



CITIZENS' DECLARATION ON THE CITY OF TOMORROW

(Summary)

The full version of the Citizens' Declaration
is available on www.raise-eu.org

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Citizen's Declaration on the City of Tomorrow

We are a group of twenty six European citizens of different countries, age groups and occupations. We are not professional experts on sustainable development, but lay people, living and working in the cities of Europe.

The European Commission, Directorate General for Research asked us to give our visions and hopes about the future of cities and our opinion about its EU research programme 'City of Tomorrow and Cultural Heritage'. For the first time ever the European Commission actively sought the opinion of the European citizens on European Union policies through this so called "RAISE" initiative.

We started from concrete cases presented in a series of workshops, compared them with our own experiences and developed our own opinions on these topics:

- Urban governance
- Sustainable transport
- Sustainable built environment
- Cultural heritage

From our discussions, we decided that a fifth issue, Education, particularly for sustainability, is fundamental to the success of the others.

General conclusions

First, what could we conclude about our investigations into the four areas we assessed:

- ✓ The voice of the citizens, including those who have been marginalized in the past, must be incorporated into **urban governance** in both the old and new EU member states. Trust can only flourish if it is mutual; only if our leaders are prepared to listen to and respect our views will the people reciprocate and take responsibility for their own actions.
- ✓ A radical change in **transport** habits is required in order to facilitate change towards more sustainable transport use: technical solutions by themselves will not solve the problems of sustainability.
- ✓ Greater **sustainable built environment** depends on our moving beyond a consumption-driven society in which 'new' is always seen as superior to 'old'. We must learn the value of reusing what we already have, rather than discarding it in favour of novelty, whether that means the renovation of housing stock, the reclamation of brownfield sites, the retention and repair of consumer goods or the recycling of materials.
- ✓ Equally, we need to focus on the sustainable integration of **cultural heritage** in everyday life, encouraging people to feel ownership for, and appreciate the importance of, our diverse and shared cultural heritage.

Second, what is, here and now, practically significant across all the areas:

- ✓ There is an urgent need for greater awareness and **education** on sustainability, and the implications if we continue on our present unsustainable course. Often our choices are made on the basis of insufficient information, without an understanding of the true hidden costs of our actions. If we have participation on issues and give a clear view of the implications of the choice, people can make those choices to make a difference in their daily lives.
- ✓ Often it is the most **local**, small scale initiatives which are most successful, drawing people in and helping them make a commitment to producing visible improvements in their daily lives. The slogan: 'Think global, Act local', is not just a cliché.
- ✓ Conversely, experience in one area can often be applied elsewhere. Across our community, we have an enormous range of expertise and knowledge of 'what works and what doesn't'. Failure to disseminate this **knowledge** more widely is a missed opportunity.

Conclusions on Urban Governance

Poor **urban governance** delivers poor outcomes. We see the result of this in urban sprawl, unaffordable housing, un-integrated transport systems and the destruction of green spaces amongst other things. We consider Urban Governance as an instrument for the structuring of the relationship between the city and the citizens. This also includes public/private partnerships and all other actors operating in the city.

The research we have studied deals primarily with engaging all citizens. A key sector receives only limited examination. That sector is comprised of marginalized groups and vulnerable people such as young, elderly and impoverished people, immigrants and migrants, single parents, homeless and/or travelling people.

- ✔ We therefore recommend that future EU sponsored research should focus much more on the participation of marginalized citizens and their integration in urban governance.
- ✔ We propose that research should be done on the differences between new and old member states relating to democratic participation with the purpose of exchanging good practices i.e. to teach and learn at the same time and fostering democratic renewal.
- ✔ In order for the citizens to participate fully in their communities and the way in which they are governed, it is necessary to have sufficient resources to facilitate this action. Politicians should also be motivated to promote this process. Independent or voluntary work is not the answer.

Urban governance should provide public instead of individually concentrated decisions. Politicians should work together with citizens, spending more money :

- on the dissemination of information,
- organisation of meetings,
- public hearings,
- the elaboration of innovative governance tools and methods,
- conviction and teaching campaigns of governance measures as well as other means to involve citizens in the decision making process.

Conclusions on Sustainable Transport

Mobility is a central issue in our daily lives, and also one of the major sources of problems that we experience. It affects our lives in various ways: environmentally, economically and socially. In these respects, there are a number of problems related to quality of life we consider important in relation to transport: pollution (and its consequences to people's health), congestion (with its costs in time and money) and accidents (with more than 40,000 people dying and many more injured on European roads every year).

EU research has been addressing several aspects of the mentioned problems. We are aware of a tendency in our society and in research to favour technological solutions (e.g. futuristic robot vehicles) as they seem to offer straightforward solutions to very complex issues. This has led and still leads to developments which are expensive and may be prestigious but do not really address the crucial issues. Sustainable transport will only improve if the people's behaviour, motivation and needs are addressed first and foremost. We are also concerned about a lack of efficiency in the dissemination of the best practices that different cities in Europe have developed. We suggest that the efforts should be improved so that successful examples can be spread and shared by different cities more readily.

We assess positively the efforts to integrate transport issues in the first steps of urban planning. We also think that the most important topic of research and political action should be to change the transport habits of people in a more creative way than the manner in which this issue has been addressed till now (e.g. by means of transport pricing, car sharing, etc).

We have seen research projects focussed on the technological issues - we are suggesting more research into the socio-economic field such as:

- ✔ Motives of people for using greener transportations (such as public transport, walking, cycling, car sharing etc.) or to switch from using individual car to more sustainable transport modes.
- ✔ Information on mobility options for citizens (e.g. which alternatives to the car? What are the cost relations? Timetables, fares, inter-modality...).

- ✓ Improvement of the compatibility of transport systems in European cities, e.g. EU-wide car sharing systems, recognition of other cities' travel cards.
- ✓ Which improvements can contribute to making the use of public transport more attractive to people? (e.g. extra infrastructure and services in carriages: internet connection, tables, meeting rooms, on-board language classes, newspapers,...).
- ✓ Health issues caused by too much traffic.
- ✓ Policy models to find effective methods of encouraging related policy areas (e.g.: economic, labour, regional development, industrial, tax policies) to incorporate the need for change and reduction in transport.

Conclusions on Sustainable Built Environment

A more sustainable future for mankind requires an approach that re-values what is considered already without utility. Reusing and recycling are still considered unattractive in our cultures, and everything new is considered better than if used. For a sustainable future, this approach must reverse. Reusing, reclamation and renovation should be the actions to maintain the city of tomorrow. Reconstruction is more sustainable than new construction, but cannot compete with cheaper construction costs in urban sprawl areas.

The EU research projects have outlined several main fields to be tackled in the built environment of our future cities. These are **urban sprawl**, **city green spaces**, **construction technologies**, and **brownfield sites**.

As regards **Urban Sprawl**, the wide use of cars has turned most city centres into areas of difficult access. Transport, water supply, energy, sewer systems are built to supply and serve the new dwellings, reducing the countryside and destroying natural habitats. Larger urban areas diminish social interaction, creating social isolation and promoting segregation and indifference. As citizens, our recommendations for the future research include:

- ✓ Teach citizens about energy and sustainability and encourage them to act accordingly.
- ✓ Improve inner cities attractiveness by reducing noise and traffic and increasing pedestrian mobility and quality of spaces.
- ✓ Increase reusing of existing empty buildings.
- ✓ Increase taxes for urban sprawl construction, and directly re-invest them in the needed infrastructures.

Green spaces are crucial as they fulfil many functions – improve air quality, create habitats for wildlife, offer space for safe and healthy relaxation, children's play and sports, and mainly provide human well-being in the cities (reducing stress and increasing people's awareness of nature and its cycles). The EU-sponsored research should focus on:

- ✓ increasing biodiversity for a more "natural nature";
- ✓ integration of biologists into city planning teams;
- ✓ using less technology and less chemicals;
- ✓ integration of jobless people in maintenance;
- ✓ planning better dissemination of green areas;
- ✓ connecting green areas to allow for migration of animal and plant species;
- ✓ integration of green areas (children playgrounds and sports facilities);
- ✓ dissemination of the knowledge from EU projects;
- ✓ promotion of green areas in general, no European city has too much green.

Civil engineering is mostly drifting away from integration with nature's capacities. Some materials still widely used in Europe, like exotic wood, should not be used. The choice of building materials must consider both energy and resource consumption. Better knowledge exists, but construction lobbies and poor public awareness support the existing unsustainable methods. The performance and use of the final built space must also be considered, in terms of thermal and noise insulation, emissions of dangerous particles, durability, and reusability of built elements. In our opinion, the following should be addressed by EU research:

- ✓ Introduction of clear and unbiased definitions of sustainability / environmental performance and durability of building materials and techniques.
- ✓ Dissemination of knowledge and encouragement of more sustainable ways of living.

- ✓ Promotion of more sustainable construction by taxing – taxes should reflect the actual amount of energy and resources used in the construction industry.
- ✓ Implementation of research findings on ergonomics, psychology, and general well-being in construction.
- ✓ Consistent promotion of anti-seismic regulations in countries where they are needed.
- ✓ Better integration with construction lobbies in order to start building in more sustainable ways.

Brownfield sites are abandoned plots of land previously used for industrial purposes and nowadays posing serious environmental and health risks. Further EU research should focus on finding ways how to:

- ✓ Develop efficient and less expensive technologies to clean up the polluted soil and waters.
- ✓ Integrate brownfield reclamation planning practices, (tax systems should be used to find the needed resources).
- ✓ Determine the best alternative uses of the reclaimed areas and encourage investors to use them.
- ✓ Disseminate good examples and practices.

Conclusions on Cultural Heritage

The European continent has an immense cultural heritage. This puts a huge responsibility on our countries in terms of preservation and valorisation of this legacy.

We take the term Cultural heritage to include both the tangible heritage such as monuments, buildings or archaeological items, and also the intangible heritage such as language, literature, music, art, traditions, songs, dances and others. We believe that cultural identity stems from cultural heritage. Cultural identity strengthens communities and cities and may lead to more respect among the different European peoples.

In spite of all the resources allocated to this sector, there is a remarkable fraction of Europe's cultural heritage that is either being destroyed or is in grave risk. The most critical point in this is that the loss of cultural patrimony is irreversible – whatever is lost cannot be brought back.

We reviewed EU funded projects which researched different themes such as the effects of climate change, pollution and other negative aspects on cultural heritage. We understand that these projects have resulted in important improvements on a number of historical objects.

- ✓ However, we feel that the EU should find ways to more effectively spread the tangible effect of the research projects it funds.
- ✓ Moreover, since culture heritage protection is normally a sector where resources are very limited, the EU could provide funding to make it easier for the re-application elsewhere of the results obtained through EU-funded research.
- ✓ We are against the segregation of cultural heritage from everyday life and from the people. Cultural heritage preservation cannot succeed at EU level and national level without being supported (or triggered off) from the local level. However, the EU may explore ways of making the individual citizens understand and contribute towards cultural heritage preservation. This may be a way to bring cultural heritage closer to the people – they would feel more part of something they helped preserving. This has to start with children. If people do not understand the importance of preserving cultural heritage, the technical solutions by themselves will not solve the problems.
- ✓ The research on cultural heritage that was presented to us was very one-sided – i.e. dealing mostly with technical issues, such as the effect of pollution on cultural heritage, the climate change, etc. While we recognise the utmost importance of researching the above-mentioned aspects we feel that in further research more attention should be paid to the following issues:
 - the impact of economic pressures,
 - migration of people and the effect of consumerism on cultural heritage.

European research should focus more at the sustainable integration of cultural heritage in everyday life.

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