



European Urban Forum

Prague, Ministry of Regional Development,
13 October 2017



The main goal of the international conference is a meeting at working level with open discussion on ways how to effectively reach the commitments contained in the UN and EU approved documents relating to housing and urban development issues in 2015 and 2016. The conference will also provide opportunity to share experiences, visions and looking for possible synergies of activities in strengthening the cooperation between UN and EU in the area of urban development and housing in the pan-European region of the UN Economic Commission for Europe Member States.



SESSION 1

EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF UN AND EU URBAN AGENDAS - POSSIBLE SYNERGIES AND COOPERATION

Specification

- Institutional level as a basis for implementation of approved UN and EU documents - possible steps at regional, national and local levels
- Common objectives and commitments contained in approved UN and EU documents
- Opportunities for deeper UN and EU cooperation in housing and urban development issues
- Evaluation of the progress in implementation of the approved documents - tools and indicators of development measurement and comparability

Context

- In October 2016, Ecuador's Quito held the third United Nations World Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development "Habitat III". The official outcome of this event was the approval of "New Urban Agenda" (NUA). It is a global set of visions, goals, and commitments of 193 UN Member States formulating ways of access to housing and urban development for the next 20 years (until 2036), as the UN summits on housing and urban development are based on 20-year cycle. At global level, the housing and urban development agenda is coordinated by the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), seated in Nairobi.
- The EU as a complex of 28 Member States has contributed to the NUA with the "Urban Agenda for the EU" (approved in May 2016). For the EU region, urban development is a key issue - more than 70% of the EU citizens live in cities, where, at the same time, about 85% of the whole EU's GDP is generated.
- The UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Member States has contributed to the NUA with the "The Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing" (approved in April 2015). The Charter serves as a basis for activities and projects of within this pan-European region, comprising 56 states throughout the whole northern hemisphere.
- The "Habitat III" conference was one of the first Implementation conferences for the Sustainable Development Goals of the "Agenda 2030" (approved in September 2015 for the period by 2030). The NUA is mainly touched by the Goal 11 - "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, resilient and sustainable". Moreover, Visions and commitments contained in the NUA relate also to several other goals, such as Goals 1 and 2, aimed at combating extreme poverty in all its forms.

"New Urban Agenda" Implementation

- NUA calls for an integrated approach to urban development, which should be based on activities at all levels - from national to local ones. This document recognizes that the implementation of the commitments relating to transformation will similarly require multilevel implementation measures. Although a number of key items and activities correspond to urban planning and design, they differ in spatial and time scales.
- If appropriate steps are not realized, cities will face most of the already known risks, and there will be no benefits. The risks of poorly managed local implementation include badly located communities, isolated from job opportunities and services, and population displacement due to unregulated zone creation for people with higher incomes, deformed resource consumption (mainly due to planned sparsely populated localities and unplanned densely populated places) and uneven distribution of urban services, particularly in unplanned informal and illegal city districts.
- Local activities enable to specify principles - such as equality and justice, particularly in districts, where strong links among citizens are and where a group identity is formed. For successful local implementation of NUA, horizontal coordination and involvement of local communities and groups are fundamental - whether it is a design proposed by a local community, community management or other forms.

Implementation of Goal 11 of the "Agenda 2030"

- The Sustainable Development Goals, formulated in the "Agenda 2030" and approved by the UN Member States in September 2015 at the UN summit, represent an ambitious, transformative global framework for sustainable social, economic and environmental development with the primary commitment of "not leaving anyone behind".
- Achieving the "Agenda 2030" goals is highly dependent on the sum of local successes that require efforts of efficient, responsible and well-funded local authorities, together with private stakeholders, civil society and local communities.
- Sustainable urban development is explicitly focused in Goal 11 - "Making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable" - which is for achieving the "Agenda 2030" goals crucial - at least since more than half of the planet's inhabitants live in cities and this share is growing further. Success with reaching Goal 11 is therefore fundamental and determinant for the entire "Agenda 2030".
- In cities, concentration of economic potential as well as risks occurs; e.g. risk of vulnerability of cities to disasters caused by climate change. Most of the "Agenda 2030" sustainable development goals have urban implications, and without adequate attention given to urban reality - in all forms and complexities - ambitious "Agenda 2030" goals are not possible to reach.

Implementation of the "Urban Agenda for the EU"

- In 2016, the Amsterdam Pact formalizing the "Urban Agenda for the EU" was signed in Amsterdam under the leadership of the EU Dutch Presidency. It is a way to enable cities in Europe to better influence the EU legislation, how to focus funding instruments through different funds into cities, and how to share experience of urban authorities across Europe.
- The core of the "Urban Agenda for the EU" is development of partnerships in 12 thematic areas in total. These partnerships enable cities, Member States, EU institutions and other stakeholders, such as non-governmental organizations and the private sector, to work together on equal basis and to look for and find common ways to improve urban areas in the EU.
- At the end of 2015 and beginning of 2016, 4 pilot partnerships were launched in the following areas:
 - o Integration of migrants and refugees,
 - o Air quality,
 - o urban poverty,
 - o Housing.
- In January 2017, 4 more partnerships were launched in the following areas:
 - o Circular economy,
 - o Digital transformation,
 - o Urban mobility,
 - o Job opportunities and skills in local economy.
- Then the implementation of the remaining 4 partnerships was started in the following areas:
 - o Adaptation to climate change (including green infrastructure),
 - o Energy transformation,
 - o Sustainable land use and solutions based on nature principles,
 - o Innovative and responsible public procurement.

Implementation of the "The Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing"

- „The Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing" was endorsed by the UNECE in April 2015 as a contribution to the "Habitat III" UN summit and as an input to the then-prepared and negotiated NUA. The Committee on Housing and Land Management, which is the UNECE subsidiary body in the field of housing and urban development, approved in its plenary meeting in December 2016 the framework for the implementation of the Charter including the establishment of the Centres for implementation of the Charter in UNECE Member Countries. Several countries reported during the meetings of the Committee's Bureau during 2017 about the preparation for establishment of centres - e.g. United Kingdom, Albania, Estonia, Finland, the Czech Republic and Belarus. The Charter Implementation Centres will cooperate and the UNECE Committee of Housing and Land Management will coordinate such international cooperation.

Discussion questions for panel discussion

- How to internationally interlinkage reaching of goals and commitments contained in agreed UN and EU documents?
- What specific international activities can contribute to deeper and more effective cooperation between the UN and the EU in the field of housing and urban development? Which existing international platforms can be effectively used?
- Which objectives and commitments contained in the approved documents can be implemented jointly at pan-European and national level in common / at the same time?
- Are there tools available to evaluate the progress of implementation of approved documents? Can indicators approved for the "Agenda 2030" be used effectively also to measure the progress of reaching goals of other documents?

SESSION 2

STRATEGIC ROLE OF CITIES AND MUNICIPALITIES IN URBAN AND HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Specification

- As cities are growing and developing, there comes a need to manage them. Consequently, they will demand actionable political management that relies on professional background.
- Development of cities represents a complex process and solution of such problems requires long-term vision and usage of adequate planning tools. Cities should play an important role in strategic planning as well as with other stakeholders, who are contributing to the urban development, from resulting partnerships
- An integral part of cities and municipalities, a part of this, is housing of the local citizens. As mentioned in the Agenda 2030 Objectives of sustainable development, there is need to ensure quality, safe, and affordable housing and associated services. Development of sustainable housing is facing challenges of globalization, demographic changes, climate changes or economic fluctuation, and is linked with phenomena such as use of existing housing stock and its adaptation to compact and resilient settlements with high quality and readable structure. It also supports ecological and energy efficiency as well as high quality environment and design.

Context

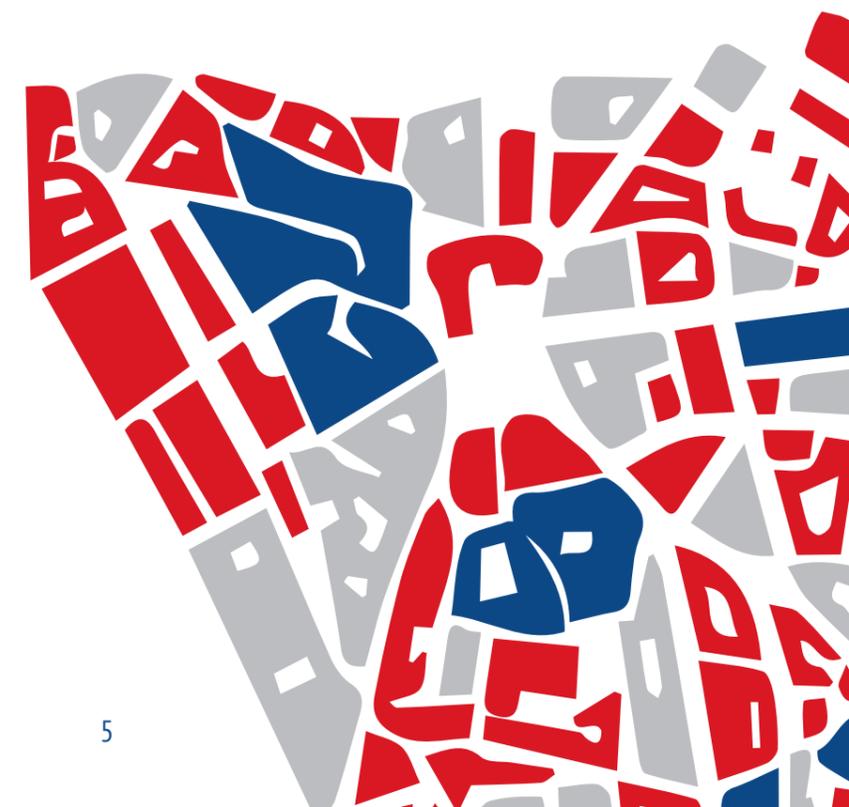
- At the beginning of 20 century, in cities lived 14 % of the total population. In 2000 it was more than half and until 2050 it is estimated around ¾ of the world population will be living in a city. Cities are consider as basic building elements of prosperity and development poles. Their significance is a result of joint action of several factors. These include for instance a number of inhabitants and associated human capital; financial resources; diversified structure of economy; representation of industries capable to generate growth in the surrounding areas; impact on competitiveness; greater labor productivity; involvement of economy based on knowledge and accumulation of innovations and others. However, the view on the city is perceived in different parts of the world differently.
- Issues of futher urban development concern various spheres: demographic, economic and social area (aging population, low economic level of citizens, low entrepreneurial activity and willingness to do business, etc.); transport and technical infrastructure (e.g. excessive traffic load associated with negative impacts on the air, problems with parking); environmental issues (poor air quality, excessive and inefficient energy consumption and resources, etc.); public space issues (inefficient use of the potential of recreational areas of cities, poor quality of public space in suburbs and housing estates, uncoordinated construction of shopping centers, etc.); and public administration (cooperation with cities and municipalities on the suburbanization process, a lack of predictive planning and nonexistent tools for economic planning).
- An integral part of cities and municipalities is among other thing housing of inhabitants. Possibilities and affordability of housing are basic criteria for high quality life in cities. Principles and targets of housing policy at the national level consists of mainly creation of appropriate legal, fiscal and institutional environment, which allows to all stakeholders actively operate at the market.
- The fundamental aspect of the development and sustainable life of citizens will be ability of municipalities to adapt to demographic changes. European population will be aging in following years and decades, while the fastest groups that will grow is over 80 years. That will increase demand on usage, permeability and barrier-freeness of the city, and at the social cohesion certainly at the local and communal level.
- The role of cities and municipalities is, therefore in creating specific strategies for sustainable urban development and its own potential, irreplaceable. Thus, development of cities represents a complex process and solution of these problems requires long-tern vision and usage of adequate planning instruments. In the programing period EU 2014–2020, there are specific instruments supporting metropolitan development and areas of agglomeration, so-called integrated instruments – for urban space, these are in the case of the Czech Republic Integrated
- Territorial Investments (ITI) and Integrated Plans for Territorial Development (IPTD).

Principles of urban policy in the Czech Republic

- In the case of the Czech Republic, five principles were proposed within the framework of a conceptual document Principles of urban policy – Actualization 2017. These principles go across fields, intertwine and complement each other, and create the frame for increasing quality of inhabitants' life in urban areas and increase attractiveness of cities as places suitable for life, investments and labor. The principles should help to coordinate current policies influencing urban development, initiate consideration of territorial factors in these policies, and support local governments when implementing integrated approach to manage their cities.
- Principle 1 – Strategic and integrated approach to urban development consists of strategic directions and development activities: 1) Documents and instruments of strategic urban development that apply strategic documents, programs and plans, as tools for management of urban and region development. 2) Coordination of instruments and approaches to urban development. 3) Integrated approach towards management of territorial development. 4) and Information and methodical help at urban development.
- Principle 2 – Polycentric development of the settlement system consists of strategic directions and development activities: 1) Focus on support and implementation of polycentric development. 2) and Balanced and polycentric development of settlement systems.
- Principle 3 – Support of urban development as poles of development in the territory consists of strategic directions and activities for 1) Economic, social and demographic area. 2) Transport and technical infrastructure. 3) Public space. 4) Public services and housing. 5) and Public administration.
- Principle 4 - Caring for the urban environment consists of strategic directions and activities: 1) Healthy environment. 2) Climate change. 3) Sustainable use of natural resources. 4) Caring for nature and landscape. 5) and Environmental education and public awareness.
- Principle 5 – Ensure implementation of NUA, which is touching upon all mentioned topics when the Czech Republic is preparing its implementation plan.

Questions for panel discussion

- What municipalities can do to enhance sustainable urban development? Particularly, how to ensure that policy instruments and strategies are really implemented and effective, while boosting participation of (local) relevant stakeholders?
- How to create livable cities reflecting demands of local people in order to increase the quality of life? Including good practices and practical/smart solutions
- How to build sustainable housing area as a part of the city in a resilient, inclusive and safe way?
- How to restore (dysfunctional) settlements, for instance blocks of flats, in cities addressing the needs of citizens in the 21th century, while making them more friendly neighborhoods?



SESSION 3

STRATEGIC APPROACH, RESOURCES AND TOOLS FOR FUTURE TERRITORIAL AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT / COHESION POLICY OF THE EU

Specification:

- Territorial and urban development in context of Cohesion policy (general description, philosophy of Cohesion Policy); benefits resulting from Cohesion policy (in the last decades)
- Why Cohesion policy brings added value – tools, targeting on results, urban dimension and integrated approaches, Smart Cities etc.
- Practical experiences with implementation in practice (general observations; examples).
- Future perspective (post 2020) – vision/goals; tools; linkage to SDGs and other approaches.

Context

- The interdisciplinarity and connectivity we encounter in everyday life is becoming inherent also in the formation and implementation of important policies - one of them is the policy of economic, social and territorial cohesion - Cohesion Policy. This Policy has played and continues to play a significant role in the development of the EU and the Czech Republic as well. Its key feature is its ability to target territorial needs (it supports different areas with different tools), to create investment background and be able to involve different layers of partners in the development of the territory. It is close to the citizens as well as institutions that work with it and use it to plan major actions or projects in their territory.
- Cohesion Policy is a policy of investment, long-term and stable character, which is capable of directing its support to European, national, regional and local needs and of developing the potential of the territory. It is a tool for achieving greater maturity, convergence, competitiveness and a higher quality of life. It is visible through concrete projects and impacts; however, its positive benefits need to be communicated more.
- The debate on the future of Cohesion Policy post 2020 is part of a larger whole and of fundamental questions seeking an answer to what direction the entire EU will take. In summary, the future of Cohesion Policy will be decided by three important factors - the rising role of the EU in the context of integration uncertainty (UK exit from the EU, efforts to create or allocate part of the budget only for the euro area and the issue of “two-speed” Europe); the need to reflect on security issues and the emergence of new needs; the ability of Cohesion Policy to improve performance in the 2014–2020 period and willingness of net payers to contribute to Cohesion Policy.
- The perception of Cohesion Policy can be significantly influenced by every EU Member State; this includes effective and targeted communication of results and impacts of Cohesion Policy, both to citizens and partners in the EU.
- The Czech Republic has had up to CZK 1.5 trillion available for the 2004–2020 period from the EU budget for Cohesion Policy and it has already invested successfully a significant part of it. Approximately CZK 650 billion have been allocated for the 2014–2020 period; those need to be effectively utilised within the time available while overcoming the relative complexity of whole Cohesion Policy.
- Cohesion Policy thus forms almost one third of government capital investments in the Czech Republic and so plays a significant role in GDP growth, low unemployment, creating thousands of new jobs and it brings additional indirect effects (improvement of strategic management in public administration, improvement of partnership).
- The urban character of Cohesion Policy is all the more important as cities are those that drive the economy in the Czech Republic. Support from Cohesion Policy is long-term and stable, bringing an innovative view on how to develop cities and their hinterlands (e.g. the concept of smart cities, smart specialization, integrated instruments) and enabling us to think about what the right investment is in a given territory - it does not have to be a sophisticated transport system, or an upgrade of power grids and other infrastructure, but Cohesion Policy enables also the utilisation of research and innovation potential, it can involve educational institutions, it does not leave fallow damaged or unused areas and can also work with socially weak and needy persons.

Future Cohesion Policy after 2020

- Not only Cohesion Policy but also the entire structure of EU instruments now face new needs and challenges, the integration uncertainty after the UK exit has confronted the EU with crucial questions, it is also necessary to look at the global and modern trends (e.g. Society 4.0, or digitization in general), the direction of the EU should be put into a broader perspective of sustainable development goals of Agenda 2030; all of that, as a result, increases pressure on the EU to introduce a new, modern and clear vision and strategy for the next decades or even further.
- The Czech Republic believes that Cohesion Policy, even in the combination of those factors, can play a very important role; in addition, the Policy is based on a shared commitment between the European Commission and EU Member States (i.e. it can responsibly and purposefully respond to the needs of the territory, but also can strengthen the strategic level of governance). The question is, what tools or form will enable Cohesion Policy to help EU even more to face these challenges, but also to meet the development needs of individual countries and their regions.
- The future programming period after 2020 must, according to the Czech Republic, be set on the basis of principles such as cooperation, trust, continuity, partnership, simplicity, accountability and flexibility. The transfer of good practice from the past is very important. The future shape of Cohesion Policy must avoid complexity leading, among other things, to increased administration and possible lack of interest on the part of applicants.
- Cohesion Policy is key in the context of the development of the Czech Republic, it is capable of removing barriers, giving a strategic direction to the areas that will help develop the potential of the territory; however, with regard to future development, it will not cover and provide support for all areas, which is a challenge for other, and in the future possibly new, programmes/ instruments. The Czech Republic supports the principle of territorial dimension, i.e. targeting the support to areas where the resources spent will bring maximum possible effect (whether at regional, urban or rural level).
- When selecting the objectives and priorities of the Czech Republic after 2020, a significant role will be played by concentration of aid, either laid down by the European Commission or set at the national level; in this regard, it will be crucial to prioritize among the different areas so that the funds that will be much smaller, are used effectively and with the highest possible added value.
- It will be necessary to have quality, implemented (implementable) and reviewed strategic documents and source documents on which the objectives and priorities of the Czech Republic will be built; it will also be necessary to reflect new challenges, sustainable development goals of “Agenda 2030” and new (mega)trends.
- Objectives and priorities, that are constructed based on strategic work and procedures, are already underway in the Czech Republic and a strategic document called “National Concept of Implementation of Cohesion Policy in the Czech Republic after 2020” is being created; in terms of Cohesion Policy, it will draw on the territorial dimension and territorial objectives and priorities now being formed in the document Strategy of the Regional Development of the Czech Republic 2021-2030.

Discussion questions for panel discussion

- How can we successfully manage such 21st century phenomena and challenges as Society 4.0 and digitisation? And how can these be reflected in policies, e.g. Cohesion Policy?
- Interdisciplinarity is not only a matter of sectors or themes, but also relates to the need to connect levels, from international to local; it is one thing to “think glocal” and another is to implement the principle in practice. How can international commitments be defined and met while meeting needs at national level and engaging with real regional and local problems?
- Can Cohesion Policy be made more flexible without losing its key characteristic – the ability to finance member states’ and region’s long term priorities?
- How can we prepare for a potential decrease of resources (e.g. for Cohesion Policy after 2020)? What should we do to contain the impact of such a decrease? In the future, how can we make better use of other resources or instruments, either those available now (e.g. centrally managed programmes, financial instruments) or others which may not exist yet?

