



ECOSOC • Integration Segment (27–29 May, 2014)
SUSTAINABLE URBANIZATION

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ITALY

Contribution to the 2014 United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Integration Segment

ECOSOC Integration Segment – Italian contribution on “Sustainable Urbanization”

1) What has been the experience of your country in using urbanisation as a tool for the integration of economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development?

Italy does not have a national comprehensive normative/policy framework on sustainable urbanisation. Nonetheless, there is a large number of interesting experiences and good practices at the municipality level, especially in the central/northern regions and mainly focused on the environmental dimension.

SMART CITIES are cities that are engaged, on a voluntary basis, in addressing their strains on energy, transportation, water, buildings and public spaces through solutions that are both highly efficient and sustainable. In brief, a Smart City is a city seeking to address public issues via ICT-based solutions on the basis of forward looking participatory policies and multi-stakeholders partnership.

Italy is among the countries with the largest numbers of Smart Cities in the EU, but most initiatives are still at planning stage. 68 Italian cities have promoted the creation of a **National Observatory of Smart Cities**, under the auspices of **ANCI** (National Association of Italian Municipalities). Ad hoc Guidelines on planning Smart Cities have been elaborated in 2013.

Examples of the most common solutions adopted by Italian Smart Cities are: **neighbourhood units** (ICT-enabled infrastructure to create carbon neutral and sustainable residential areas); **“testbed” micro infrastructures** (ICT-enabled infrastructure for piloting a network of technologies that interact in a given area of a city, involving sensors and devices); **intelligent traffic systems** (ICT-enabled systems based on road sensors or GPS to monitor real-time traffic information and manage city traffic in an efficient and sustainable manner); **resource management systems** (ICT-enabled infrastructure to improve the management of utilities for a city such as energy or water); **participation platforms** (ICT-enabled citizen participation open data strategies, crowd-sourcing and co-creation platforms).

A **“Regulation on the collaboration between citizens and administrations for the protection and management of urban common goods”** has been recently adopted by the Municipality of Bologna to plan and manage, in collaboration with citizens, urban spaces, like urban parks, neglected areas, disuse buildings.

As October 2013, seven Italian cities have signed the **Green Digital Charter**, promoted by the European Networking Intelligent Cities for Energy Efficiency, committing to use ICT as a main driver to improve energy efficiency.

Many initiatives promoted in Italian cities are conducted under **LIFE**, the European Union’s financial instrument supporting projects that contribute to the achievement of EU environment/climate policy in Member States. While mainly attaining the environmental dimension, most of them are able to successfully capture also the social and economic gains. A significant number of Italian projects related to sustainable urbanization have been implemented, like:

- **IDEM**, selected as one of the 14 Best LIFE Environment in 2010, that aims at the improvement of the urban management through the integration of a variety of tools, including Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS),

- **LOWASTE**, aiming at decreasing the local production of waste through the development of a market for recycled products and experiencing a pattern of “circular economy” at the urban level,
- **CHAMP**, involving Italy and other three States, aiming at training and supporting local authorities in implementing an Integrated Management System for Sustainability, that has resulted in the launch of a **European Partnership for Integrated Sustainability Management**.

EMAS (EU Eco-Management and Audit Scheme) is a voluntary tool available for any kind of company/organisation aiming to improve its environmental performance, that in 2011 has been open to the public sector and local authorities. More than 200 Municipalities have EMAS registration in Italy, almost all small-medium towns located in the Northern Regions, as well as four Provinces. Every year an EMAS Award is recognised by the EU Commission. In 2011, under the category “Organisations from the public sector”, the winner was the **Municipality of Ravenna** that established participatory structures to involve employees, citizens and external stakeholders and stimulating their contribution to improve environmental performance. A pilot project has been carried out in Italy from 2001 and 2004 (**TANDEM**) to encourage and support the application of EMAS by local authorities.

URBACT is a European exchange and learning programme, co- financed by the European Union (European Regional Development Fund), to promote sustainable urban development and support Cities to develop integrated solutions to major urban challenges.

57 Italian cities participate to the programme, including Lead Partners to the following projects:

- **USEAct**, a project aiming at defining ways to achieve opportunities for people and business to settle in existing locations without consumption of further land;
- **JOB TOWN**, a European Network of Local Partnerships for the Advancement of Youth Employment and Opportunity;
- **ENTER.HUB**, that promotes the role of railway hubs/multimodal interfaces of regional relevance in medium cities as engines for integrated urban development and economic, social and cultural regeneration.

COVENANT OF MAYORS is the European movement involving local and regional authorities in the fight against climate change. Launched in 2008, it is based on a voluntary commitment by signatory cities to meet the EU 20% CO₂ reduction target through increased energy efficiency and development of renewable energy sources. Signatories undertake to submit a Sustainable Energy Action Plan (SEAP), in which they outline how they intend to reach the CO₂ reduction target. Italy is the European countries with the highest number of signatories (2681). More than 600 Italian Plans have been approved by the EU Commission. More than 1000 plans are still under evaluation.

LOCAL AGENDA 21 is a process that facilitates sustainable development at community level, based on participatory approach. The Italian Coordinating Association of Local Agenda 21 links Municipalities, Provinces, Regions and other local actors in order to support and promote Local Agenda 21 processes. A very large number of Italian municipalities are involved, that have signed the Aalborg Charter for European cities for sustainable development, as well as the Aalborg Commitments, and participate to the **European Sustainable Cities & Towns Campaign**.

A **thematic Strategy on Sustainable Urban Development** has been published by the EU Commission in 2006. Guidance on integrated environmental management has been prepared by the Commission in 2013.

2) What kind of investments have been made in your cities to make them hubs of sustainability?

As highlighted in the reply to the previous question, most investments are made at the local level and in the framework of programme funded by the European Union, or under European networks.

Initiatives focus on: ICT –enabled traffic systems or infrastructures, open data, participatory processes, innovative entrepreneurship, climate change adaptation and mitigation, energy, integrated urban management.

3) How have you addressed specific urbanization challenges in an integrated way?

A proper and specific policy framework in the field of urbanization in an integrated way has not yet been set up in Italy. However, urban and land development planning are regulated by a broad national regulatory framework, which is subsequently adopted and implemented at regional level. Therefore, local urban policies are identified by Regions, coherently with the sectoral planning priorities (e.g. soil protection, civil protection, landscape planning), established by public administration, institutional bodies or agencies.

Against this background, the integration framework of urbanization policies is not homogeneous: some Regions have gained long experience in the use of integrated assessment procedure in urban development planning, through which the three pillars (economic, environmental, social) of sustainable development have been ensured. Some others adopt only general planning instruments and do not consider the new requirements coming out from changes in the urbanization process.

National legislation covers specific environmental sectors (water supply, waste, energy..). Recently the Council of Ministers approved a draft regulatory act on soil finalised to contain soil consumption.

4) What kind of institutional structures are in place in your country for effective governance, policy-making and planning for sustainable urbanization?

Italy does not have specific institutions in charge of sustainable urban policies. As stated above, the current regulatory framework foresees a shared competence between government, regions and local authorities. Within this framework, decision-making regarding urbanization is made by local authorities, in compliance with regional and national laws. Some specific local authorities (Parks, River Basin Authorities, Cultural Heritage Controlling Authorities), covering areas that include various Municipalities, have the mission to ensure that urban planning and investments is coherent with national provisions on protection.

Monitoring and data processing, research and reporting on urban environment are developed by the Institute for Environmental Protection and Research (ISPRA), as well as by Regional Agencies for Environment Protection (ARPA).

The Italian National Institute of Urban planning (INU), association of people and institutions, carries out research in the field of urban planning, cities, environment, cultural heritage.

What are some innovations and partnerships that demonstrate the power of urbanization in the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development in your country?

In the most recent years, public/private partnership have been triggered for the construction of high speed railway network and the related urban transformation. Indeed, in cities crossed by the national high speed railway network, Ferrovie dello Stato (State Railways), has promoted urban re-qualification projects (finalized to urban regeneration and environmental protection) specifically covering the areas of the new stations, integrating local authorities' action.