

EUROPEAN AGENCIES NETWORK FOR CITIZENSHIP, INCLUSION, INVOLVEMENT AND EMPOWERMENT OF COMMUNITIES THROUGH THE URBAN TRANSFORMATION PROCESS

A PROPOSAL FOR THE EU URBAN AGENDA

EUCANET is a network supported by the **Europe for Citizens** program of the European Union.

During a two year long debate, the five founding partners (Torino Urban Lab, Fondazione per l'Innovazione Urbana of Bologna, City of Skopje, City of Marseille, Cluj Metropolitan Area Intercommunity Development Association) explored **how city agencies could improve the direct contribution of citizens to EU urban policies**.

Many urban authorities in the European Union support organizations (city agencies, local development agencies, urban think tanks, urban innovation hubs, living labs, urban labs, etc.) playing an explicit citizen engagement and connection role within the boundaries of their territorial systems. These agencies are either deeply embedded into local government, or mainly relying on private support.

Often contributing directly to the spatial planning process (dialoguing with citizens, organizations, business and knowledge institutions, public authorities), they also help generate new governance models, develop strategic vision for the future and share knowledge through social and relational resources. Yet, while such agencies enjoy a privileged position between top-down policies and bottom-up initiatives, as well as between citizens and local decision makers, they still miss a close relationship with the EU level. Designed to favor a larger democratic participation, city agencies could effectively feed the EU policy making process on urban matters, providing **fresh, locally based knowledge about forefront and innovative practices**. As they participate pro-actively in national and transnational networks, they could easily establish a connection and compare practices, allowing for specificities and commonalities to be identified and for key innovative elements to emerge. Their action at local level could also be adapted to make them more capable to **provide high quality information on EU policies, promote EU citizenship, values and identity, collect and combine issues and requests, mobilize EU citizens, help fight populisms and enhance democratic participation**.

To realize the potential of city agencies in pro-actively feeding the policy-making and implementation process of the **Pact of Amsterdam**, the establishment of a new bijective relationship between the local and the EU level is required.

In particular:

1. **city agencies' experience in collecting, surveying and interpreting emerging dynamics at city/neighborhood level** should be better exploited to strengthen multifaceted, multidimensional, in-depth knowledge about EU urban systems and territories;
2. **city agencies should proactively join the Pact of Amsterdam implementation process** to share the specific knowledge about inclusion, involvement and empowerment of communities through the urban transformation process, on the development of a strategic vision for urban futures and about the emerging issues at local level;
3. the **inclusion of a more explicit reference to the Pact of Amsterdam priorities and cross-cutting issues in the city agency portfolios of activities** should be encouraged and supported;
4. **city agencies need to develop new skills, competencies, expertise and organizational learning methods** to nurture, foster and activate the innovative urban policy-making processes needed to implement the EU urban agenda;
5. **consolidating and expanding the European network of city agencies** could support this process, offering know-how, well-honed approaches and working methods, and supporting cities willing to establish new city agencies.

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