

## **Appendix 2**

### **EUROCITIES: Background and involvement of Belfast City Council**

#### **Background**

EUROCITIES is the network of major European cities comprised of local elected Members and Officers of over 130 of Europe's largest cities and 40 partner cities, that between them govern over 130 million citizens across 35 countries. It is the platform for the Mayors of Europe's most important cities. The primary purpose of the EUROCITIES is to influence the development of European policy and legislation in the interest of cities. In Europe, cities are nowadays regarded very clearly as a vital part of the solutions to Europe's futures.

Belfast City Council has been an active member of the network since the early 1990s.

EUROCITIES exists to make Europe and its institutions relevant to local and regional councils throughout Europe. As a network, it monitors and influences EU policy and legislation, builds early intelligence and access to EU funding. It also provides a platform for council officers and elected Members to share best practice and work together on developing solutions to social inclusion, economic development, knowledge society, environment, mobility and cooperation issues.

The day to day work of EUROCITIES is conducted through these six thematic fora and their associated working groups. Each forum elects its own city chair and vice chair and meetings are held in different volunteer host cities 2-3 times a year.

EUROCITIES influences and works with the EU institutions to respond to common issues that affect the day-to-day lives of Europeans. EUROCITIES aims to influence the opinions of Brussels' stakeholders to help city governments to tackle strategic challenges at local level.

The network and secretariat is headquartered in Brussels and an Executive Committee made up of 12 elected representatives manage the business of the organisation. This is currently led by the Mayor of Nantes, President of EUROCITIES.

#### **Why EUROCITIES? – Benefits to Cities**

EUROCITIES provides a high profile international platform for ambitious outward looking cities. Participation in EUROCITIES earns EU and international visibility, both for the Member city and its engaged political leaders. EUROCITIES allows cities to showcase their best practice and learn from other international and influential stakeholders.

##### **a) Shaping the EU agenda**

It falls to local authorities to implement some 70% of EU legislation. Yet, the policy dialogue at European level is largely among National governments and the EU institutions. EUROCITIES improves the design and delivery of EU programmes by ensuring they are developed with input from city government. EUROCITIES ensures that the critical role of cities in Europe's future success is not only understood but also supported.

As the collective voice for Europe's biggest cities, EUROCITIES provide the EU institutions with a representative route for dialogue; helping to ensure that their strategies and policies are grounded

in local realities. This reinforces the role of cities in delivering on wider EU objectives beyond regional policy, from innovation through to energy to social inclusion.

The credibility of EUROCITIES as a lobby comes from its extensive transnational membership. Its member cities between them govern a quarter of the EU population, more than any single member state. EUROCITIES is often involved and consulted as a recognised stakeholder in EU policy development.

#### b) Resources

**Financial:** Much of EUROCITIES' efforts are geared towards making the strategic case for more powers and resources for Europe's major cities. As a result of lobbying, many EU policies and programmes have an urban dimension – not only those concerning regional development i.e. structural funds such as ERDF and Interreg, but also policies on, for example, transport, energy, innovation, culture and the social agenda.

The 'network effect' of EUROCITIES also means that Members have potential partners for short-term European projects ready to hand. Such projects offer cities the chance to bring in often quite significant sums of money to help them deliver their priorities in a particular field, such as climate, mobility, social inclusion or ICT. By virtue of the working relationships created through the forums and working groups, proactive partnerships of major European cities can be formed for a transnational project bid.

**Learning:** Participation in the EUROCITIES network brings real development benefits for individuals, whether politicians or technical and political staff. Seeing how colleagues in other European cities deal with similar challenges, and understanding better the strategic context of common work can widen horizons. This builds capacity and inspires new thinking back home, bringing real benefits to the organisation as well as to the participating individuals. It is a real strength of the network that among the 140+ member cities there are more than 2,000 people engaged in EUROCITIES' six forums and 40 working groups. All bring local expertise and experience not only to share with each other, but also to inform European policy-making.

**Information:** EUROCITIES members have the benefit of access to a strong team of European policy experts in Brussels. The web site is a resource in itself, with members' area offering partner search and discussion forum facilities alongside news and background information, and access to all the analytical and policy papers. The invaluable monthly EUROCITIES FLASH reports the network's activities and carries updates on new developments. The Brussels secretariat provides regular funding forecasts giving early warning of project opportunities, and guides to funding programmes when the calls for projects are published.

#### **Belfast City Council Participation**

BCC has been an active member in the EUROCITIES network since the early 1990s and currently participates in a number of relevant working groups.

Some of the key outcomes of the Council's engagement in the network include:

##### *1. Access to EU funded projects:*

Belfast City benefits from early access to information on EU funding calls and invitations into project funding partnerships with experienced cities. Some examples include;

- i) Funding for coloured low carbon lighting for City Hall
- ii) Funding to showcase GEMS NI employment project looking at 'integrated employment services at a local level'
- iii) Funding for a mutual learning and exchange programme for the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector bodies in Belfast addressing Roma inclusion issues

- iv) Sourcing partners currently for BCC's planned Creative Europe bid for funding to revitalise vacant space through culture
- v) Funding for intelligent ICT networking between cities
- vi) Funding for a local energy partnership.

## *2. Influencing EU policy:*

BCC has participated in many EURO CITIES led lobby campaigns on shaping EU policy including;

- i) Development for new Structural Funds programmes 2014-2020
- ii) Push for an Urban agenda at EU level, and an urban dimension within all EU policies
- iii) Information and best practice on cyber security, big data usage for city planning and digital inclusion for practice
- iv) Leading and working with big cities to develop a clean cities tool kit and best practice approaches
- v) Working with experts to develop a materials and circular economy strategy for Belfast.