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27. Calls on the Commission to review in 2012 the progress made in attaining the objectives of the Strategy and to assess the potential in different sectors for further cost-effective reductions;

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28. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission as well as to the governments and parliaments of the Member States.

P6_TA(2006)0367

Thematic strategy on the urban environment

European Parliament resolution on the thematic strategy on the urban environment (2006/2061(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its resolutions of 13 October 2005 on the urban dimension in the context of enlargement ⁽¹⁾ and of 18 January 2006 on the environmental aspects of sustainable development ⁽²⁾,
 - having regard to the communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on the Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment (COM(2005)0718),
 - having regard to the communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions 'Towards a thematic strategy on the Urban Environment' (COM(2004)0060),
 - having regard to Decision No 1600/2002/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 July 2002 laying down the Sixth Community Environment Action Programme (6th EAP) ⁽³⁾,
 - having regard to Rule 45 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety and the opinions of the Committee on Transport and Tourism and the Committee on Regional Development (A6-0233/2006),
- A. whereas around 80 % of European population lives in cities, yet their needs and interests are not always appropriately represented in the European Union's funds, projects, initiatives and strategies,
- B. whereas the aim of the Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment (TSUE) is to contribute to the overall environmental performance of cities in Europe, by reducing bureaucracy and enhancing efficiency of the implementation of environmental policy, and encouraging long-term environmental planning at local level,
- C. whereas, given that the share of public transport in new Member States, although on the decline, is still higher than in the old Member States, measures need to be considered that would be able to halt a further decline in the use of public transport,

⁽¹⁾ Texts Adopted, P6_TA(2005)0387.

⁽²⁾ Texts Adopted, P6_TA(2006)0020.

⁽³⁾ OJ L 242, 10.9.2002, p. 1.

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- D. whereas the 6th EAP promoted in particular the need to tackle rising volumes of traffic and to achieve a significant decoupling of transport growth and GDP growth,
- E. whereas the energy dependency of the European Union should also be addressed at urban level, with the largest increase in energy consumption being in the transport sector, and whereas policies on other sectors such as housing and the choice of energy sources for heating are, in the main, decided at local level,
1. Welcomes the communication from the Commission on the TSUE; however, considers that it is not sufficient to achieve the goals set in the 6th EAP;
 2. Supports in particular the fact that the communication also recognises the important role of cities as economic drivers;
 3. Shares the Commission's analysis that environmental problems in cities are particularly complex because their causes are inter-related and echoes the Commission's warning that local initiatives to resolve one problem can lead to new problems elsewhere;
 4. Regrets that, contrary to the intentions of the 6th EAP, there are no legally binding measures and deadlines proposed by the Commission to address any of the goals set by the 6th EAP;
 5. Regrets also that the TSUE does not attempt to balance European policy between urban and rural areas, or between centrally located towns and cities and those in outlying areas;
 6. Calls on the Commission to issue guidelines on the application of the forthcoming Directive on ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe and to ensure the proper enforcement of this piece of legislation;
 7. Stresses that the Commission, in cooperation with the national authorities, should encourage every agglomeration having more than 100 000 inhabitants to establish a Sustainable Urban Management Plan (SUMP) and a Sustainable Urban Transport Plan (SUTP);
 8. Demands that the Commission guidance document incorporate core common indicators in line with obligations and targets under relevant existing EU environmental policy (e.g. air, noise, water and waste directives, energy efficiency and climate policy) to allow for comparisons and benchmarking between European cities;
 9. Considers that the SUMP should take into consideration among others the following documents:
 - Waste management plan (Directive 75/442/EEC on waste, as amended ⁽¹⁾)
 - Noise maps and action plans, if available (Directive 2002/49/EC relating to the assessment and management of environmental noise ⁽²⁾)
 - Local air pollution plan or programme if available (Directive 96/62/EC on ambient air quality assessment and management ⁽³⁾)
 - Local Environmental Plans and Programmes pursuant to Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment ⁽⁴⁾;

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 194, 25.7.1975, p. 39. Directive as last amended by Regulation (EC) No 1882/2003 (OJ L 284, 31.10.2003, p. 1).

⁽²⁾ OJ L 189, 18.7.2002, p. 12.

⁽³⁾ OJ L 296, 21.11.1996, p. 55.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ L 197, 21.7.2001, p. 30.

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10. Considers that SUMP should be set out as follows:
 - (a) Collection of data and relevant information concerning:
 - The areas mentioned in paragraph 9 of this resolution,
 - Relationships between built-up areas and the countryside and the rural environment,
 - Forecasts for population growth and the demand for new areas for development,
 - Communication flows, mobility, urban integration and accessibility of services,
 - Local greenhouse gas emissions,
 - Urban structure and the proportion of green areas and urban sprawl,
 - Local biocide use,
 - Health problems related to the environment,
 - Possibilities of an environment that is free of obstacles for the disabled, the elderly and others,
 - The assessment of cultural heritage, the built environment and the natural environment, as well as places of ecological interest and the risks to which they are exposed,
 - The assessment of drinking water requirements in urbanised areas and the arrangements to be made as regards purification and recovery;
 - (b) Objectives concerning:
 - Improvement of the situation in the areas mentioned in point (a),
 - Integration of sustainability into all fields of urban policy,
 - Harmonisation with SUTPs,
 - (c) Practical measures and actions to be taken in order to attain the objectives referred to in point (b);
11. Stresses that citizens, NGOs, business organisations and other stakeholders should be involved in the preparation of the SUMP, which should be made available to the public; considers, furthermore, that regular evaluation of progress made and dissemination of the results of such evaluations are also essential;
12. Encourages the Commission to carry out a mid-term review of the implementation of the technical guidelines in connection with the 2009 consultation and supports the Commission's work in connection with setting up a thematic Internet portal for local authorities;
13. Calls on the Commission to propose a target for green areas per capita for new urban development and considers that that target should be included in the SUMP so as to prevent any reduction in green areas in urban areas not reaching this target;

Sustainable Urban Management

14. Calls on the Member States to prioritise within their national strategic reference frameworks and their operational programmes funding for projects which implement sustainable urban management and transport plans, as well as projects limiting greenfield and promoting brownfield developments, and to promote the planting of street trees and designation of more green space;
15. Calls on the Member States to promote the use of the Environmental Management and Audit Scheme by local authorities;
16. Calls on urban authorities to make systematic reference to sustainability criteria in their public procurement tenders and to incorporate commitments to that effect in SUMP;
17. Supports the promotion of composting, as opposed to burning, waste vegetation in order to avoid locally occurring pollution;

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18. Considers it also important to get citizens more involved in local decisions both by political and technical means;

19. Believes that more attention should be paid to preventing and removing dirt, litter, graffiti, animals' excrement and excessive noise from domestic and vehicular music systems;

Sustainable Urban Transport

20. Supports the idea of sustainable urban transport plans (SUTPs) as an instrument for improving the urban environment, but stresses the need to use this instrument in a flexible way, in order for the specific needs of each Member State and its urban areas, and, moreover, of regions affected by specific constraints, to be sufficiently taken into account;

21. Stresses that SUTPs should contain concrete and quantifiable targets that can be presented and monitored by means of a scoreboard, which would enhance the dissemination of best practice among Member States; points out that SUTPs should be flexible enough to accommodate new developments;

22. Considers the use of environment-friendly modes of transport and technologies to be a key factor in achieving a cleaner urban environment; notes in this respect in particular the use of bio-fuels, hybrid car technologies, bicycles, and trucks and buses that meet the EU's enhanced environment-friendly vehicle (EEV) standard⁽¹⁾; will accordingly give its keen attention to the Commission proposal on the introduction of clean public transport vehicles and proposes that the local energy efficiency agencies be allocated a specific field of activity relating to urban transport;

23. Supports the development of public transport using sustainable energy sources and urges that a better balance be struck between individual and collective transport in urban areas;

24. Points to the need to encourage greater use of public and collective transport in urban areas; also considers that urban transport services need to be geared both to the requirements of spatial planning (old town districts, outer areas, links to airports, stations, industrial estates, shopping areas, etc.) and to the needs of the public and demographic changes (older people, people with disabilities, etc.);

25. Calls on the Member States, in cooperation with local authorities, to make efforts to achieve a shift in inner-city passenger kilometres of at least 5 % to sustainable transport methods, such as public transportation and cycling, within the period of 2002-2012;

26. Stresses that access to mobility for all (also those without access to a private car) is a social factor that needs consideration;

27. Given that accessibility is central to sustainable development and must be tackled by an integrated urban policy approach, calls on the EU institutions to foster exchanges of good practice among local and national authorities and calls on the Commission to monitor the enforcement of the existing European legislation to promote accessibility for people with disabilities, and in particular of the rules governing the specific Community procurement procedures, which expressly require design to be tailored to all users;

28. Considers that SUTPs should include the means by which local authorities intend to:

- promote non-motorised transport modes such as cycling and walking, by building an extensive network of bicycle lanes and by providing safe lanes and intersections for pedestrians,
- promote public transport and the development of public transport infrastructure, and disseminate information on existing good examples, such as the introduction of integrated pricing and ticketing systems and the development of P+R systems,

⁽¹⁾ Directive 2005/55/EC concerning the emission of gaseous and particulate pollutants (OJ L 275, 20.10.2005, p. 1).

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29. Reminds the Member States of their responsibility to take into account the most vulnerable transport users in the design of cities, for example by lowering speed limits or by implementing car-free zones in city centres or residential areas, with the aim of reducing road deaths by 50 % by 2010, as set out in the White Paper on European Transport Policy;

30. Proposes the establishment of city logistical plans in order to reduce and improve the transport of goods within cities, including, in particular, coordination of goods distribution locally within cities;

31. Recalls that air pollution is a major cause of health problems in the EU; stresses therefore that cities with high air pollution should consider establishing low emission zones;

32. Supports combating emissions at source and implementing innovative measures aimed at solving environmental problems in cities; emphasises that studies have shown that goods traffic produces up to 38 % fewer particulate emissions when moving than when stationary and that innovative measures are therefore needed to aid traffic flow;

33. Urges better coordination between local authorities with a view to ensuring a certain level of coherence. Poor coordination between local authorities leads to higher delivery costs, more traffic and therefore more pollution;

Sustainable Urban Planning

34. Notes that the Commission appropriately identified the problems and the current situation in this field; however, it did not propose any action to resolve it;

35. Stresses the importance of planning and design of estates and tower blocks in crime prevention, and also for public areas such as car parks and routes to and from railway stations;

36. Emphasises also the social dimension of sustainable urban planning and recommends the general improvement of quality of life in inner-city areas through a holistic (in particular social, cultural and environmental) approach;

37. Calls for an attempt to be made, in new developments and urban expansion, for the topography and natural structure of the land to be respected so that the identity and appearance of each area may be preserved;

38. Suggests that urban planning should involve the provision of more green areas, and that, in the processes of expansion and new development, enough natural areas be left for the public to be able to commune with nature;

39. As a precautionary measure to preserve historical areas, natural areas, rivers, lakes and wetlands, calls for protection zones to be created around such areas, within which, in order to resist pressure to develop, there are very few possibilities to build;

40. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to promote research into the relationship between the various urban models and social behaviour, as well as into the conditions that foster social harmony and health;

41. Stresses that some historic quarters — valuable parts of our common heritage — have been abandoned for decades in the cities; recommends the setting-up of national, regional or local support programmes in order to promote adequate rehabilitation of these areas, including architecture, open spaces and squares, as well as riverside areas, bridges and other public works;

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42. Takes the view that in order to tackle the problem of climate change in cities, such as the lack of natural ventilation resulting in periods of very high temperatures and heavy air pollution, city-climate research should be included in urban planning in order to avoid the wind tunnel effect of high buildings; stresses that the loss of green spaces decreases natural ventilation;

43. Urges the Member States to promote projects co-financed by the EU related to the development and modernisation of district heating and to support increased building and use of district heating; stresses, in this respect, that in case of an energy crisis, a switch to a different energy source is easier to achieve with district heating;

44. Emphasises the fact that new methods of water management in cities should be developed, aiming to keep rainwater in cities for longer periods during hot and dry summers, prevent flash flooding and avoid housing and other developments on flood plains;

45. Proposes that Community guidelines should be established for the promotion and implementation of sustainable water resource management in cities, aiming to adapt to the impact of Climate Change, including requirements for water efficiency in new buildings, water conservation in wet periods for the dry and hot periods, maintenance of water bodies in hot periods as cooling systems and Sustainable Urban Drainage in order to decrease run-off and flood risk, reduce soil sealing and increase water conservation;

46. Considers that, when the thematic strategy is implemented, attention should be paid not only to the quantity but also to the quality of water; therefore calls on the Commission to support the sharing of good practice in this area when connection is sought to networks that have already been set up as part of the implementation of the Water Directive;

47. Emphasises the importance of renovating old water pipes and drainage systems in cities;

Sustainable Urban Construction

48. Regrets that although Sustainable Urban Construction was identified as one of the four focus areas of the 'Towards a Thematic Strategy on Urban Environment', the proposed strategy lacks any specific action in this field;

49. Stresses the importance of increasing the environmental performance of buildings with energy efficient house design (insulation, renewable energy use, green roofs, passive/active solar design, low energy houses etc.); supports the use of renewable as well as, if possible, locally available energy sources in the urban environment as well as water efficient building design (conservation and re-use of rainwater, rational flush of toilets, water efficient washing machines and dishwashers); further recommends benchmarking and EU-wide sharing of best practice in improving energy efficiency, the introduction of renewable energies and progress in sustainable urban construction in general;

Financing, research and exchange of best practices

50. Emphasises the need to support the introduction of such initiatives with adequate EU funding, especially from specific programmes and funds such as Civitas⁽¹⁾; supports the Commission's view that there are opportunities for obtaining financial assistance to address environmental priorities in urban areas under the proposed Life+ Regulation, the Cohesion Fund, the Structural Funds and the research framework programme, and is consequently opposed to any cuts in their budgets. Points, however, to the need to identify sources of additional specific funding to meet the new challenges arising from the strategy for the urban environment;

51. Endorses the Commission's recommendations that an integrated approach be taken to managing the urban environment and takes the view that, if applied at local level with the support of the Member States, such an approach should be taken as one of the criteria for the granting of Structural Funds resources and loans from the European Investment Bank (EIB);

⁽¹⁾ Civitas: Clty-VITAlity-Sustainability, Civitas I (2002-2006) and Civitas II (2005-2009) have an overall budget of more than EUR 300 million.

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52. Calls on the EIB to improve its lending instruments to effectively support sustainable urban development and to prioritise in existing programmes urban projects which implement SUMP, in particular in the area of energy efficiency, renewable energies, and sustainable urban transport infrastructure; further calls on the EIB to ensure that investments funded by it do not contradict sustainable urban management objectives;

53. Emphasises the significance of research in connection with urban policy, including issues relating to electricity and gas supplies, heating and air conditioning and waste treatment, and calls on the Commission to re-incorporate specific provisions dealing with this issue in the 7th Framework Programme on Research;

54. Considers it extremely important to support a network of national focal points on urban issues, such as the European Urban Knowledge Network, and welcomes the continuation of support for the URBACT programme within the framework of the proposed cohesion policy for 2007-2013;

55. Calls for the promotion of exchange of best practice at EU level between urban authorities on the implementation of the strategy and SUMP; furthermore proposes that, in order to avoid mistakes in urban development in the future, an honest and open exchange of negative experiences also be encouraged, by means of campaigns — which may be run by associations of towns — aimed at both civil servants and elected representatives;

56. Urges the Commission to go into greater detail with regard to the significance of the relations between cities and their environs for sustainable urban development which contributes to the overall cohesion of the EU and, in this regard, calls on the Commission and the Member States to promote such sustainable urban development;

57. Proposes that EU funding be allocated and used by Member States in order to retrofit buildings and neighbourhoods;

Better law-making

58. Calls on the Commission and the Council to strike an inter-institutional agreement with the Parliament in which the three institutions express their dedication to the implementation of all existing Community legislation as mentioned in this resolution; is convinced that such an agreement would contribute to improving accountability and therefore to 'better law-making';

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59. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission, the European Investment Bank and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.

P6_TA(2006)0368

A European Qualifications Framework

European Parliament resolution on the creation of a European Qualifications Framework (2006/2002(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Commission staff working document entitled 'Towards a European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning' (SEC(2005)0957),
- having regard to the Commission proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an integrated action programme in the field of lifelong learning (COM(2004)0474),