

Nicolaas Beets

Dutch Urban Envoy, Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, The Netherlands

slide 1

It is a pleasure to be back here. The first time I was in Bratislava was some twenty years ago as head of the task force of EU enlargement and here we are after this almost completed successful Slovak presidency of the EU. Things can really change. I'm standing here, as Elena Szolgayova, DG from Slovakia said, as part of the so-called Trio presidency, where now Slovakia is at the forefront, The Netherlands is in the back, but Malta is on the horizon. In that perspective we still play a role in the Urban agenda for the EU. I would like to thank Mr Olivier Baudelet from the European Commission for the commitment of the Commission, because the whole Urban agenda cannot be without commitment of the Commission and it's clearly stated. I am also here to say a few words about the participation of the Dutch cities, because the idea of an urban agenda for the EU was something which originated also 20 years ago after the Habitat II conference where there was a first announcement for the Commission saying we need an urban agenda for the EU. It was then in the Dutch presidency of '97 and since then we have been from the Netherlands' cities pushed to make it happen. And from the Dutch cities there was a large participation in writing actually the Pact of Amsterdam - personal involvement of the mayor of Amsterdam and the mayor of Rotterdam. Furthermore, the mayor of Utrecht, the mayor of Den Hague were also in strong support. All are former politicians who really pushed for this urban agenda. So in the Netherlands there is a keen interest from cities for the Urban agenda for the EU.

slide 2

A brief view of Europe how it stands. It was already mentioned, now more than 70% of Europeans live in urban cities and here you can see a rough division and you can see that in Slovakia which is encircled, there is still a substantial part of people who live in rural areas, but not the majority. And in the Netherlands it is quite obvious that there is only maybe 20% which live in rural areas.

slide 3

This is a slide of the distribution of the urban population in EU and you can clearly see that it is densely concentrated in the German western parts, in northern Italy, in Britain and in the Netherlands.

slide 4

In cities opportunities and challenges meet. Your both secretaries of state already mentioned it. And it is also the place where the pain sometimes is felt when integration fails or when refugees are not welcome.

slide 5

It's all in the framework of the Europe 2020 strategy where cities should be smart, sustainable and inclusive.

slide 6

The UA EU fits in the trend of how the EU was constructed. It started with 6 nations from the rubble of the 2nd world war, basically concentrating on food security, on no-more-war and on economic integration. But it was very much about nation states. But then in '87 there was a European Single Act and there was a specific responsibility for regional policy, it was then introduced. In '89 structural

Nicolaas Beets - Prepis prezentácie

BUDÚCNOSŤ MIEST V MEDZINÁRODNÝCH SÚVISLOSTIACH – INFORMAČNÝ SEMINÁR

6. 12. 2016 Kongresová sála MZVaEZ SR

funds were added, because it was more than just negotiating about treaties. And then we had the cohesion fund which basically led to the then existing Union how can we get to the territories or parts of the countries which are less developed into the mainstream. In the Maastricht treaty there was a very important moment in '92. It was a creation of the Committee of the Regions, clearly saying that regions also play an important role in the EU. And in Lisbon this was further reaffirmed. But not a word about cities.

slide 7

Because if you just go back to the start of the Union, maybe only 50% of the European population lived in cities. Now it is 72%. So then we've had the Pact of Amsterdam this year establishing the Urban agenda for the EU. It's an informal contribution to the design of the future and the revision of the existing EU regulation. Basically it tries to give cities a voice in how to shape the EU in the future. To make it more urban-proofed, if you like.

slide 8

Now, what is the Urban Agenda for the EU? It's creating the conditions for cities to blossom through better emphasis on regulation and from cities it's felt sometimes that the EU regulation is made at a level where it is not considered right in the interest of cities. So it is also about better funding. Olivier mentioned it. It's about better access to EU funding. There are a lot of EU funds but they cannot be reached by cities and the cities now have voice in the partnerships to try to improve that. It is about better knowledge-sharing.

slide 9

UA EU was the priority of the Ministry of the Interior and it was formalised in the so-called Pact of Amsterdam, the negotiations took place in over a year and on 30th of May we had the Pact of Amsterdam adopted. But that was only – if I may say only – at an informal meeting of the ministers for urban matters. What we needed also was Council conclusions where the Council said yes we approve the Urban agenda for the EU and that happened on the 24th of June.

slide 10

It's a new form of multi-level cooperation, where cities, member states, EU institutions and stakeholders work in partnerships and the partnerships will work alongside and will feed into the formal EU process. And that is the next step. When the partnerships will produce results, the EU should pick it up. The Commission, the Council and the European Parliament all will play an important role in getting the results formalized. The European Parliament has been heavily involved also in creating the Urban Agenda for the EU.

slide 11

The key instrument are the thematic partnerships. They focus on priority themes and there are 12, I will show you later. It's about concrete case-based approach, result oriented and the membership consists first and foremost of cities. Five cities will be selected in each partnerships, which in themselves are not representing that particular city interest but the interest of a network European cities. They are part of an existing network and are suggested by European umbrella organisations. Member states are there, the EU institutions, the European Investment Bank, Housing Europe,... these are just examples. They should formulate proposals for better regulation, better funding and better knowledge exchange.

slide 12

The Commission mentioned already some of the tools - to improve the Urban agenda for the EU a collaborative online tool which will be established in January, the Urban data portal where data and maps will be shown online and there is a secretariat which has been appointed just very recently.

slide 13

These are the twelve themes. And they are divided in smart, sustainable and inclusive. And if you just follow the smart line left which is in red – innovative and responsible public procurement, circular economy, urban mobility, jobs and skills and digital transition. In green you will go from the top – air quality, circular economy, urban mobility, climate adaptation, energy transition and sustainable use of land and nature-based solutions. And finally in blue – affordable housing, urban mobility, jobs and skills, inclusion of migrants and refugees, digital transition and urban poverty.

slide 14

Now what we saw is during the Dutch presidency we started with four pilot partnerships. Basically starting from nowhere building partnerships. But here you see how much interest there was when we had a broad call based on the Pact of Amsterdam which was in June. And there you can see that all over the EU more than 200 cities responded and said yes we would like to become a part of a partnership. Unfortunately many had to be disappointed but they will be able through the internet to participate and carry the partnership forward.

slide 15

These are the four pilot partnerships in the Netherlands – Housing, Inclusion of migrants and refugees, Air Quality and Urban poverty. And 3 of those are all Partnerships dealing with social questions. And this also shows how much we would like with the Urban agenda to bring the EU closer to its citizens through the cities, that's one of the aims as well.

slide 16

I take one example, which is Housing and actually it is coordinated by Slovakia. Elena has done a great job in getting this partnership off the ground together with Vienna which is almost a sister city, the urban areas Riga, the Scottish City alliance, Poznan and Lisbon, member states – Latvia, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. And others – European Commission, the various DGs - and this is an important novelty, because all DGs which are involved in this theme are connected. We anticipate that the cooperation within the various DGs is further strengthened. AEDES, Eurocities, EIB, Housing Europe and the International Union of Tenants and URBACT.

slide 17

During the Slovak presidency and I mentioned it already as successful because in Bratislava on the 4th October we agreed on four new partnerships – Jobs and skills in the local economy, Circular Economy, Urban Mobility and Digital Transition. In literally a few days we hope to establish the partnerships and announce their start.

slide 18

I will briefly mention the Jobs and skills. The objectives are prosperity and low unemployment, teaching skills for future jobs.

slide 19

Circular economy – increase the reuse, repair, refurbishment and recycle of existing materials and products to promote new growth and job opportunities. This is a nice addition, it's coordinated by Oslo, because from Norway there has been a keen interest in joining these partnerships. And they have actually applied and they are one of the coordinators, which is a nice addition to this.

slide 20

On Urban mobility the coordinators are the Czech Republic and Karlsruhe in Germany.

slide 21

Digital Transition will be done by Estonia, Oulu which is a city in Finland way up in the North and Sofia in Bulgaria.

slide 22

During the Maltese presidency in early 2017, we hope to agree on Energy transition, Sustainable use of land a nature-based solutions, Climate adaptation and Innovative procurement. That will conclude the 12 themes which have been agreed in the Pact of Amsterdam, but there is also a note that other themes can be added as Olivier already mentioned that new themes can be added and that will be done – if it's done – by the end of 2017.

slide 23

Finally I have the famous website and a Twitter account. And you see here a photograph which was taken here in Bratislava at the DG meeting when we agreed on these four partnerships.