

Brussels, 5 February 2009

European Urban Day: Commissioner Hübner highlights €30 billion boost for cities

On 6 February, Regional Policy Commissioner Danuta Hübner will address the "European Urban Day" conference in Prague. The event, backed by the Czech Presidency of the European Union, is an opportunity to evaluate the crucial urban dimension of the EU's Cohesion Policy, which provides €30 billion in support for European cities to invest in innovation, competitiveness and sustainable development. During her visit, the Commissioner will also hold talks with Cyril Svoboda, the Czech Minister for Regional Affairs.

Ahead of the event, Commissioner Hübner stated: "Investment from the European Union's Cohesion Policy is crucial for boosting economic growth and job creation in cities. The urban dimension is especially important in the current downturn because the policies developed by cities have consequences for surrounding areas, the region and often the entire Member State. Cities need to be encouraged to take the lead in this process of making the Union more competitive, more innovative and more ecologically and economically sustainable."

The conference will focus on the impact of the expanded urban development programmes supported by the Cohesion Policy in 2007-13. Around 10% of total allocations under the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), i.e. €30 billion across the EU, is targeted at specific measures to promote urban development, including better infrastructure (housing, schools, hospitals, telecommunications, and transport); support for small and medium enterprises; urban regeneration for job creation; restoration of historic city centres; and initiatives to enhance energy efficiency and environmental protection.

In her speech at the event, entitled "From Bristol, through Leipzig to Prague: What is the State of Play of the Urban Dimension of Cohesion Policy and how to Continue?", Commissioner Hübner will underline the need for an integrated approach to address urban development. In particular, she will call for increased attention to ensure that immigrant populations in cities are not excluded from job markets.

The Commissioner will also highlight the variety of tools available for cities through the Cohesion Policy. These include:

- • [JESSICA](#) (Joint European Support for Sustainable Investment in City Areas), a joint initiative by the Commission, European Investment Bank and Council of Europe Development Bank aimed at facilitating financing of urban renewal projects through a combination of grants and loans;
- • The [URBACT](#) programme, which promotes the exchange of good practice between towns and cities through the creation of thematic networks;
- • The [Urban Audit](#), a wealth of statistical information to help cities learn from the experiences of other cities facing similar challenges;
- • The [Urban Atlas](#), a new database of satellite images of 185 cities, designed to aid city planners in their work.

The “City Stars” to reward sustainable cities

During the conference, Commissioner Hübner will announce the launch of "CityStars 2010", recognising the most innovative city projects supported by Cohesion Policy. This new award, which builds on the success of the European Commission's [RegioStars](#) initiative, aims to encourage best practice and the goals of the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities.

Adopted by Member States in 2007, the Leipzig Charter calls for coordinated action in support of an integrated urban development policy, with an emphasis on modern infrastructure networks, improved energy efficiency, clean urban transport, integration of migrants and special attention towards deprived neighbourhoods. The Charter built on principles set out in the 2005 "Bristol Accord", which established a framework for a common European approach to sustainable communities, combining economic prosperity and social justice (IP/07/705).

Note for editors

The urban dimension is fully integrated within the objectives of the 316 ERDF programmes in 2007-2013 across the European Union.

The “European Urban Day” is organized by Czech think-tank CEVRO (the Liberal Conservative Academy), in collaboration with the European Parliament's URBAN-Housing Intergroup, the Czech Senate, the Czech Ministry for Regional Development, the Union of Towns and Municipalities and the Council of European Municipalities and Regions.

More information on regional policy is available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/index_en.htm