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NEWSLETTER

PETER SIMON

"Innovative public-private partnership, a way to develop metropolitan areas"

City managers from Amsterdam, Helsinki Region, Lille Métropole, Verband Region Stuttgart, Metropolregion Hamburg and Warsaw presented case studies of efficient metropolitan governance at a conference on April 14th 2011. The conference was jointly organized by the network METREX (gathering 50 metropolitan regions and areas in Europe) and the URBAN Intergroup, in cooperation with EURO CITIES and PURPLE. Participants discussed how to improve good metropolitan governance with MEPs, representatives from the European Commission and the OECD.

In his introductory speech, **Peter Simon MEP** (S&D, Germany), Vice-President of the URBAN Intergroup, presented the innovative structures of the Rhine-Neckar Metropolitan Region. "That might serve as a possible model upon which the institutional structure of other European Regions could be based," the MEP said. The region covers three different German federal states (or "Bundesländer") and is managed by a public-private partnership.

"This unique and innovative public-private partnership model within Germany proofed to be useful in creating innovative clusters and networks, with the help of which many joint development projects were successfully implemented, with several of them being rewarded with the German label *Cluster of Excellence*", the MEP added.

European financial resources

Mr Simon also drew attention to the importance of Metropolitan Regions and other functional areas for the effective implementation of new regional development strategies, and therefore called for more support from the European level. "This could be for example through a better access to European financial resources within the national operational programs for projects which are inter-regionally implemented," he said.

Jan Olbrycht MEP (EPP, Poland), President of



Peter Simon MEP (S&D, Germany) (on the left), Vice-President of the URBAN Intergroup, presented the innovative structures of the Rhine-Neckar Metropolitan Region.

the URBAN Intergroup, stated that the cooperation between urban and rural areas will not improved without "provocation." Indeed, the URBAN Intergroup proposed to the European Commission in 2011 the preparatory action "RURBAN: Partnership for sustainable urban-rural development."

The aim of this preparatory action is to analyse territorial partnership practices for towns and cities and rural areas, to achieve better cooperation between different actors in developing and implementing common urban-rural initiatives based on the integrated approach and finally to promote territorial multilevel governance.

Participants warned that the lack of a robust Urban and Metropolitan EU Agenda could lead to a failure of the EU 2020 strategy. All agreed that good Metropolitan governance will be a key issue in tackling climate change, future transport problems and territorial cohesion, if the urban trend in Europe remains unbroken.

"It is time for Europe to learn from Singapore"

A delegation study of the URBAN Intergroup visited Singapore from April 18th to 20th 2011, under the invitation of **Oldřich Vlasák MEP** (ECR, Czech Republic) in cooperation with IBM and IDA. **MEPs Lambert van Nistelrooij** (EPP, the Netherlands), **Ramona Mănescu** (ALDE, Romania) and **Miroslav Mikolášik** (EPP, Slovakia), together with the First Deputy Minister for Regional Development of the Czech Republic Daniel Braun, representative of the European Commission Christophe Forax and other partners had a chance to experience Singapore's rapid urban development.

The main aim of the visit was to get inspiration of forward looking approach of Singapore government in building an interconnected, instrumented and intelligent city, to see successful deployment of digital technologies in areas of urbanization, and to show concrete examples and solutions that allow making cities attractive places for citizens and businesses. Such an experience provided EU representatives experience that can be used in the preparation of urban dimension guidelines for the next period of EU funding.

"Urban tiger"

Singapore is indeed a real "urban tiger" of the east. Last year Singapore was considered the third most competitive economy in the world, according to the World Economic Forum's competitiveness ranking. Singapore won points for its lack of corruption and for the efficiency of its government; it was also credited for its technological innovation and business culture. In the same year Singapore has been hailed as having the best quality of life in Asia and eighth-best in the world according to the Country Brand Index that was compiled by FutureBrand in partnership with BBC World News. This is due to factors such as its advanced strong public school system and high stand-

ard of universities, as well as being among the top-ranked by respondents for job opportunities (including remote jobs). Singapore also emerged top in being the safest country in Asia.

The delegation visited several projects, including both infrastructure projects (such as the Land Transport Authority which focuses on smarter transportation mechanism based on congestion fees that mitigate traffic flows) and social capital development projects (such as the project of Housing Development Board of subsidized flats called Pinnacle and Duxton which supports integration of various minorities and allows Singapore citizens to own residences).

The delegation had also a chance to meet with key personalities such as Liu Thai Ker, Director of RSP and former Chief Planner and CEO at the Housing and Development Board and Urban Redevelopment Authority of Singapore. This authority has shaped the landscape of the city for many decades. Participants also met Mohamad Maliki Bin Osman, Senior Parliamentary Secretary at the Ministry of Defence, Ministry of National Development and Mayor of the Southeast Community Development Council of Singapore that is responsible for balancing various interests in city development.

Singapore has a remarkable reputation for its successful deployment of limited resources, use of new technologies and for its strength and stability even during Asia's current economic crisis.

Widespread recognition and attempts by other countries and cities at emulation of some of the strategies adopted have confirmed that Singapore has achieved longstanding aspirations for excellence in many areas. "Perhaps it is time for Europe to see and learn from Singapore best practice," said **Oldřich Vlasák MEP**.



The URBAN Intergroup delegation met Mohamad Maliki Bin Osman, Singapore's Minister of National Development.

"Urban planning is not about money, it is a way of thinking"

The 5th International Conference "City 2011 – city space management" took place on May 16th-17th 2011 in Katowice (Poland) during the European Economic Congress. Politicians, architects and academics debated on current issues related to city space management.

Over 200 mayors, government representatives, developers and urban planners participated to this annual meeting organized by **Jan Olbrycht MEP** (EPP, Poland), President of the URBAN Intergroup, and the think tank "Think Silesia", in cooperation with the Association of Polish Cities, the Silesian Union of Municipalities and Districts and the City of Katowice.

The first day of the conference focused on national workshops about the role of information in city space. The Copernicus Science Centre in Warsaw was presented as an example of recent innovative changes in the capital city.

The second "international" day of the conference consisted in four plenary sessions. **Professor Peter Bishop**, Deputy Chief Executive at the London Development Agency, said in the introductory speech on "growing places", that "today we should answer the question of which cities we want before we start to transform them." He presented the changes planned in London at the occasion of the 2012 Olympic Games. In his speech, he pointed out that preparations for the Olympics have become a catalyst for positive changes in the eastern part of the UK capital city, being associated mainly with the well known docks. "No matter what you plan, what you change, you have to think about the action. The city is a stage on which all the time something has to happen!" Professor Bishop summed up.

"Changes should serve residents"

During the second plenary session, representatives of international organizations focused on the new conditions of urban planning in Europe, such as economic, demographic and climate changes. Presidents of some Polish cities had the opportunity to confront their own political visions of development with those of de-



Pictures at the top: **Piotr Uszok**, Mayor, City of Katowice, **Jan Olbrycht MEP** (EPP, Poland) (on the left) and **Professor Peter Bishop** (on the right) participated to the conference.

velopers. The last session was devoted to the analysis of Polish cities in international studies (such as the OECD report on Polish cities).

In his concluding remarks, **Jan Olbrycht MEP** stressed that city space is extremely valuable: it can be easily spoiled, but it is very difficult to shape well. "Policy makers, practitioners and planners bear enormous responsibility in planning urban spaces. They can not forget that the most important in cities are residents," the MEP said. "The changes should serve the residents of our cities, not only today but also for several years," Mr Olbrycht concluded.



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