
REVIEW ARTICLES AND REPORTS**Markus ELTGES*****LEIPZIG CHARTER ON SUSTAINABLE EUROPEAN CITES
– A WORK IN PROGRESS****1. THE GERMAN EU COUNCIL PRESIDENCY: CONTINUITY AND
PROGRESS**

On 1 January 2007, Germany took over the EU Council Presidency for six months. Within the context of this Presidency, Germany hosted an informal ministerial meeting on urban development and territorial cohesion in Leipzig.¹ The key policy issue of the informal ministerial meeting was ‘Strengthening European cities and their regions – promoting competitiveness, social and territorial cohesion in Europe and in its cities and regions’.² This key policy issue of the German Presidency took up the thread of the European Council decisions on sustainable development and applied them in concrete terms to the spatial development of urban neighbourhoods, cities and regions. The German Presidency tried to find a link between the political mainstream with formal competences of European institutions and the intergovernmental cooperation with no competences of European institutions in the field of urban development in order to give a European urban development policy more public attention and

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¹ From the beginning – that means when developing first strategic ideas what to do under the German Presidency – until the end – that means when preparing all documents for Leipzig – the BBR was very closely involved in the German Presidency. In other words: the BBR was a very crucial pillar before and during the German Presidency. The *Informationen zur Raumentwicklung*, a magazine of the Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning (2007), gives a summary about the results of the German Presidency.

² If, in the context of the EU, ‘Germany’ or the German Council Presidency are mentioned, the German EU Presidency for urban development is meant.

political power. Against this background, it was very helpful that the European Council emphasised the important role of cities and regions by implementing the renewed Sustainable Development Strategy.

With regard to the important role of local and regional levels in delivering sustainable development and building up social capital, it is the overall aim to build sustainable communities in urban and rural areas where citizens live and work and to jointly create a high quality of life (Council of the European Union, 2006).

The demand for a high quality of life of citizens is expressed for example in the central challenge of the renewed EU Sustainable Development Strategy ‘Social Inclusion, Demography and Migration’. The overall objective of this challenge is to create a socially inclusive society by taking into account solidarity between and within generations and to secure and increase the quality of life of citizens as a prerequisite for lasting individual well-being. The cities have shown in the past that they have the potential to contribute effectively to realizing these objectives. They fulfil all the prerequisites to accomplish these tasks.

Cities and conurbations

- are centres of economic strength. Here is where supply and demand, innovation and information are located. Jobs, firms and educational institutions of all levels tend to be concentrated in cities. As a rule, the share of the population with higher education is higher in the cities. A high educational standard in turn is a basis and an engine for dynamic economic growth which in turn will trigger innovation activities and entrepreneurial initiative. A positive urban milieu will then attract new talents;

- are centres of social and ethnic inclusion. In the history of cities there have been numerous examples of successful inclusion of new population groups into urban society. Nevertheless, this inclusion does not always take place immediately and without conflicts. At present, cities are faced with major challenges, especially in connection with the change in economic structures and globalisation. Specific problems, among others, are high unemployment and social exclusion. If individual urban neighbourhoods show a concentrated occurrence of these problems, they may experience decline and stigmatisation. The consequences of these overlapping social and structural problems affect mainly residents with a migration background, with especially young people being affected in this group;

- have made major efforts in the past to conserve or recreate a sound environment. In many cities, public parks, urban forests and connected green spaces ensure healthy urban living. There are also many positive trends regarding environment-friendly transport. Nevertheless, cities are particularly susceptible to environmental problems such as noise, air quality and traffic emissions. Neglected buildings also cause health problems and a diminished quality of life. Environmental pollution in cities as well as a poor quality neighbourhood environment are among the main reasons why residents leave cities and move to

the urban fringe. The resulting urban sprawl and land sealing leads to additional traffic. At the same time, more and more production and retail businesses are moving from the city centres to the urban periphery. This also has negative consequences as regards increasing car traffic and dependency of people on motorised transport for basic services.

So, the German EU Presidency, responsible for the urban development policy, was convinced that the European Union can only implement its renewed Sustainable Development Strategy successfully, if it takes this urban dimension of sustainability into consideration. The profound changes in the economic patterns and demography in Europe pose enormous challenges particularly for the cities. On the one hand, we have economically thriving cities with a growing population, on the other hand we have areas and cities which are struggling with enormous problems caused by structural changes of the economy and a declining and ageing population. Here, cities and the persons being responsible in and for cities play an essential role. At the same time, the cities must also make their contribution to the Lisbon Strategy. After all, the EU Sustainable Development Strategy and the Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Employment complement each other.

2. THE MESSAGES OF THE INFORMAL MINISTERIAL MEETING IN LEIPZIG

For the German Council Presidency it was i.a. important to give citizens an understanding of European decisions. Urban and spatial development is almost predestined for such citizen-friendly policy approaches as, in the end, the population experiences the consequences of Brussels' decisions in its concrete living environment – whether within the neighbourhood, the city as a whole or within the region. Wolfgang Tiefensee, the Federal Minister, had invited his counterparts from the other 26 EU countries to an informal meeting to Leipzig on 24/25 May 2007 in order to have a political discussion on this issue and to agree on priorities of joint action.

With the EU Presidency Germany had the chance to put topics of European and international relevance on the agenda in order to start basic discussions. The time for this was convenient. On the one hand, the 'great' political topics like 'financial perspective 2007–2013' had already been approved. Therefore, national financial aspects could not block the view by articulating short-term national finance interests in the future. On the other hand, it was the first time in the EU that all 27 Member States took part in the discussions. This increased the sustainability of political agreements because all member states were actively involved.

Three political documents were adopted during the Informal Ministerial Meeting on Urban Development and Territorial Cohesion:

- Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities;
- Territorial Agenda of the European Union;
- Conclusions of the German EU Council Presidency including agreement on the follow-up procedures concerning the Leipzig Charter and the Territorial Agenda.

The ministers (of all 27 EU member states) responsible for urban development agreed upon the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities and, in doing so, upon common principles and strategies for an urban development policy. The Leipzig Charter, hereinafter referred to as Leipzig Charter, lays the basis for an active urban policy in Europe. Furthermore, the common orientation on characteristics of the European city, as approved by all Member States, is fundamentally new.

So, the Leipzig Charter is first of all a political document. All 27 member states ministers responsible for urban development policy, all European institutions, representatives from the candidate countries, neighbouring states like Turkey and relevant stakeholders agreed upon this document as a result of an informal ministerial meeting under the German Presidency in spring 2007. The ministers agreed upon common principles and strategies for an urban development policy.

With the Leipzig Charter and the Territorial Agenda (TAEU), urban development and territorial cohesion issues were put again on the political European agenda. Both political documents point to the necessity for the Member States to take action so that cities and regions will be able to cope with the demographic and social change, the climate change and the impacts of the structural change on the economy. Both documents are equally dedicated to the sustainability objective and to the objectives of the Lisbon Strategy.

In order to implement the guidelines of the Leipzig Charter, i.e.

- making greater use of integrated urban development policy approaches;³
- while paying special attention to deprived urban neighbourhoods in the context of the city as a whole, the ministers agreed upon
 - developing a national urban development strategy and policy in the Member States;
 - thus integrating the objectives and strategies of the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities into national, regional and local development policies;
 - promoting the instrument of integrated urban development, supporting the governance structures for their implementation and creating the related necessary framework conditions on the national level.

³ To give an overview of the relevance of the integrated urban development approach, Germany launched a study by Franke *et al.* (2007).

Table 1. Objectives of the Leipzig Charter

<i>The climate-friendly city</i>
Creating a compact city (urban renewal from outside to inside)
Fostering sustainable urban transports – urban areas shall be in accordance with suburban areas
Achieving highest energy efficiency of public and private buildings
Increasing green and forest spaces in the city
<i>The social city</i>
Fighting against social segregation in the city
Creating and preserve affordable housing in the city
Supporting social integration
Increasing equal opportunities by fostering education and training policies
Creating a family and age-friendly city
<i>The strong city</i>
Promoting the city as an impetus for regional growth
Strengthening city centres
Supporting the city's role as a centre of knowledge, education, innovation and labour markets.
Facing up to demographic change by concentrating settlement on cities
Fostering a solid financial base
<i>The beautiful city</i>
Applying the architectural culture (<i>Baukultur</i>) as a guideline for urban development
Creating and ensuring high-quality public spaces
Protecting buildings and monuments of urban and architectural value
Creating a 'green' city
<i>The modern city</i>
Making use of an integrated urban development policy – urban areas shall be in accordance with suburban areas
Applying new forms of cooperation in urban development (city, economy and inhabitants; empowerment structures)
Using new forms of financing (PPP, urban development funds)
Adopting most modern information and communication technologies for the benefit of the population and of enterprises

Source: Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development, own illustration.

At the end, the Leipzig Charter is not only a political document with commitments. The Leipzig Charter also recommended concrete steps and instruments in order to achieve sustainable cities in Europe. Some people say that this document is alarmingly concrete for a European political document. What does it mean?

The ministers do not only give the recommendation ‘Making greater use of integrated urban development policy approaches’, they give recommendations concerning ‘how to do’, too. They recommend that European cities should draw up integrated urban development programmes for the city as a whole. These implementation-oriented planning tools should

- describe the strengths and the weaknesses of cities and neighbourhoods based upon an analysis of the current situation;
- define consistent development objectives for the urban area and develop a vision for the city;
- coordinate the different neighbourhood, sectoral and technical plans and policies, and ensure that the planned investments will help to promote a well-balanced development of the urban area;
- coordinate and spatially focus the use of funds by public and private sector players and
- be coordinated at the local and city-regional level and involve citizens and other partners who can contribute substantially to shaping the future economic, social, cultural and environmental quality of each area.

Within the scope of an integrated urban development policy, the ministers recommend the following strategies:

- creating and ensuring high-quality public spaces;
- modernising infrastructure networks and improving energy efficiency;
- proactive innovation and educational policies.

The ministers do not only give the recommendation ‘that special attention is paid to deprived neighbourhoods within the context of the city as a whole’, they give recommendations concerning ‘how to do’, too.

The concretisation of the recommendations and strategic actions, as described in the Leipzig Charter, will certainly vary from country to country, given the highly different conditions they are subjected to. However, we may not forget that the message of the Leipzig Charter is clear:

1. ‘Europe takes place’. The majority of the population in Europe lives in cities of different sizes. Moreover, cities are not only concentrated places for European integration, but also traditional research and innovation areas. It is that most of the value creation ‘takes place’ in cities which then allows public actors to finance regional and social compensation. In addition to that, a European policy, which attempts to combine the Lisbon and Gothenburg Strategies, needs every available capacity. One of these capacities is urbanity. The EU policy has

to be more 'urban and spatial'. In this regard, the Leipzig Charter underlines the fact that every level of government, whether local, regional or European, bears a specific responsibility for the future of our cities and our regions. In order to cope with this responsibility at different levels, we should improve the coordination between different sectoral policies and become aware of integrated urban and spatial development policies. There is no policy that alone could ameliorate the competitiveness of enterprises and living conditions for people. Therefore, we need to foster the cooperation of different policies at different levels of government. The European Structural Funds are of outstanding importance with regard to these sectoral policies as they offer new ways of using national and European funds in supporting loans.

2. 'The importance of good governance in cities'. Urban planning is not only a task of the public sector. A future-orientated urban development policy needs to integrate the society as well as the economy. Only by actively involving these groups, urban development policy can succeed in promoting local democracy. At the same time, the early integration of social and economic actors allows safer planning and investment in city-related measures and projects. Another aspect of good governance is the respect of 'neighbours' interests'. Cities and city regions need visions for a cooperation based upon a fair balancing of interests. In the Leipzig Charter, the ministers acknowledge this democratic tool as a sustainable outlook of urban development. They further recommend to pursue the strategy of integrated urban development (and to examine its application respectively).

3. 'The promotion of urban renaissance'. Inner cities need strong investments, independently from the empirical analysis on their renaissance. This concerns both public and private investments. We can convert these investments into money (value) by coordinating public and private activities. Thus, the respective ministers of urban affairs support the promotion of inner cities. Moreover, they place emphasis on compact European cities as a part of climate protection. The ministers also point out the sustainability of mixing housing, education, work, accommodation and recreational activities. A high degree of mixed uses causes less urban traffic as well as less soil sealing.

4. 'Climate protection is a task of urban affairs'. Climate protection is an important challenge cities have to face. Cities are centres of massive energy consumption, particularly with regard to transports and building energy. Almost three quarter of the worldwide energy consumption is located in cities. In spring 2007, the European Council decided to change Europe into an economic area characterised by high energy efficiency and low greenhouse gas emissions. By 2020, greenhouse gas emissions shall be reduced by at least 20% of the year 1990. Therefore, the Leipzig Charter provides implementation strategies such as the promotion of environment-friendly urban transports (walk, bicycle, public

transportation). At the same time, it shall increase the energy efficiency of buildings and thus contribute significantly to climate protection.

5. 'Integrate all citizens'. Europe may not be a bureaucratic structure. Europe can only be credible if its (social) values become effective and concrete. Only if we manage to implement these convictions in a credible way, the European idea of integration will be accepted as such by the society. In the urban context, social issues appear very often. Yet, 'no-go areas' may not exist in Europe. The fight against social segregation in cities is an integrated element of the European community of values.

Moreover, the existence of deprived neighbourhoods can be hazardous to the attractiveness, the competitiveness, the social integration forces and the security of cities. Consequently, the Leipzig Charter emphasises the fact that only a city, which, as a whole, is socially stable, can unfold its potential for growth. The Leipzig Charter therefore attempts to promote social and cultural integration in deprived neighbourhoods while considering integration as one of the major strategies for a harmonized urban policy at the European level. Long-term and stable economic growth can only be realised if cities consistently remain socially stable and balanced. Education is the key for equal opportunities. Educational offers, which respond to the needs and deficits of children and young adults, must be improved qualitatively and quantitatively, notably in deprived neighbourhoods. This being the situation, the Leipzig Charter suggests four concrete action strategies which are to be included in a holistic and integrated urban development policy.⁴ The four action strategies are as follows:

- pursuing strategies for upgrading the physical environment (see Wassenberg *et al.*, 2007);
- promoting an efficient and affordable urban transport (see Lehmbrock *et al.*, 2007);
- strengthening the local economy and a local labour market policy (see Froessler *et al.*, 2007);
- proactive education and training policies for children and young people (Brocke *et al.*, 2007).

6. 'The city must be beautiful'. With regard to the increasing competition between geographic locations, cities should upgrade their architectural and urban man-made landscapes. The so-called *Baukultur* (architectural culture) is not some extravagance, but a necessity to develop urban quality, to forge close links to cities and to enable civil commitment in cities. *Baukultur* gives new impetus

⁴ The German Presidency prepared studies with examples of good practice in Europe. These studies should help cities of all sizes to effectively implement the principles and strategies set out in the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities. All these studies were launched by the BBR. All studies are available as downloads at <http://www.eukn.org/eukn/researchservices/dossiers/index.html>.

for growth. In a time where we can get everything everywhere, architectural and urban man-made landscapes become important instruments of structural policy (see Gehl, 2007). Cities and the national government must act and bring their influence to bear.

In order to achieve the aims of the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities in favour of beautiful and modern cities it has to be worked together at the national, regional and local level while using the related competences and their capacities. The Leipzig Charter is thus based upon a multidimensional system of objectives illustrating today's socio-political priorities (see table 1).

3. WHY LEIPZIG CHARTER ON SUSTAINABLE EUROPEAN CITIES?

Since 1990, the urban development policy has been developed at the European level, especially by the European Commission. Milestones in 1990 were the Green Paper 'Urban Environment', the implementation of the Community Initiative 'URBAN' since 1993 under the Structural Funds and especially the action programme of the European Commission 'Sustainable Urban Development in the European Union: A Framework for Action' in 1999. This framework aimed at a better coordinated and targeted community action for urban problems and was organised based on four interdependent policies:

- strengthening economic prosperity and employment in towns and cities, which in fact account for 80% of the population of the Union;
- promoting equal opportunities, social integration and the rehabilitation of run-down areas;
- improving the urban environment;
- contributing to good urban governance and an increased participation of local actors and citizens (see European Commission, 1998).

The Member States were very cynical about these activities and decided that a Member State approach in the field of urban development policy was needed, especially against the background of a missing treaty competence of the EU in the field of urban development policy. There was a need to act as a counterbalance on the part of the Member States.

So, under the French Presidency in the year 2000, the first important step was done. The Member States agreed upon the action programme of Lille. This was the first answer to the framework for action of the Commission. For the first time the action programme of Lille provided the Member States with headlines for a political discussion. These headlines were as follows:

1. Better acknowledgement of the role of towns and cities in spatial planning referring to the ESDP.

2. New approach of urban policies on national and community levels.
3. Support the community life in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.
4. Measures to tackle social, ethnic and discriminating segregation in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.
5. Work on different spatial scales. Promoting an integrated and balanced urban development.
6. Partnership between public and private sectors in urban regeneration and especially in reinforcing economic life in disadvantaged areas.
7. Diffusion of best practises and networking. Promoting the diffusion of the results obtained by the Member States in the field of urban development issues.
8. Use of modern technology (Information Technology like Internet) to be used as a tool for urban policy as regards the improvement of employment, education, transport and social cohesion.
9. Further analyses of urban areas to deepen the knowledge of interlinked phenomena such as unemployment, criminal rates, social services, cultural assets, environmental issues in urban areas.

The next step was made in 2004 by the Rotterdam 'Urban Acquis'. This Urban Acquis made the headlines of the action programme of Lille more concrete and emphasised the role of urban development policy in the framework of the Lisbon and Gothenburg Strategies. Furthermore, the crucial role of the stakeholders in the process of urban development was taken up for the first time.

The next step in 2005 was the 'Bristol Accord'. This document gave a definition of a 'sustainable city':

Sustainable communities are places where people want to live and work, now and in the future. They meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment, and contribute to a high quality of life. They are safe and inclusive, well planned, built and run, and offer equality of opportunity and good services for all.

However, this definition is indeed very open, but it was the first time, that the ministers discussed the aim of a sustainable city and agreed upon a definition. Furthermore, the success of the Bristol Accord was to emphasise the issue of skills in the context of urban development. From this point of view, urban development is more than building and planning. A sustainable urban development policy needs a holistic approach and consequently a team of urban developers with comprehensive skills.

The next step in 2007 was the 'Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities'.

All mentioned political papers followed the common aim to contribute to the sustainable development of European cities and to give a political framework for discussions between the EU member states and European institutions, especially the European Commission. At the same time, a crucial pillar of the Member States' cooperation becomes more and more clear: continuity.

All these documents emphasise the necessity of horizontally and vertically integrated methods. They call for the recognition of spatial aspects and influences and of different sector policies and strengthen the role of the cities. Furthermore, they promote the European exchange of experiences between all agencies in the sector of urban development. At the end, hopefully, the Member States and the European institutions will develop a policy for the cities in Europe in a mutual learning process.⁵

In this spirit, the Leipzig Charter ends with ‘Europe needs cities and regions which are strong and good to live in’.

4. LEIPZIG CHARTER ON SUSTAINABLE EUROPEAN CITIES. WHAT NEXT? THE CASE OF GERMANY?

It is not always easy to implement the recommendations and commitments of the Leipzig Charter. In the EU member states we have different traditions and competencies. Nevertheless, with a view to the continuity of political cooperation in Europe, all Member states should suit the action to the word, in Germany as well.

Against this background, Germany very much appreciated that all Member States, accession countries, European institutions and all relevant stakeholders unanimously adopted the Leipzig Charter. In Germany this was very helpful for putting the commitments of the Leipzig Charter into action:

- on 2 July 2007, two days after the end of the German Council Presidency, Federal Minister Tiefensee gave the go-ahead for the establishment of a national urban development policy. At a conference with about 1000 participants in Berlin, essential elements of a national urban development policy were discussed. The publication of a memorandum ‘Towards a National Urban Development Policy’ by Federal Minister Tiefensee was in the centre of attention. This memorandum was elaborated together with experts and representatives of local government associations as well as of the Federal Länder. Moreover, a call for projects was launched at the congress in order to support the principles of the Leipzig Charter by practical examples.

- on 17 and 18 April 2008, the second major congress was held in Munich, again with more than 800 participants, with a second call for projects being launched in the spirit of the Leipzig Charter. On 24 and 25 June 2009 the third conference take place in the city of Essen.

⁵ For the political history of a European Urban development policy cf. Eltges and Nickel, 2007, pp. 479–486.

– the Leipzig Charter calls for a better city-regional coordination. In order to bring the policy of city-regional coordination forward in Germany as well and in line with the Leipzig Charter, Germany launched two scientific projects: ‘Supraregional partnerships – innovative projects to promote city-regional cooperation, networking and supraregional responsibility’ and ‘Integrated urban development in city regions’. These projects i.a. are supposed to increase the aesthesia of cities and municipalities towards the Leipzig Charter. The first result of the last study was that 86% of the German towns and cities use the instrument of an integrated urban development policy.

– the Leipzig Charter calls for a better cooperation between the different sectoral Government departments having an impact on urban issues:

The framework of national politics impacts heavily on the development of cities. This does not only apply to finance, economics, social and tax policies, but also to the statutory framework of urban development. However, this influence at a national level occurs quietly and remains unconsidered. What is lacking is the political pooling of different policies and resources which consider the effects as well as any additional political stipulations that may define the political intentions for urban development (Federal Ministry of Transport, Housing and Urban Affairs, 2007, p. 17).

Against this background, in summer 2008 the Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning launched a study ‘The contribution of the Federal Government on sustainable cities’. With this study the awareness of all relevant ministries on the federal level for urban issues should be highlighted by a process of open coordination:

– the Leipzig Charter calls for the preservation of the ‘European city’. The central feature of this European city is the vibrant city centre. In 2008, the Federal Government launched a new programme for the ‘Promotion of Inner Urban Development’. The financial assistance provided by the Federal Government to promote ‘active neighbourhood centres’ is destined to strengthen central service areas threatened or affected by losses of function, especially commercial vacancies. In the context of the Leipzig Charter, the funds are used to prepare and implement a set of measures to preserve and develop these areas for economic and cultural purposes and as places of working and living.

– the Leipzig Charter calls for the increase of energy efficiency. The energy efficiency of buildings has to be enhanced. This applies to both new and old buildings. The renovation of the building stock decisively contributes to the energy efficiency and to the improvement of the quality of life for the inhabitants. Tackling climate change is a special challenge for the cities. Cities are the centres of energy consumption. They account for almost three quarters of the world energy consumption. In spring 2007, the European Council decided to redesign Europe to an economy with high energy efficiency and a low level of greenhouse gas emissions. By the year 2020, the greenhouse gas emissions in

the European Union are to be reduced by at least 20% compared to 1990. Due to the Integrated Energy and Climate Programme which was adopted in late 2007, Germany is well prepared to achieve the reduction level of 20% and to increase the share of renewable energy in the final energy consumption. Approximately 40% of the energy is used for the heating of buildings and hot water preparation. In Germany, buildings generate almost 20% of all CO₂ emissions and three quarters of all residential buildings have a considerable energy saving potential. In order to alleviate the investment backlog even in the financially weak municipalities – combating climate change involves costs – Germany has made a so-called investment pact with the Federal states. From 2008, this pact will promote energy efficiency improvement measures to the social infrastructure by providing capital grants amounting to 600 million euros and the Federal Government will contribute one third of the funds. 2009, in the light of the economic crises, the budget of this programme increased to 900 million euros.

– the Leipzig Charter calls for special attention to be paid to the reduction of social disadvantage in cities. Within the framework of an European Social Fund-funded Federal programme ‘Social City – Education, Economy, Work in the Neighbourhood’ being launched in 2008, the Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Affairs will grant financial assistance for the promotion of projects meant to improve the qualification and social situation of the inhabitants in areas covered by the urban development programme ‘Social City’, thus also enhancing their perspectives on the labour market. It supports new educational and employment initiatives, measures to strengthen and expand the local economy and, thus on the whole, social integration, community participation and wealth creation in the district. An important aspect in this connection is gender mainstreaming as well as the integration of persons with an immigrant background. The programme will be implemented between 2008 and 2015 with a total funding of 160 million euros. Clear political decisions in favour of integrated area-specific strategies are required to ensure the success of these strategies in deprived neighbourhoods.

– the Leipzig Charter calls for special attention to be paid to the preservation of architectural heritage. Historical buildings, public spaces and their urban and architectural value must be preserved. 2009 Germany launched a special programme for the preservation of 33 German UNESCO World Heritage Sites with a federal funding of 150 million euros. Facing the various challenges of historic cities of different size and structure, this programme aims to develop integrated management strategies as well as innovative good practice methods, instruments, and action plans with investments to facilitate the right balance between preserving the cultural heritage of historic urban landscapes as element of identity and integral part of European history and enabling a sustainable, future-proof urban development to maintain and to strengthen the attractiveness and competitiveness of the historic urban landscapes.

In the context of these activities, the Federal Government makes an important contribution to the implementation of the 'Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities' in Germany and to suiting the action to the word in spite of the fact that the Leipzig Charter is a political non-binding document.

5. LEIPZIG CHARTER ON SUSTAINABLE EUROPEAN CITIES – A EUROPEAN MOVEMENT?

It is for sure that the Leipzig Charter has caused Europe to close ranks. Within its EU Council Presidency, Germany has used another opportunity to distinguish urban development policy and to come to a common sense about what integrated urban development policy is. The implementation of the proposals and decisions developed during the Leipzig process does not only remain in the hands of policy-makers and administrators but also of economic actors and citizens. What is important is that all territorial levels are involved: Europe, Member States, regions, cities and rural areas. There is still a lot to do. In order to provide for a better circulation of the Leipzig Charter in cities and municipalities, the Committee of the Regions translated the document into 21 EU languages and into Russian.⁶

Nevertheless, one year after the German EU Presidency it is necessary to implement the new impulse by the Leipzig Charter on the local, the Member State and European Union level.

On the European level, directly after the German Presidency, the Leipzig Charter influenced the systematic and structured exchange of experience and knowledge in the field of sustainable urban development. The content of the Leipzig Charter is one of the basic pillars of the new exchange programme URBACT II. This URBACT programme, financed by the European Structural Funds and the Member States, is an European programme which aims to foster the exchange of experiences among European cities and the capitalisation and dissemination of knowledge on all issues related to sustainable urban development. Under the headline 'URBACT II – Main Objective' in the operational programme of URBACT II, the Leipzig Charter is mentioned as follows:

Cities have a vital role to play in the achievement of the Lisbon and Gothenburg strategy aims. The Leipzig Charter offers common principles and strategies for urban development policy. The URBACT II programme will facilitate this task by allowing cities to exchange experience on key urban policy fields (European Commission, 2007).⁷

⁶ For the different language versions please see http://www.eukn.org/italy/themes/Urban_Policy/leipzig-charter_3342.html.

⁷ See for more information concerning URBACT www.urbact.eu.

But this is not enough ‘implementation’. So in February 2008, the European Parliament in a resolution

[...] stresses the importance of improving coordination between the Territorial Agenda and the Leipzig Charter; regrets in this connection that the Council has not yet adopted an action programme for the implementation of the targets of the Leipzig Charter, and calls on forthcoming presidencies to remedy this omission, thereby ensuring a systematic follow-up to the Leipzig Charter. Against the background under the Presidency of France in the second part of the year 2008 the ministers in charge of urban development decided to develop an overarching, flexible open reference framework for the implementing the Leipzig Charter.⁸ Against this background, it has become necessary for all participants to come together and construct tools for the operational application of the Leipzig Charter and to make these tools available to the relevant stakeholders, to the cities, to other public authorities, to the scientific and technical community, to the private sector, and to non-governmental organisations representing the inhabitants and users.⁹

This work will be finished by the end of 2010.

On the national level, many Member States, especially the new Member States, used the Leipzig Charter in the context of writing their operational programmes in the framework of the European Structural Funds policy. Other member states started a national debate about the added value of an integrated urban development policy. In order to have a systematic overview of the activities (legal framework, subsidies, research programmes or political campaigns), the French Presidency launched a scientific study within the European Knowledge Network.¹⁰

All in all, a political discussion on the European level about the benefits of the Leipzig Charter will take place within the next years. An European urban development policy is a ‘work *into progress*’.

But we have to improve the links between the European and the local level. The Leipzig Charter could be the starting point of a general European movement, if we close the gap between Europe, the Member States, regions and cities of all size. There is a lot of work to do.

⁸ European Parliament resolution of 21 February 2008 on the follow-up of the Territorial Agenda and the Leipzig Charter: Towards a European Action Programme for Spatial Development and Territorial Cohesion (2007/2190(INI)).

⁹ Appendix to the final statement by the ministers in charge of urban development for implementing the Leipzig Charter, Marseille, 25 November 2008.

¹⁰ The European Urban Knowledge Network (EUKN) shares knowledge and experience on tackling urban issues. 16 EU Member States, EUROCITIES, the URBACT Programme and the European Commission participate in EUKN. See for more information also www.eukn.org. The study ‘European Survey. Levers of Public Action for the Development of Sustainable Cities’ was operated by NICIS-Institute.

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