



CITIZENS' DECLARATION ON THE CITY OF TOMORROW

(Full version)

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

To all of you who represent Europe's political and technocratic importance, thank you for being here with us and for listening to our modest contribution to building the city of tomorrow.

Beyond, this message should be aimed at each European citizen concerned about his destiny.

This is a unique event. For the first time in the European Union, a panel of citizens from all Member States was given the opportunity to evaluate research outcomes and their practical usability for urban sustainable development.

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.

In our daily lives, sustainability means to us the ability for ourselves, our children and grandchildren to have a good quality of life, to use resources wisely, to use technology and research to solve problems, so that the world will be a sane, safe, happy and healthy place to live in.

We are aware that every technology comes with a cost, and that we need to use research as a tool to try to look further, be aware of the dangers and find ways to anticipate potential problems and try to avoid them.

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.

We are grateful for the opportunity to work together and forge friendship with our fellow citizens from all over Europe. We have committed our time and energy because we believe strongly in the importance and value of the work we have done. Our experience has shown us that although we come from different cultures, we can work together and our diversity implies enrichment for and complements those things which we share as members of the human community.

What do we declare 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. If we can persuade our political leaders and all of you to improve the process of urban governance we will create more sustainable cities with a higher quality of life for all of our citizens. Such cities will be more economically, culturally, environmentally and socially successful.

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.

Urban Governance encompasses built environment, cultural heritage and public transport **and a host of other issues. It is about participation of citizens in all areas of policy and relates strongly to transparency, accountability and shared responsibility.**

The results of the EU funded research projects, **which we analysed**, highlighted two principal ideas which lie at the heart of Urban Governance namely change and trust.

Across some of the **old member states of the** European Union we have seen a reduction in democratic involvement manifested by reduced turnouts at elections and the Euro barometer polls revealing a democratic deficit at the European level. **On the other hand in some new member states they are on their way to fulfil a desire towards democratic participation of their citizens in the political process. In the old members states this demonstrates profound levels of mistrust by the citizens of the political class. At the same time citizens of the new member states are presumed to be celebrating their new found freedom.** We need a renewal of our **collective** democracies.

This also means working to construct sustainable communities, balanced with regard to social, economical, environmental, local management...

There are several meanings of the distance between government and the governed: firstly between institutions at the European level and the EU citizens, secondly between the governments at the national and local levels and the citizens and thirdly amongst the citizens themselves at the local level. This is all compounded by a lack of incentives to raise bottom-up stimulus for sustainable governance.

Our deliberations and recommendations on E.U. Research

We believe that all the research, which took place under the guidance and financing of the EU has helped to make cities more citizen friendly.

We noticed that **citizen's participation has been encouraged in concrete terms in a practical way.**

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.
- ✓ We recommend a new governance approach where our voice is combined with the results of the scientific research and where politicians act solely as our, the citizens' representatives rather than omniscient experts.
We recommend that research should be conducted looking at the building of solidarity within the member states in the view of what this means to the citizens of the various European member states.
- ✓ 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,
 - convincement and teaching campaigns of governance measures as well as other means to involve citizens in the decision making process.
- ✓ We consider that a sense of ownership is an essential element in motivating citizens to participate: we recommend that research should deal with the question of how such a culture of commitment could be facilitated in all cities. Local action enhancing the global mind set should be the primary goal of urban governance.

What do we declare on more 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).

We are aware that the transportation trend is towards further growth, due to increased mobility and socio-economic changes in our society. Beyond a certain threshold, more roads do not solve problems, but only attract more cars.

Therefore, we wish to have transport systems in our cities which:

- ✓ are more sustainable: the growing need of mobility and the growing use of transportation (of all modes) increases pollution. To counteract this, the most polluting mode of transport - the individual use of private motor vehicles (which we use most frequently) needs to be reduced.
- ✓ are more efficient: shorten the distance / time we need to cover for our daily travels, make work-places, basic services, shopping and leisure more accessible from our home avoiding to be stuck in traffic jams, and improve the inter-modal-ity of transport.
- ✓ are safer; Public transport systems have to guarantee the safety of the travellers more than they do today. Suitable infrastructures are needed to prevent weaker users (like cyclists or pedestrians) from accidents. We do need safer roads more than faster roads.

Our deliberations and recommendations on EU Research

EU research has been addressing several aspects of the mentioned problems. Reviewing a number of research projects, we came up with the following conclusions.

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. Only then and as "servant" of this aim can technology in transportation become a useful tool for our cities' future.

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).

In that way we could work effectively towards the reduction of emissions and the quantity of cars. A shift from car traffic to other modes of transport will also support the equally important reduction in the number of traffic accidents and casualties.

We see a need for us and all people living in cities to change our transport habits. To be able to do this, we need infrastructure (transport systems, information systems) and educational activities (informing about the issue, raising awareness - starting in the primary school). Changes in transport habits need to be supported by incentives for the use of sustainable transport as well as clear "dis-incentives" concerning car use. These could combine regulatory as well as pricing measures.

The future of transport in our cities can only be sustainable and successful if an integrated approach to policy development is adopted. In this approach, "soft" (motivational, behavioural) measures, which trigger change towards more sustainable use of transportation need to be developed in balance with more strict and sometimes unpleasant "hard" regulations or pricing disincentives for using the car, as e.g. inner city road charges, parking and access restrictions.

We consider it vital to inform, involve and listen to the citizens from the planning stages onwards. Successful citizens' participation will lead to a higher success rate of transport policies, because:

- ✓ it enables the adaptation of measures undertaken to citizens' needs and attitudes;
- ✓ it increases citizens' awareness of problems and developments;
- ✓ it increases mutual trust between citizens and politicians/authorities.

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.

What do we declare on Sustainable Built Environment

The citizens of Europe represent some of the richest people in the world and at the same time, are among the least sustainable. Today, a sustainable building can only be found in societies that make little use of energy, where reusing and natural recycling cycles are still present and where utility remains until the end of the product's existence. Our construction industry constantly demands new materials and is responsible for 50% the world energy and resources consumption. Today, uniformity in shape and materials seem to be an objective in building our living spaces. 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. To increase sustainability, better governance is necessary. The need for teaching, dissemination and public publicity is obvious.

Our deliberations and recommendations on EU Research

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.**

After studying these problems and having the experience of citizens of different European countries, we came to the conclusions that follow.

As regards **Urban Sprawl**, the wide use of cars has turned most city centres into areas of difficult access. Smaller families create the need for more homes, more urban sprawl, and the increasing depopulation of city centres. Urban sprawl creates the need for heavy infrastructure systems. 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). A child, asked to draw planet earth will create a round shape with a big tree on the top! However, the mere existence of green areas is not enough: location and linking to residential complexes must be taken into account to reduce the use of cars in order to reach these green areas; unseen spaces in the inner blocks, though regarded as green areas are often covered with construction; bad management of green spaces can lead to emerging social problems related to drugs, crime and vandalism; finally, the design of green spaces often ignores biodiversity, imposing large grass-covered surfaces and uniform vegetation.

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.

Construction techniques

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. In addition, besides the performance in the final work, materials have embedded energy, used during their transformation and transport into the construction site. Either passive or active construction systems are being developed today. However, active systems tend to move into high-tech approaches that in most cases are hazardous to the environment. 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

Brownfield sites are abandoned plots of land previously used for industrial purposes and nowadays posing serious environmental and health risks. Pollutants still present in the soil continue to contaminate the air, and surface or underground waters. In most cases, it is difficult to point out responsibilities, as proper knowledge of the problems came too late and the initial polluters often no longer operate or exist. Reclamation is complex and very expensive. However, just not using the land does not help solve the problem at all, quite the opposite. As new industries and investors refuse to use these areas, the risk of more urban sprawl increases.

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.

What do we declare 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 must bear in mind that cultural heritage is non-renewable. What is lost cannot be replaced.

We cannot live our present well if we do not know our past and thus cannot learn the lessons from it. It is essential for European citizens to understand the historical development of their continent if we want to build solidarity between our own nations and also with the entire humankind. 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.

We feel that sustainable management, usage and preservation of Europe's cultural heritage may in a long term perspective result in important material (e.g., tourism and employment) and immaterial (e.g., more respect and better relationship between peoples) benefits.

We have noted both positive and negative examples of how cultural heritage is treated across Europe. On a positive note, we would like to highlight several models which can be emulated elsewhere. Having been a degraded area, the Museums Quarter in Vienna has developed into a vibrant cultural centre housing museums, artists' studios, and open spaces where people can meet. In Tallinn, the redevelopment of part of the coastline in the city centre, namely the WWII port, will open up accessibility and opportunities to cultural and leisure resources for the citizens.

However, in our everyday lives, we are concerned about how our cultural heritage is not respected in our local environment/context. Examples of this are the Olympic highway cutting through the Villa Pamphili Park in Rome or the planned M3 highway which is proposed to cut through the Tara/Skryne valley, the ancient seat of the High Kings of Ireland.

We believe that Europe is not pulling its weight when it comes to cultural heritage preservation. 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.

Our deliberations and recommendations on EU Research

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.
- ✓ Bearing in mind the concept of sustainability, we feel that it is very important to take a wider view. Cultural heritage must be perceived not only as individual monuments isolated from their environment, also the context of contemporary social reality and relationship must be taken into account. When researching cultural heritage, it is important to research the impacts of economic development, of changing function and the position of cultural heritage items in the urban structure of the growing cities and of the movement of people which results in empty town centres especially in smaller towns.
- ✓ Just as the European Union has a Common Agricultural Policy, it should have a Common Cultural Heritage Preservation Policy. We are not saying that the EU should control the cultural identity of single states but that it should build a common European approach towards cultural heritage preservation in the interest of our collective European identity and culture.
- ✓ There seems to be more need for collaboration and communication both internally within the EU (between DG Research and DG Education and Culture) as well as externally - between the European Union and other international organisations such as UNESCO.
- ✓ We are also concerned that there is a great wealth of cultural heritage in Europe which remains largely unknown outside the national context. Good examples of this are the Prehistoric culture of Malta, vernacular architecture or local folklore and traditions across Europe. The Commission should identify this aspect for future funding.
- ✓ It must also be noted that great care must be exercised when making cultural heritage accessible to economic exploitation (tourism). The emotional value and usability of cultural heritage for the people connected with it and the people's reverence for cultural heritage are of utmost importance and must not be compromised by economic considerations.

- ✓ 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. We are convinced that the need for EU intervention is most evident in resource lacking regions.
- ✓ Sustainability demands that the issue of urban cultural heritage is well integrated in the remaining context of urban policy making. Investment needs to be directed towards beneficial activity such as non-intrusive economic growth, local development and citizens' involvement in heritage preservation.
- ✓ 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.
- ✓ We also believe that cultural heritage research could be a good way of anticipating and building good arguments in favour of introducing pedestrianisation in city centres, reduction in car use and traffic volumes, increasing green and blue areas within city zones – for building cities and towns as we want them.

It is time to conclude...

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.
- ✓ The inevitable limitations on the number of areas which we were able to consider, left us frustrated that we were not able to consider other areas vital to sustainable development, such as **energy policy and biodiversity**.

Third, we wish to state that:

- ✓ We all live on a small planet with **finite resources**. The way in which those resources have been and are being used endangers the chances of an acceptable quality of life for us, our children and grandchildren and their contemporaries throughout the world.
- ✓ We can and must take action as individuals to reduce the destructive impacts of our lifestyles, but we need the **support** and examples of our leaders and our fellow-citizens.
- ✓ We recognize that action must begin in our own neighbourhoods and cities. However, we are also part of a **wider world**, and we must look beyond our own borders and short term time horizons.

The interaction in our group made us realize that we have many things in common. For this reason, we consider ourselves to be European citizens and we believe that cooperation between Europeans is possible and indispensable.

Individually we may feel we can do little, but through our collective conscience we may encourage each other to do more and change our behaviour in some ways.

If we as a group of twenty six people who came together as strangers can learn from each other and change our lives, it is possible for other groups to do the same. Our group gives evidence of generating a global dynamic.

We can each make changes in our own way which can feed back into our communities, societies, and countries, starting a process for a better future.

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