

Improving the quality of life in large urban distressed areas (LUDA) - an issue of growing importance in Europe's major cities

(Proposal for the EUROCITIES' Urban Regeneration Working Group)

Many cities in Europe have large urban distressed areas (LUDA) suffering from economical, social and environmental problems, and requiring a new approach to urban regeneration. Improving the quality of life in such areas has become a challenge of growing importance for political decision-making and planning practice.

The City of Florence together with a number of other cities in Europe is involved in a project addressing this issue. The LUDA-project is a project of key action 4 "City of Tomorrow and Cultural Heritage" within the Fifth Framework Programme of the European Commission.

Within the project an innovative approach is taken on the improvement of quality of life in large urban distressed areas (LUDA) based on the following considerations:

1. Urban regeneration needs to be viewed holistically and inextricably linked with the general improvement of quality of life in urban distressed areas, taking into consideration ways to increase
 - economic prosperity
 - social inclusion
 - environmental sustainability
 - cultural creativity and heritage
 - participation and cooperation

in an integrative way, thus being fully in line with the EUROCITIES' strategic objectives.

2. The improvement of quality of life in large urban distressed areas needs to be understood as a multi-faceted and multi-dimensional phenomena with solutions based upon governance emphasising
 - active citizenship
 - the mobilisation and engagement of all stakeholders
 - the application of integrative and comprehensive planning approaches, and
 - the development of appropriate decision-support and management systems.

Based on this, LUDA project activities provide a platform for grouping and inter-linking stakeholders' interventions.

3. LUDA improvement concepts, strategies, methods and tools help decision-makers

- to better understand the complexity of problems and potentials in large urban distressed areas,
- to reflect the aspirations and expectations of the population living in the area in a broader context, as well as predicting and assessing the impact of interventions, and
- to more efficiently identify, confront and address problems of the areas and to utilise and optimise scarce funds by exploiting the potentials of inter-linkage between interventions of different stakeholders.

By taking a holistic view, it is possible to maximise synergies between otherwise isolated programmes and projects and to minimise unwanted side effects as well as to decrease risks of failure of such interventions.

Against this background, the LUDA project aims to support decision makers facing the complex intractable problem of improving the quality of life in large urban distressed areas by:

1. Developing better understanding on strategies for action
2. Facilitating exchange of experience between cities in an EU context
3. Matching long term policy with short term decision taking
4. Encouraging private investment and action
5. Improving access to, and mobilising public funds
6. Promoting good governance and effective public-private partnerships.

Based on these considerations, the Municipality of Florence proposes to take up the issue of improvement of quality of life in large urban distressed areas in the recently established EUROCITIES Urban Regeneration Working Group, with the following objectives:

1. To place the improvement of quality of life in large urban distressed areas (LUDA) high on the European policy agenda.
2. To identify major policy issues related to improving the quality of life in large urban distressed areas, to formulate and discuss strategic policy options, and to forward respective policy recommendations to the European Commission.
3. To create a network of knowledge supporting the dissemination of good practice related to the improvement of quality of life in large urban distressed areas, and to facilitate the exchange of experience inside and outside of EUROCITIES. This will contribute to facilitating knowledge transfer and capacity building through a learning process in elaborating a strategic concept in the participating cities and organise networking between them.
4. To improve targeting scarce resources in a more efficient and effective way towards improving the quality of life in large urban distressed areas through more active participation, coordination and management.

5. To mobilise additional financial and other resources in order effectively address the problems of large urban distressed areas in European cities including the major cities in the New Member States.

In order to fulfil these objectives the following steps are proposed:

1. To discuss, identify and assess the characteristics of the issues relating to improvement of quality of life in large urban distressed areas within the framework of urban regeneration in the EUROCITIES Urban Regeneration Working Group,
2. To elaborate policy recommendations and discuss the substantive LUDA issues with the European Commission, with special consideration of the new Structural Funds' and other programmes.
3. To encourage and facilitate the participation of other affected and interested cities in Europe in the discussion on the issue beyond EUROCITIES.

In carrying out these steps, the EUROCITIES' Urban Regeneration Working Group will be supported by a European network of research institutions providing outstanding scientific excellence and practical experience by providing major research findings related to key issues.

EUROCITIES' members are encouraged to join and become actively involved in activities of the Urban Regeneration Working Group.

Cities which are not members of EUROCITIES are asked to support the activities, and to express their interest in participating in the further dialogue about the improvement of quality of life in large urban distressed areas (LUDA) in order to facilitate an appropriate forum for discussion.

Contact Person:

Project Director: Prof. Dr. Bernhard Müller

Leibniz Institute of Ecological and Regional Development

Phone + 49 351 4679 210 - fax + 49 351 4679 212

Weberplatz 1 - 01217 Dresden - Germany