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### **CITIES IN EUROPEAN AND POLISH STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS**

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### **MIASTA W EUROPEJSKICH I POLSKICH DOKUMENTACH STRATEGICZNYCH**

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**Summary:** Cities and urban areas have played greater and greater role in EU development process, and urban dimension is present in almost all European and Polish strategic documents. They establish development goals that cities should achieve and indicate problems they should focus on. The aim of the article is to summarize information relating to cities in European and Polish strategic documents over the last years and to create a vision of European and Polish city of the future.

**Keywords:** European cities, regional development, urban policy.

**Streszczenie:** Miasta od wielu lat odgrywają coraz istotniejszą rolę w rozwoju Unii Europejskiej, a tematyka rozwoju obszarów miejskich poruszana jest praktycznie we wszystkich dokumentach strategicznych. Wyznaczane są w nich cele rozwojowe obszarów miejskich, prezentowane wizje miast przyszłości oraz wskazywane problemy, na które obszary miejskie powinny zwrócić szczególną uwagę. Celem artykułu jest podsumowanie informacji dotyczących rozwoju obszarów miejskich zawartych w europejskich i polskich dokumentach strategicznych oraz stworzenie, w oparciu o przedstawiane w nich informacje, wizji europejskiego oraz polskiego miasta przyszłości.

**Słowa kluczowe:** miasta europejskie, rozwój regionalny, polityka miejska.

## **1. Introduction**

Nowadays cities become a more and more important part of European space. It is even possible say they are vital to the future of Europe. There are powerhouses of economic growth, places of science, technology, innovation, social interaction and ideas exchange. On the other hand, cities are also places where European biggest

challenges such as unemployment, segregation and poverty concentrate. That is why urban dimension becomes a significant part of almost all Polish and European strategic documents.

## 2. European strategic documents

The European Union has paid attention to cities and their development for many years. The most important documents in which urban dimension is mentioned are:

- The New Charter of Athens (2003);
- Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities (2007);
- Toledo Informal Ministerial Meeting on Urban Development Declaration (2010);
- Europe 2020. A European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (2010);
- Cities of tomorrow. Challenges, visions, ways forward (2011);
- Urban Agenda for the EU. Pact of Amsterdam (2016).

The New Charter of Athens presents a vision of European cities connected in social, economic, environmental and spatial aspects [<http://www.ectp-ceu.eu/index...>, access 28.06.2016]. It is the answer to major problems European cities faced in the beginning of the XXI<sup>st</sup> century. Many cities were built and rebuilt in accordance with its recommendations.

Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities lays the foundation for a new integrated urban policy in Europe, focusing on helping cities tackle problems of social exclusion, structural change, ageing, climate change and mobility [<http://www.euractiv.com/section/sustainable-dev...>, access 28.06.2016]. Pierre Laconte claims that because of Leipzig Charter people started to perceive cities as the leading force for regional development, as well as a tool to fight against the warming climate and resource exhaustion [Laconte 2012, pp. 246-247].

Toledo Declaration sets out the intelligent and sustainable development of urban areas (based on social cohesion), outlining the fact that an integrated approach of urban policies represents one of the key instruments facilitating the implementation of the 2020 European Strategy. Integrated urban regeneration and its strategic potential are crucial for a smarter, more sustainable and socially inclusive urban development in Europe [Toledo Informal... 2010, p. 3].

Europe 2020 is the main EU development strategy, in which The Commission proposes five measurable EU targets for 2020 that will steer the process and be translated into national targets (employment, research and innovation, climate change and energy, education and combating poverty) [EUROPE 2020, pp. 3-4]. EURO CITIES<sup>1</sup> believe that, with the right support, cities can play an important role

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<sup>1</sup> The network of major European cities consisting of over 130 of European largest cities and 40 partner cities across 35 countries.

in delivering on the Europe 2020 targets [<http://www.eurocities.eu/eurocities/issues...> access 29.06.2016].

The document ‘Cities of tomorrow’ underlines that cities became the breeding ground for many urban problems, but also for science and technology solutions, culture, innovation and individual and collective creativity. They play a significant role in mitigating the impact of climate change as well. In recent years, the economic and financial crisis has intensified several urban problems and demonstrated the limits of existing sectorial policies, hence calling for an integrated, cross-sectorial and territorial approach which offers a new European model of urban development. There should be defined a new integrated concept of cities which will generate dynamic urban development, transport, engineering, environment and social perspectives across a diversity of geographical levels. According to Johannes Hahn, Member of the European Commission in charge of Regional Policy, “‘Cities of tomorrow’ reflection process will provide inspiration for policymakers and practitioners involved in urban development, whether at local, regional, national or European level. Looking ahead and developing visions of the cities of tomorrow is becoming increasingly important at all levels. The development of our cities will determine the future of Europe [Cities of tomorrow... 2011, p. III].”

The EU Urban Agenda is intended to provide an operational framework and effective instruments to horizontally improve the urban dimension in European policymaking. This includes better policies, territorial impact assessment, more tailor made and place sensitive EU-funds. It also includes opportunities to exchange knowledge and best practices, research and cooperation. The EU Urban Agenda offers a new form of multilevel and multi-stakeholder cooperation with the aim of strengthening the urban dimension in EU policy and shall be taken forward in close partnership among Member States, the European institutions, regional and urban authorities and other stakeholders [Urban Agenda... 2016, p. 4].

The document ‘Urban Agenda’ ensures the EU that cities can provide their input and expertise in EU development and put EU policies into practice. Commissioner for Regional Policy Corina Creţu said: “Cities are hubs of creativity and engines of European growth, but they face major challenges, such as social exclusion, air pollution or unemployment. We need to tackle these problems together. Our commitment to having Urban Agenda shows that we are putting urban matters higher on our agenda and are ready to listen more to our cities when it comes to what works for them and what needs to be improved [<http://www.europa.eu/rapid/press-release...>, access 29.06.2016].”

The document ‘Urban Agenda’ for the EU focuses on twelve priority themes such as: inclusion of migrants and refugees, air quality, urban poverty, housing, circular economy, jobs and skills in the local economy, climate adaptation, energy transition, sustainable use of land and nature-based solutions, urban mobility, digital transition and innovative and responsible public procurement [Urban Agenda... 2016, p. 7].

All mentioned documents say about urban development, but they often focus on different problems or challenges and they set own goals. The list of most popular topics is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** The list of most popular topics concerning cities mentioned in European documents

	The New Charter of Athens	Leipzig Charter	Toledo Declaration	Europe 2020	Cities of tomorrow	Urban Agenda for the EU
Creating and delivering high-quality public spaces		+			+	
Infrastructure modernization		+			+	+
Development of urban transport		+			+	+
Compact cities					+	
Better living conditions	+	+	+	+	+	+
Raising the attractiveness of cities as the location of economic activities		+			+	+
Improving energy efficiency		+	+	+	+	+
Active innovation and educational policy		+		+	+	
Promoting social and intercultural dialogue		+	+		+	+
Cooperation between cities	+		+		+	
Preservation of cultural heritage	+	+			+	
Cities as economic powerhouses		+			+	+
High quality of the environment (ecological cities)		+		+	+	+
Integrated approach to urban development	+				+	+
Tackling the problem of unemployment and social exclusion (social inclusion policy)		+	+	+	+	+
Sustainable development			+	+	+	+
Polycentric urban network					+	+
Cooperation with the regional centers					+	
Revitalization of the cities					+	+

Source: own research based on European strategic documents.

When summing up all presented information, the holistic vision of European cities appears. The European cities of the future should:

- be engines of social progress and economic growth in all the EU Member States,
- be integrated in socially, economically, environmentally and spatially effective network,
- cooperate and complement each other, while preserving cultural heritage,
- be eco-friendly, compact and energy-efficient,
- harmoniously combine the natural environment with urban areas,

- take care of prosperity and high standard of living of their inhabitants,
- adapt to climate changes,
- conduct an active innovation and educational policy.

### 3. Polish strategic documents

Poland has always actively participated in creating European space and its policies, including urban policy. In the main Polish strategic documents special attention is paid to cities, urban areas and their development.

The base for the new national development management system is the Act of 6 December 2006 about the principles of development policy. It indicates fifteen areas particularly relevant for the development of Poland, including the development of cities and metropolitan areas.

Polish strategic documents are coherent not only with each other but also with the objectives of the development described in the strategic documents of the EU, above all with the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy, although they transfer the European challenges into national ground. The main strategic documents of the new system, on the basis of which the Polish urban development policy is implemented, include:

- Poland 2030. The third wave of modernity. Long-term National Development Strategy (2013);
- National Development Strategy 2020. Active society, competitive economy, efficient state (2012);
- 9 Integrated Strategies, within The National Strategy of Regional Development 2010-2020. Regions, cities, rural areas (2010);
- National Spatial Development Concept 2030 (2011);
- National Urban Policy (in progress).

Long-Term National Development Strategy defines major trends and challenges as well as the concept of development of Poland in the long-term, while National Development Strategy 2020 (Medium-Term National Development Strategy) sets out strategic objectives for the development of the country until 2020. 9 Integrated Strategies document assists them in achieving the development objectives, but for the urban development the most important one is National Strategy of Regional Development, which indicates the extent of the territorial impact of interventions implemented under various public policies. National Spatial Development Concept represents the spatial framework for the development policy in Poland, including the implementation of various development strategies [National Development... 2012, p. 4].

Polish government is currently working on a national urban policy. Its guidelines until 2020 were presented in May 2012. The strategic objective of the policy is to strengthen the capacities of Polish cities and urbanized areas so they could generate

sustainable growth, new jobs and better quality of life for urban citizens. National urban policy focuses on five specific objectives to create competitive, strong, integrated, cohesive and sustainable and efficient cities.

Conducting the national urban policy is based on three principles:

- the principle of integrity: the national urban policy has to be submitted to development policy;
- the principle of an integrated territorial approach;
- the principle of multilevel governance [Założenia krajowej... 2012, pp. 78].

The substantial part of the policy is an integrated territorial approach towards regional and spatial development which follows the line of the EU most recent urban agenda. According to UITP – International Association of Public Transport “[...] being one of the strategic policy documents at the central government-level (National Urban Policy) will be the first ever attempt by the Polish government to showcase the necessity and advantages of fitting public policies to the real needs and opportunities of cities” [http://www.ceec.uitp..., access 30.06.2016].

**Table 2.** The list of most popular topics concerning cities mentioned in Polish documents

	Long-term National Development Strategy	Medium-Term National Development Strategy	National Strategy of Regional Development	National Spatial Development Concept	National Urban Policy
Strengthening the functional links between cities	+	+	+	+	+
Development of basic and modern urban infrastructure	+	+	+		+
Changing economic functions of the cities	+		+		+
Active public life	+				+
Better quality of life	+		+		+
Better access to the capitals of province [voivodeship]	+	+	+		+
Improving intra-regional and regional transport availability		+	+	+	+
Strengthening the development potential of local centers	+	+	+	+	+
Greater creativity in cities	+				+
Smart, sustainable and inclusive growth		+	+		+
Strengthening regional centers		+	+	+	+
Development of social infrastructure		+			+
Strengthening the position of cities in the national and international scale		+	+		+
Enhancing the competitiveness of cities		+	+	+	+
Development of social capital		+			+
Integration of the functional space of urban areas		+	+	+	+

The national urban policy pays attention to the most important issues and challenges that Polish cities have to deal with. Some of them are mentioned in other strategic documents. The list of the most popular topics is presented in Table 2.

According to presented information there is a comprehensive vision of Polish cities of the future. They are competitive, strong, integrated, cohesive, sustainable, efficient, easy to reach with friendly inhabitants. To achieve it Polish authorities should:

- strengthen the integration processes as well as functional, infrastructural and institutional links between cities;
- create compact and internally integrated space of urban centers and their functional areas;
- stimulate smart, sustainable and inclusive growth;
- strengthen the position of cities in the national and international scale especially by developing their metropolitan, administrative, scientific, cultural and symbolic functions, as well as developing high quality public services;
- develop human resources and social capital;
- increase regional and intra-regional transport availability;
- support the development of regional and sub-regional growth poles.

## 4. Conclusions

Cities are one of the major players in the EU development as they directly or indirectly implement EU policies and therefore contribute to the major policy objectives of the EU. However, European and Polish cities have to deal with a lot of different problems and challenges to achieve their development goals. They have a lot in common and can support and cooperate with each other, but it has to be remembered that every city is unique and has its own historical, social, economic and cultural conditions. There is a coherent vision of European and Polish cities of the future, but there are many issues not mentioned in European documents that Polish cities have to deal with and have to focus on first of all (before they achieve the European level of development). That is why there is a need for a general European urban development strategy and a common vision of European cities of the future, but every country and every city has to transfer them into their national and local ground, considering regional potentials and barriers.

It is worth noting that cooperation (especially sharing information about ongoing urban development processes) of Member States, EU institutions and stakeholders, such as NGOs or business partners as well as city authorities responsible for urban development, can speed up the urban development process in the whole EU and only then the joint solutions to improve the quality of lives in urban areas can be found.

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