



EEA URBAN STAKEHOLDER MEETING - 2020

As EEA renovates its commitment to the Urban Sustainability file it renovated as well its commitment on presenting once a year the results of the co-created work. Since 1 December 2017 the EEA organized 3 Urban Stakeholders meetings. This year, for its fourth edition, in a virtual format across three different afternoons. The meeting started on the 30/11 afternoon with a session that made a Policy/Science interface in an urban sustainability context. It served as an appetizer for the next two days as it was followed by a facilitated debate on 1/12, as well in the afternoon, to gather stakeholders views. On 2/12 in the afternoon a round of discussions with the presence of representatives from DG ENV and DG CLIMA focused on lessons learnt during the pandemic and beforehand to focus EEA inputs from 2021 onwards.

1.1 POLITICAL MOMENTUM

The COVID pandemic has precipitated an unprecedented sanitary, economic and social global crisis. Highly dense populated areas – urban areas – being the most affected. Many cities have reacted rapidly and effectively showing the local level governance at the forefront of responsiveness and collaboration.

Extra pressure has been put on the social protection, education, health, and welfare systems. Impacts on the environment have showed a mixed picture. Local authorities have a critical task to protect their citizens, their environment and prepare their communities for recovery and strengthened resilience. The year 2020 has re-shaped urban life around Europe and the world. Local communities have played a key role in contributing to keeping people safe and maintaining economic activities.

The city/local level has proven to be one of the main agents for recovery, governance, protection and development within societies and thus a cornerstone for the post-COVID world. In parallel, at EU level a series of policy frameworks, legislative proposals and initiatives have been launched to operationalize the European Green Deal proposed in December 2019. They are the cornerstone of a sustainable recovery. During the Autumn 2020, the ICLEI Mannheim Conference, the European Week of Cities and Regions (that sprawled over 3 weeks), the Green Week and the EUROCITIES conference all addressed the relevance of cities. In the transition to a new sustainable urban normality, local authorities see an expanded role supporting government stimulus packages for employment creation, delivery of essential services, ensuring a green-economic transformation, provision of adequate shelter and public space and reestablishment of local value chains.

Within the EU sphere a new Urban Agenda – linked to a new Leipzig Charter signed during the German Presidency 30 November 2020 – and a new Territorial Agenda, will be major steps in support of future Cohesion policies and a Recovery Package securing a just transition for all. The 8th Cohesion Report, under preparation – will touch upon the recovery stimulus which will last for the next MFF period.



Two other recent events should be highlighted. The [Green City Accord](#), a DG ENV initiative with the support of European mayors and major umbrella organisations of cities - Eurocities, ICLEI, and CEMR - committed to safeguarding the environment. The Accord will support cities to achieve a healthier environment, improve the quality of life of citizens. Actions in five areas of environmental management are expected: Improving air quality; Enhancing nature and biodiversity; Reducing noise pollution; Improving municipal waste management and advancing the circular economy; Improving the quality of water bodies and the efficiency of water use. The Green City Accord was launched last 22 October during Green Week. The 2020 edition of the European Week of Regions and Cities an event that took place from 5 – 22 October, reached record-breaking numbers: 10 000 participants and 2 000 speakers gathered from all over Europe to take part in more than 500 digital sessions. These addressed Circular Economy, Public Procurement, Sustainable Land Use, Housing, Culture/Cultural Heritage, Security in Public Spaces, Mobility, Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation.

Both these events show how intertwined the Environment and Climate Agendas are with the Urban Agenda. They also show the EEA Urban Sustainability Conceptual Framework is fully fit for purpose. And they show the need to continue the urban sustainability work within EEA and EIONET in a 2021/2030 time frame. Within this background the work done at EEA with your support, proves to be fit and responsive to future challenges.

1.2 EVENT OVERVIEW

The 3-day event is called **‘Europe after 2020 – the green transformative role of cities’**. The discussion on the 30/11 afternoon invited three keynote speakers to bridge the Policy/Science interface in an urban sustainability context. This was followed by a facilitated co-creation workshop on 1/12 afternoon to gather internal and external stakeholders’ views. Last but not least, on 2/12 in the afternoon, a discussion with the presence of representatives from DG-ENV and DG-CLIMA took place to reflect on the day 2 workshop outcomes, lessons learnt during the pandemic and actions for 2021 onwards.

Day 1: Bridging Policy-Science

Mon 30/11 offered an open webinar based on the fundamentals of the future EEA strategy, and the opportunities to localize it within a Policy/Science context. This webinar featured experts to talk about the role of cities and EU urban policies supporting them, the current policy cycle in a the Green Deal momentum, as well as new perspectives on urban futures, using COVID-19 lessons for re-thinking and redesigning them.

Prof. Hans Bruyninckx EEA Executive Director presented the new EEA Strategy 2021-2030 and the EEA work trajectory that influenced it. He focused as well in the work that is already underway relating to the urban scale and the cities governance and reiterated the EEA perspective that cities are key actors if the EU (and the world) want to achieve key environment and climate targets. To the great acceleration of environmental phenomena he called for a Accelerator Award to recognize great effort by local authorities towards environment and sustainability transitions.



Carole Mancel-Blanchard from the Cabinet of Commissioner Elisa Ferreira, presented the state of play of the designing of the **European Urban Initiative (EUI)** within the cohesion policy context and the proposal for 2021-2020. The EUI aims to overcome the fragmented landscape of initiatives, programmes and instruments in support of cities under cohesion policy. It will strengthen sustainable urban development with integrated and participatory approaches in all urban areas and will support the Urban Agenda for the EU. As for its main activities, the EUI will support innovative actions as well as capacity and knowledge building, policy development and communication. The European Commission aims to connect the designing of the EUI with current activities in cities, examples of good practices under the Urban Innovative Actions, URBACT and Article 7 of ERDF. The Cabinet welcomed EEA contributions and sees the Agency as a very relevant future stakeholder.

Maarten Hajer from Urban Futures Studio Utrecht University, reflected on the construction of the city based on some urban utopias from the 19th century up to the 1960s as a quest for idealized ways of living. Based on the work of swiss architect Le Corbusier (and the principles of the “Cite Radieuse”) he called for a new way of seeing the cities – deepening the understanding of what sustainability transitions really are, and the need to bring all disciplines from engineering to environmental sciences and social sciences, together. He elaborated further on two examples as priorities: bringing his experience with the International Resources Panel he pointed to the need to a clear change/shift in the materials used to build the city; bringing his ethos as a social scientist he mentioned the need to give new meaning and empower the neighborhoods.

Overall facilitation was held by Ivone Pereira Martins (EEA) and Jock Martin (EEA).

Agenda of Monday 30.11.20		
15:50-16:00	Check-in	EEA
16:00-16:10	Agenda of the day Objective of the webinar Rules of engagement	EEA
16:10-16:25	The new EEA Strategic Cycle – is there a role for an urban angle in the EEA Strategy?	Prof. Hans Bruyninckx EEA Executive Director
16:25-16:45	What role for cities post 2020? An Urban Agenda for the EU – converging recovery, cohesion and the green deal	Carole Mancel-Blanchard CAB-Ferreira
16:45-17:05	Re-designing Urban Futures – Reframing science, policy and reality	Prof. Maarten Hajer Urban Futures Studio Utrecht University
17:05-17:25	Q/A	All
17:25-17:30	Closing remarks	EEA



Day 2: Localising EEA's strategic objectives

Tues 1/12 was dedicated to interact in breakout sessions based on the insights of Day 1, the work done so far and on EEA strategy strategic objectives: Supporting policy implementation and sustainability transitions; providing timely input to solutions for sustainability challenges; building stronger networks and partnerships; making full use of the potential of data, technology and digitalization; resourcing our shared ambitions. Collectively these sessions identified and co-proposed new areas for EEA's work on urban sustainability beyond 2020. Overall facilitation was hold by Ivone Pereira Martins (EEA).

Agenda of Tuesday 01.12.20		
14:20-14:30	Check-in	ETC-ULS
14:30-14:40	Agenda of the day Objective of the day Rules of engagement	EEA
14:40-15:00	Urban Sustainability, a EEA stakeholders process - Looking back to look forward	Presentation by CEP/LSE-Cities
15:00-16:00	Webinar 'Localizing the EEA strategy' - SO1: Supporting policy implementation and sustainability transitions - SO2: Providing timely input to solutions for sustainability challenges - SO3: Building stronger networks and partnerships - SO4: Making full use of the potential of data, technology and digitalization - SO5: Resourcing our shared ambitions	Facilitated by ETC/ULS with breakout rooms and MIRO virtual board
16:00-16:10	Break	
16:10-16:40	Plenary discussion	Facilitated by EEA
16:30-16:45	Closing remarks	EEA

Day 3: Opening a new policy circle

Wed 2/12 reported on Day 2 workshop discussions, and reflecting on work underway, gave the floor to EU policy-makers (DG-ENV& DG-CLIMA) to share their perspectives on how EGD can play out for cities and how they see the EEA role. Lessons of 2020, the new policy cycle and the EEA strategy were the basis for such discussion. Overall facilitation was hold by Ivone Pereira Martins and Jock Martin (EEA).

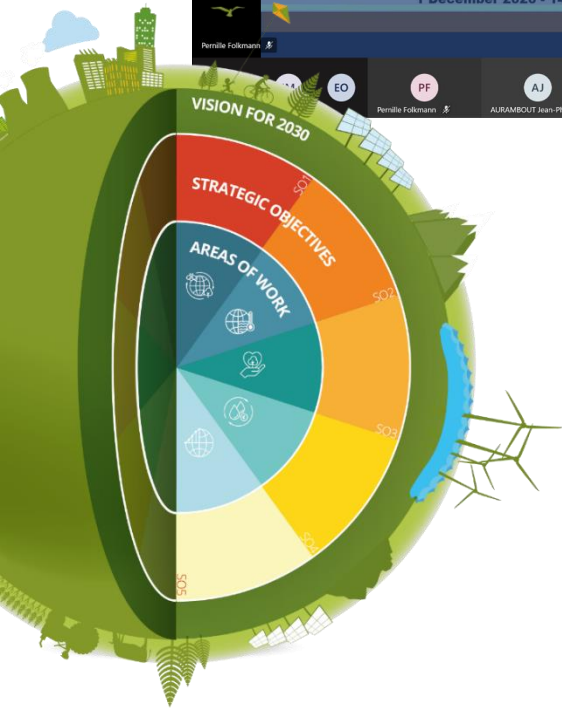
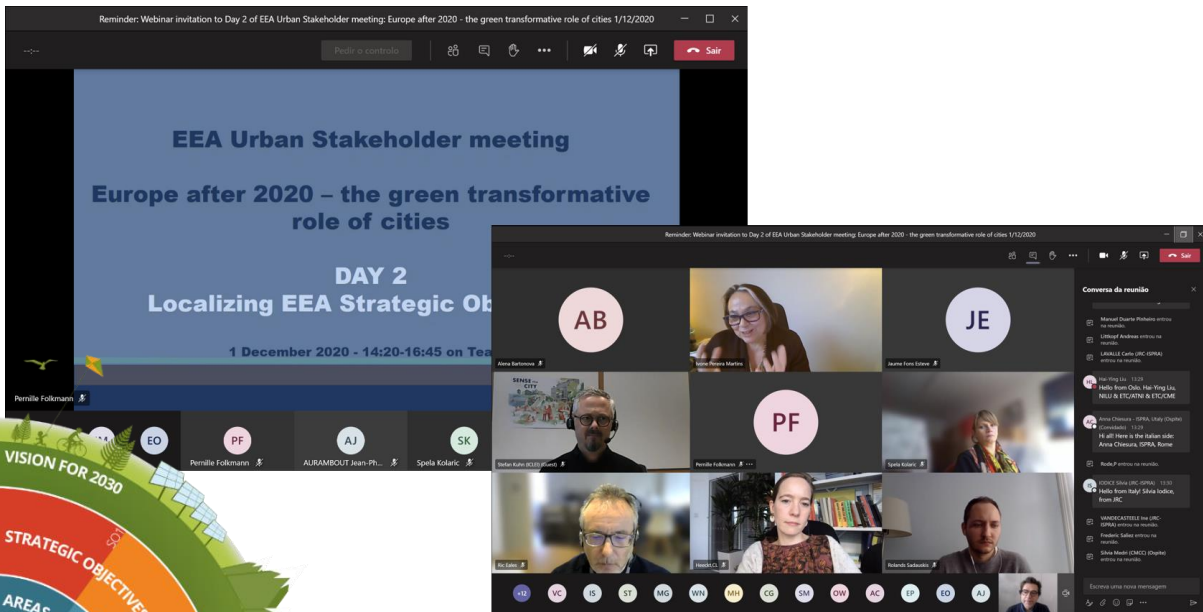
Wednesday 02.12.20		
14:20-14:30	Check-in	ETC-ULS



14:30-14:40	Agenda of the day Objective of the day Rules of engagement	EEA
14:40-14:55	Reporting outputs from Day 2	ETC/ULS (with support from CEP/LSE)
14:55-15:00	Q&A	Facilitated by EEA
15:00-15:20	Outlook from DG-Environment	Joanna Drake Deputy Director-General DG-Environment
15:20-15:25	Q&A	Facilitated by EEA
15:25-15:45	Outlook from DG-CLIMA	Elina Bardram Acting director DG-Clima
15:45-15:50	Q&A	Facilitated by EEA
15:45-16:00	Closing remarks	EEA



1.3 CO-CREATION WORKSHOP IN DETAILS (DAY 2)



3.3.1 EEA-EIONET Strategy 2021-2030: objectives

SO1 Supporting policy implementation and sustainability transitions

Produce evidence-based knowledge to support policy implementation and development of new initiatives to accelerate and scale up the transition to sustainability.

SO2 Providing timely input to solutions for sustainability challenges

Deliver targeted inputs to inform policy and public discussions, by organising and communicating knowledge on responses, including innovative solutions to societal challenges.

SO3 Building stronger networks and partnerships

Strengthen our network through more active engagement at the country level and work with other leading organisations in order to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and expertise.

SO4 Making full use of the potential of data, technology and digitalisation

Embrace digitalisation, including new technologies, big data, artificial intelligence and earth observation that will complement and potentially replace established information sources to better support decision making.

SO5 Resourcing our shared ambitions

Develop structures, expertise and capacity across our network to meet evolving knowledge needs, securing and diversifying the resources needed to achieve our joint vision.



3.3.2 Exercise/task

The online interactive workshop took place on Day 2 and was co-designed by Ivone Pereira (EEA) and Sara de Maio (ICLEI/member of ETC/ULS), with the ambition to gather valuable inputs from the urban stakeholders, within the online constraints, to discuss how these strategic objectives can play out for cities / how they can be localised effectively at the urban level.

Similarly as an in-person co-creation workshop, participants were divided in 5 groups to actively discuss 2 strategic objectives each, with the support of a breakout room facilitator and a virtual pinboard (MIRO online tool). Each group had 30 minutes to work on their main SO (round 1), then 15 minutes to feed into a second SO (round 2), dragging and filling up virtual sticky notes. Each SO pinboard canva/template was structured as follow:

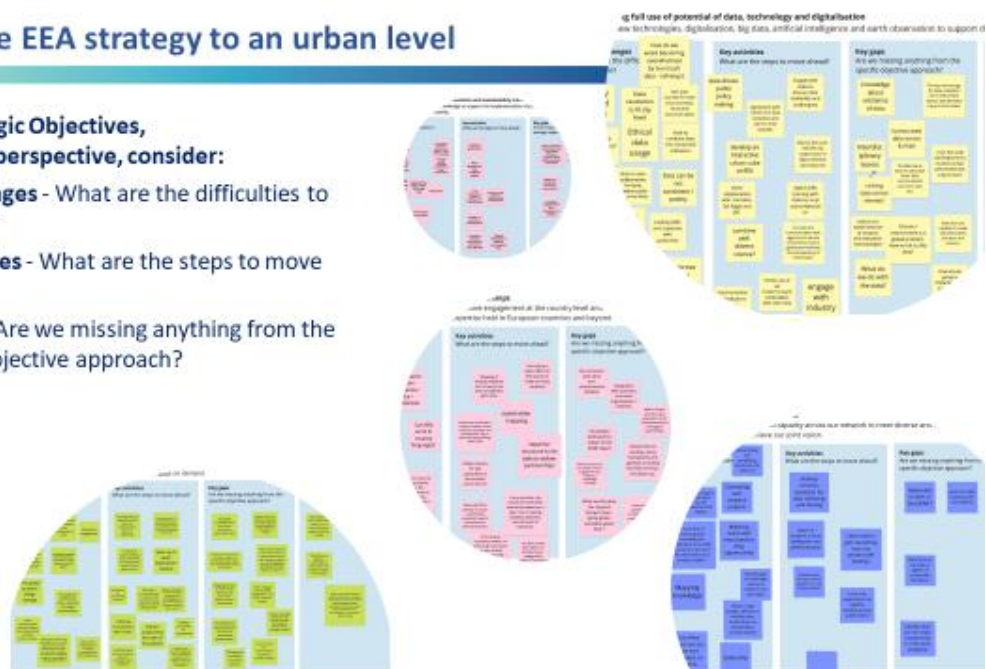
- **Key challenges** - What are the difficulties to overcome?
- **Key activities** - What are the steps to move ahead?
- **Key gaps** - Are we missing anything from the strategic objective approach?

At the end of the two rounds, all participants and facilitators eventually met back to the plenary room for an open discussion on main outputs/reflections generated during the task.

Localising the EEA strategy to an urban level

For each Strategic Objectives,
from an urban perspective, consider:

- **Key challenges** - What are the difficulties to overcome?
- **Key activities** - What are the steps to move ahead?
- **Key gaps** - Are we missing anything from the strategic objective approach?





Screenshot of the ongoing exercise on MIRO:

The screenshot displays a MIRO board with five strategic objectives, each with associated roles and participants:

- Strategic Objective 2: Solutions**
 - Roles: Guest Maker, Guest Innovator, Guest Painter, Guest Sculptor, Guest Architect
- Strategic Objective 3: Partnerships**
 - Participants: Hai-Ying Liu, Heeck, CL, Miguel de Castro Neto, Federica Risi
 - Roles: Guest Developer, Guest Sculptor, Guest Inventor, Guest Creator, Guest Visionary
- Strategic Objective 4: Data & Technology**
 - Participants: Federica, Stefan Kuhn
 - Roles: Guest Visionary, Guest Creator
- Strategic Objective 5: Ressources**
 - Participants: Cristina, Cristina Gu, Guest
 - Roles: Guest Painter, Guest Maker, Guest Explorer, Guest Sculptor

At the bottom, a timer shows 15:08 by Sara de Maio, with 'Hide' and 'Stop' buttons. A 'Guest' role label is also visible in the bottom right corner.



3.3.3 Outcomes by strategic objectives

Based on the results of the workshop, and with the support of the group facilitators, Ric Eales (CEP) and Stefan Kuhn (ICLEI, ETC/ULS), synthesised and shared the workshop outputs on Day 3 in presence of the representatives of DG-Clima and DG-Environment.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1: Supporting policy implementation and sustainability transitions

KEY CHALLENGES

- There is a **timing gap** between knowledge production and policy implementation
- The science-policy interface needs to find common languages, in particular for communicating and integrating **uncertainty** in policy implementation
- Delivering knowledge at the **right scale and tailored to different stakeholders** in order to have a real impact (not one size fit all)

KEY ACTIVITIES

- Use the **nexus approach** to facilitate the integration across policy areas from the assessment perspective and communication as well
- **Co-creation** methods need to be integrated into regular assessment. Go beyond consultation process at late stage of the production process
- Facilitate the discovery of **information tailored** at different stakeholders and, in particular, to different governance levels

KEY GAPS

- **Validation** of new data used for policy support (e.g. big data, sensors).
- Need for a culture of **policy evaluation** at local level

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2: Providing timely input to solutions for sustainability challenges

KEY CHALLENGES

- Ensuring that solutions are relevant to **diverse local contexts** and thereby increase uptake of these ideas
- Ensuring local governments have a **seat at the table** given that National governments are still dominant in conversations with the EU
- Solutions not tailored to **urban context** or lack of alignment of priorities of **different tiers** of government

KEY ACTIVITIES

- As cities are not the 'traditional' stakeholders the EEA engages with, think about how any outputs produced **impact on cities** and **scaling solutions** so they work at the urban level
- To increase knowledge about cities and better meet their needs, consider **working directly with a sub-set of cities** on solutions (e.g. deepen the work on drivers, select cities to test out nexus approach)

KEY GAPS

- We have enough good solutions out there already, but the problem is their **implementation** on the ground (vested interest, behaviour change, lack of capacity, etc.)
 - Being clearer that all solutions have **winners and losers** and that the trade-offs will impact different groups disproportionately (encourage the collection of disaggregated data)
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- The SO seems fairly **passive/reactive** – also highlight need for proactive and propositional work that shapes the debate around the role of cities in driving environmental transitions

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3: Building stronger networks and partnerships

KEY CHALLENGES

- Urban governance and policy competences are **fragmented** across the EEA – how can it reach out to cities with one voice?
- The community of urban actors, networks and initiatives is already quite complex across Europe – how can the EEA find its **unique role** and position?
- What is its **offer** to local governments?

KEY ACTIVITIES

- **Mapping** of the existing urban stakeholders landscape and building up of strategic partnerships with key actors – show how EEA can **complement** existing activities
- Develop an **urban sustainability accelerator award** together with the EC
- Engage with cities directly on a set of **explorative/pilot** activities

KEY GAPS

- Need to **link** the EEA's environmental data and mission to economic and social policy arenas in order to contribute to **integrated** urban development
- Need to **align** EEA's key messages to international and European key policy frameworks, e.g. SDGs, New Leipzig Charter, EU Green Deal policy areas

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4: Making full use of the potential of data, technology and digitalization

KEY CHALLENGES

- **Privacy** concerns and ethical data usage
- Technical **data specifications/characteristics** (spatial and temporal resolution, consistency, harmonisation)
- Making the link other **initiatives and research programs**, but also to **industry** that does possess huge amounts of data
- Capacity building of citizens and public authorities to deal with large amounts of data

KEY ACTIVITIES

- **Harmonisation** of indicators and monitoring methods/approaches
- Engage and try to **collaborate** with industrial data providers, other European public bodies and the research community
- Further **uptake of Copernicus** products, development of an interactive EEA urban data cube

KEY GAPS

- **Awareness** about existence of data
- **Interdisciplinary collaboration** (across data themes), linking environmental with socio-economic data
- Established and harmonised **data analysis approaches**

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 5: Resourcing our shared ambitions

KEY CHALLENGES

- Connecting with (and accessing funds from) **programmes / research projects / networks** (e.g. URBACT, LIFE)



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- **Skills** needed to process, present, use increasing amount of available data and transform it into useful information / insights
 - Identifying **knowledge gaps** and needs (on urban scale)
 - **Simplifying** networks and other structures

KEY ACTIVITIES

- Develop **common standards** for data collection and sharing
- Create better links between **research and policy-making**
- Allocate funds for / within research projects that result in actual **implementation**
- Develop **tools for capacity building** within public bodies
- Make the **benefits of capacity building** for cities more obvious

KEY GAPS

- Include **networks of cities** within Eionet and extent the NRC meetings with local experts
- More focus on **cities as agents** of sustainable transitions
- Identification of the key **obstacles** to the implementations of cities' sustainability ambitions

3.3.4 Overall conclusions

The process...

- The virtual event worked well as a practical session. While most of participants had never used such an online co-creation tool, the big majority managed to participate and contribute. One of the breakout room (SO5) was for some odds unpopulated and thus did not gathered as much perspectives in the first round that other SOs. Same applies to SO1 for Round 2. Despite the unbalance of participant numbers across groups, all virtual pinboards were filled in with many sticky notes in each section.
- It generated many contributions from the wide range of stakeholders/participants. The outputs of the workshops were very rich, and represented an innovation/experiment broadening the consultation/co-creation/engagement methods used within the EEA&Eionet, as well as a learning opportunity for the urban stakeholder group.

Localizing the EEA strategic objectives...

- Useful exercise in validating the EEA's Strategic Objectives at a more local level and in a more specific context (i.e. urban)
 - EEA should consider testing the Strategic Objectives in other more specific contexts
 - A few specific reflections on the Strategic Objectives were raised (e.g. links between SOs, particularly 1 and 4; and clarity of the distinction between 1 and 2)
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Take-away messages from the discussion ... it is all about the 'CITIES'

- **C**o-creation: Work together with cities and their networks and initiatives – **co-create** activities, solutions and data, **consult**, involve cities in **Eionet**
 - **I**ntegration: Engage and connect with different **levels** of decision making (vertical) and with **non-environmental** policy arenas (horizontal)
 - **T**imeliness: Progressive change is not enough, **accelerate** transitions (see Covid response) – find a language to feed science and data into policy-making and become more proactive in making **bold policy proposals**
 - **I**nnovation: Connect with **industry-owned** data pools, include **EO data**, involve **citizen data** – but integrate them in formats **digestible and usable** for cities
 - **E**quality: Understand who wins and who loses, focus on reducing inequalities – further develop the **Nexus** approach as a methodology to **integrate** policy making and uncover both synergies and conflicts of interests
 - **S**kills: Equip and support cities on their transition journey, **build capacity** and develop **skills** for working with data
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1.4 KEYNOTES OF GUEST SPEAKERS (DAY 3)

3.4.1 Outlook from DG-Environment

Joanna Drake explained that the European Green Deal contained a number of responses to some of the more crucial environmental-related challenges of our times and that local governments were essential partners in delivering the European Green Deal's ambition and in addressing pollution, in managing waste sustainably and in supporting the transition to a Circular Economy. She drew particular attention to the urban dimension of the Biodiversity Strategy & Farm-to-Farm Strategy, the Circular Cities and Regions Initiative and the Zero Pollution ambition. JD assured participants of the Commission's commitment to supporting cities in their efforts to implement the European Green Deal and provided details of the support available (Structural funds, Horizon, LIFE programme) as well as the engagement offered by the new (voluntary) Green City Accord and Green Capital and Leaf Awards, not forgetting of course the Dialogue on Clean air (air pollution is still one main killer in Europe) and the EIR. Making cities co-hosts of the journey, allows dynamics to be well established and recognised, going beyond the award itself, encouraging the acceleration and engagement of cities within a long-term implementable journey. The importance of data was mentioned, and how to feed effectively back to the citizens, proving their contribution to the headlines of change. Horizontal/Participatory processes, innovation, piloting, knowledge, data and monitoring, as well as networks and funds, are all keys to successful capacity-building, implementation and replication at the city/regional granular level.

3.4.2 Outlook from DG-Clima

Elina Bardram set up the landscape of EU climate-related policies under the light of Covid-19 situation and green recovery opportunity of our societies, based on 'Do no harm' and 'Build back better' principles. The European Green Deal is accompanied by many other policy instruments for the implementation of the climate ambitions; such as the Covenant of Major, the new EU Adaptation Strategy (to be published in early 2021 to enhance city preparedness to climate change); the European Climate Pact (to be launched on the 16th of Dec as a pioneering initiative for city empowerment and engagement); the Paris Agreement upscaling EU targets to global ones; as well as previously mentioned by Joana, the LIFE programme; the Horizon Europe mission on climate-neutral and smart cities. Also, the European Regional Development Fund and its Cohesion Policy is a highly important tool for sustainable urban development. As a takeaway from the event it becomes increasingly important to engage with more stakeholders and include more agents in decision-making. She mentioned how the two DGs have been working closer, as well as with the EEA, to deploy a renewed narrative and post-covid approach together, capturing the need to learn how to co-created to serve the people living in cities, to integrate collaboratively the local perspectives in informed and evidence-based policy design. One big challenge for the EC and EEA is not so much about creating new data but to communicate data and knowledge in an accessible format for all.

1.5 DISCUSSION

- What came across the 5 objectives aligns with CITIES - as the essence of the exercise yesterday has a strong communication value. Jock Martin considers the content and format very useful and inspiring for further work within the EEA.
 - There is a data and digitalisation dilemma. People see data is everywhere and provide data via apps in real time, while there are gaps in data availability and usability by local governments. Accessible digitalisation potential for harmonised/consistent/easy data collection and interpretation could be added to complete the key outcomes of the workshop.
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ETC/ULS and other ETCs are doing an enormous work to convert data in urban cubes (interactive dashboards to analyse land use, climate impact, NBS, etc) but are reaching a limit to the processing capacity to deal with all this data. A solution needs to be found so it can be used to help assess urban sustainability.

- Vertical integration is a concern. A perspective, reflected in the presentation is that 'cities' is used as a general term but urban areas are very diverse and vary a lot in scale. Capacity may be a particular issue for smaller urban areas, and these may need a particular approach / support. The multilevel governance context cities/urban areas are working in has been mentioned in the discussion, and could be a hook for EEA for interacting with cities and national contexts.
 - Cities would benefit greatly from the development of a tool that can assess the impact of different policy measures. Would the EEA be able to play a role in this regard? How would you like to operationalize the conclusions? What is your timing/next steps? EEA is thinking about knowledge developers that in partnership with EEA, provide services to take forward the transition agenda across a various range of players and actors.
 - How these thoughts about future EEA strategy will impact on the work we have been following on the urban sustainability over the 2 last years (framework, report ecc)?
 - Thank to the great engagement of urban experts (with their skills, expertise and effort) these last three days, the EEA gathered a great amount of information, especially from the co-creation workshop, from the DG representatives' presentations and discussions. All these outputs would require reflection/work to process them into concrete next steps in 2021. The policy landscape is already crowded, the challenge is mainly to give value to what is already there. The EEA will come back to urban stakeholders with ideas on how to start a new engagement phase and how to use the potential of the group for future knowledge and co-creation activities helpful for cities.
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