32. acknowledges the creation of the European Seal of Excellence as a first step towards the NEB label concept, but is concerned that people may expect the NEB Label to have a funding stream. The use of a dedicated label could be considered as a tangible CoR contribution to the development of the NEB initiative, as advocated by the CoR in 2021;

33. welcomes the NEB Lab and its co-creation methodology, but asks for further information on how it will operate and for the CoR to be an active member of the NEB Lab and its governance;
34. asks that the Lab test the results/actions selected for the first Award, and could advance and prototype them
35. is ready to work with national governments, through the CoR Regional Hubs, on developing regulatory sandboxes and testing new regulatory approaches;
36. notes that the NEB should build on existing good practices across EU cities and regions and create a publically available resource platform;
37. welcomes the NEB Festival as a tangible, visible way to further foster the engagement of LRAs and members of the public and showcase projects at local and regional level;
38. highlights the successful work carried out by URBACT, European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) and Horizon 2020 on developing effective interactive tools which should be used when relevant;
39. points out that the NEB should connect up with Horizon 2020 missions, particularly on Adaptation to Climate Change and Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities.
40. reiterates the possible advantage of using the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) instrument for multi-level governance projects involving several countries or a euro-region;
41. notes that the NEB links the three pillars of the Urban Agenda for the EU (better regulation, better funding and better knowledge <sup>(3)</sup>) and aims to deliver on them;
42. notes the ongoing Urban Innovative Actions (the Urban Lab of Europe) and the forthcoming European Urban Initiative. Calls for the NEB to be linked to EU Urban Agenda partnerships, as this Agenda has been working on concepts related to the Green Deal and the NEB for nearly four years;
43. considers that the NEB has a role to play in the implementation of the 2021 Leipzig Charter and the 2021 Ljubljana Declaration, which call for integrated approaches, a place-based approach, multi-level governance, participation and co-creation methods;
44. believes that the European Capitals of Culture, EU iCapitals, European Youth Capitals and European Green Capitals can play a strong role in championing the NEB;
45. welcomes the establishment of NEB national contact points and calls for them to work closely with LRAs and other stakeholders, including civil society, to ensure that the NEB movement can continue to grow in a bottom-up way;
46. suggests that a training programme for 100 interested cities could be created based on the principles of the NEB. This could use the methodologies of the Digital Cities Programme or the 100 Intelligent Cities programme and its market place concept;

#### **Built environment, architecture and renovation concepts**

47. underlines that the built environment is a reflection of a community, and responsibility for its overall quality rests in the hands of public sector bodies and stakeholders, including civil society, in close cooperation with the public;

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<sup>(3)</sup> As identified in the Pact of Amsterdam.

48. points out that Europe's rich and diverse cultural and architectural heritage is an important benchmark for the quality of our built environment, in terms of user experience and physical assets;

49. is pleased that the NEB acknowledges the crucial role of urban spatial planning in achieving sustainable urban development;

50. is pleased that the NEB acknowledges the need for a shared culture of high-quality architecture. This will require raising awareness, disseminating information and promoting the role of culture and cultural heritage, high-quality architecture and built environment;

51. stresses that the Commission should help the building and construction sector to tackle unsustainable resource use and waste and promote circularity, with a focus on the reuse and recycling of materials. This could be done by closing gaps in knowledge and skills and digitising design;

52. notes that the NEB can find ways to reduce red tape with a view to making renovation easier and more cost effective; addressing the challenges involved in retrofitting very old buildings and cultural heritage requires the services of architects and other experts as well as highly skilled craftspeople<sup>(4)</sup>;

53. has no hesitation in saying that LRAs play a pivotal role in ensuring that building renovation meets land use and town planning requirements, promotes policies to counter depopulation and is in line with social equity and green criteria. Points out that Member States' methodologies for the Renovation Wave must not undermine this fundamental coordination role;

54. once again calls for the European Semester to take better account of urban issues: economic and social policy coordination in the EU must cover affordable housing, inequality and long-term investments;

55. welcomes the NEB narrative on exploring solutions to enable access to affordable and decent housing, particularly for young people and other vulnerable social groups;

56. stresses that the NEB needs to connect up with the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) Action Plan and the 2021 Porto Social Summit Declaration in order to contribute to the reflection on post COVID-19 social and affordable housing at EU level;

57. calls for the promotion of synergies between art, architecture, landscape and interior architecture, spatial planning, design and craftsmanship, as well as innovative training models for architects and other professionals;

58. calls for the engagement with the European Skills Agenda as well, therefore to contribute to the promotion and better understanding through the NEB of regional skills-related needs and opportunities in the area of urban planning, construction, sustainable use of construction resource materials, as well as to reduce the migration of skilled workforce that could result in the decrease of local economy in terms of manufacture. In this regard, the Digital Agenda for Europe plays an important role as digital technology can provide citizens with opportunities to co-create their environment and is a vitally important tool in all steps of the development of NEB initiatives;

59. calls for the NEB to engage with past EU Urban Agenda partnerships, especially in relation to climate action capacity, the Greening Cities proposal and use of public spaces; the partnerships on Sustainable Use of Land and Nature-Based Solutions, the Circular Economy and the Culture and Cultural Heritage are particularly relevant;

60. highlights that the NEB is a strong tool for unlocking social economy initiatives, as it is based on cooperation and civic engagement. Such initiatives boost social, economic, territorial and cultural cohesion and raise the level of trust at local level throughout the EU;

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<sup>(4)</sup> As outlined in Europa Nostra's European Heritage Green Paper.

### Cultural heritage quality principles

61. supports Europa Nostra's *Venice Call to Action, For a New European Renaissance paper* and its declaration on shared heritage and memory;
62. calls for synergies to be identified between the Davos Baukultur Quality Principles, the NEB and the European quality principles for EU-funded interventions with potential impact on cultural heritage, and for these synergies to be mainstreamed in all European policy and funding programmes;
63. believes that cultural heritage is a vital dimension of the NEB; the Renovation Wave must have a 'sou' and an identity, while promoting a holistic view of how we want to develop our cities and regions;
64. calls for the CoR to work with stakeholders to promote an NEB and 'Heritage Mayor of the Year' award;
65. calls for cultural heritage and the EU Green Deal to be closely interconnected, as demonstrated by the EU Cultural Heritage Green Paper <sup>(5)</sup>;
66. agrees that public funds for culture-based green strategies need to be mobilised through NEB pilot projects and initiatives addressing the vital cultural dimensions of the green transition and building on the various capacities of local communities and regions;

### Conclusions

67. asks the European Commission to establish better links between the NEB and existing conceptual, culture-related, aesthetics-oriented and design-oriented frameworks. This would translate principles into action and enable the NEB to harness the creative, cultural and cultural heritage potential of local and regional authorities to renovate and revitalize neighbourhoods across the EU. Proposes therefore a NEB Lab voucher scheme whereby interested cities and regions could receive such a voucher which would entitle them to get the necessary support for organising a NEB Lab in their constituency. A condition for receiving such a voucher would be, that (1) the NEB Lab should 'co-create, prototype and test the tools, solutions and policy actions that will facilitate transformation on the ground'; and (2) the results of the NEB Lab will be presented to the regional or city council;
68. calls for synergies to be identified between the NEB initiative and processes engaging people in Europe (such as the Conference on the Future of Europe) and strategies and action plans promoting architectural and aesthetic quality (such as the Renovation Wave of the EU Urban Agenda);
69. believes that the NEB must become a real movement which involves LRAs and is not just another top-down project. Creating a European eco-conscious way of life is crucial for all EU cities and people. It must be a project for everyone, not just the few. Ownership must start with individuals at grassroots level and go beyond large urban areas. Accessibility to ordinary people and civil society organisations is an important positive aspect of the NEB initiative. To be successful, this exercise must be socially, culturally and territorially inclusive.

Brussels, 27 April 2022.

*The President*  
*of the European Committee of the Regions*  
Apostolos TZITZIKOSTAS

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<sup>(5)</sup> 'Putting Europe's Shared Heritage at the Heart of the European Green Deal', published by Europa Nostra.