



## COMMON POSITIONS

The participants to the 49<sup>th</sup> UCEU General Assembly meeting held in Nicosia on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2009, under the presidency of Nicosia Municipality, on the subject of inclusive and sustainable capital cities,

1. Representing almost 37 million European citizens which correspond to approximately 7 percent of the total population of the European Union,
2. Having studied and analysed the EU documents on Cohesion and the related feedback submitted by involved stakeholders as well as the responses submitted to the questionnaire circulated to the capital cities of the EU by Nicosia Municipality, UCEU Presidency 2009, on inclusive and sustainable capital cities,
3. Acknowledging that territorial cohesion is key to the proper development of the European Union but maintaining that territorial cohesion is also about bridging the development lag not only among regions and in fact not only among cities or capital cities, but also about addressing very specific areas where disparities are such that they threaten stability and prevent growth,

*Declare the following*

4. The European Union's two most urgent and overriding actual challenges, on the one hand the global economic crisis and, on the other, the effort to halt climate change underline the importance of a sustainable EU Cohesion Policy as absolutely crucial in tackling them effectively,
5. In line with the renewed Lisbon Strategy which identified that the cohesion policy could contribute to the achievement of growth and jobs, capital cities of the EU wish to reinforce their determination to take the lead in developments towards sustainable growth, employment, and competitiveness within an eco-efficient and inclusive economy and to reiterate their commitment to achieving sustainable and inclusive capital cities. In this context the EU must make the needs and opportunities for urban areas a top priority,
6. Never before has there been such an urgent need to pursue the synergies between environmental protection and growth and to increase and improve investment in sustainable energy and infrastructure,
7. Never before has it been more necessary for cities to support the shift in the economy towards knowledge-based activities and the opportunity this offers to capital cities to embrace this role and to host and nurture entrepreneurship, innovation, local employment and community development,

8. Capital cities possess distinct cultural, social, geographical, educational, economic and administrative qualities that offer value and potential and as capital cities they are the most deeply multicultural settings in the European Union,

9. Capital cities need to face up to the speed of urbanisation in order to deal with the demographic shifts and the challenges these pose to education, health and mobility, while emphasizing that inclusiveness is a crucial part of urban development, and that respect and tolerance are at the core of the European Social Model,

10. In this context they maintain that diversity is a key benefit that must form part of a broader integrated approach to tackle social exclusion. They consider it necessary to emphasize that inclusiveness is a crucial part of urban development, services and policies and that an integrated approach must be elaborated at all levels of government that would allow for the social, economic and cultural benefits of development to be shared by all involved including the deprived, excluded and vulnerable groups,

11. They consider that cities and in particular capital cities are the main settings where opportunity for growth emerges and economic recovery begins, that they reflect not only the brand identity of their nations but of the European Union as a whole,

12. They believe that a sustainable economic base can be created in capital cities both through private initiatives and investments seeking competitive advantages but always in close cooperation with local authorities promoting corporate responsibility and wishing to protect the principles of environmental sustainability and inclusiveness,

13. They must revisit and reiterate the basic premises, that capital cities are above all places to live in and where all groups of population should feel at ease. Bearing in mind that an important part of the body of EU acquis concerning fields such as air quality, noise pollution, road safety, integration of migrants, equal opportunities and discrimination puts a considerable burden on urban areas, the cohesion policy has to take into account the challenges of the growing need for public services, especially public transport and new infrastructure, that economic and demographic changes impose on capital cities,

14. They must strengthen their leading role as capital cities and advocate new thinking, set new benchmarks and reach solutions for a better tomorrow beyond our own administrative boundaries. In this context, they welcome and encourage the development of strategic frameworks for specific geographic locations such as the EU Mediterranean Policy, the Baltic Sea Strategy, the European Danube Strategy and the broader European Neighbourhood Policy in which capital cities can have an important role and encourage cross-border cooperation between European capitals in the form of concrete result oriented projects,

15. They strongly believe that capital cities have a wealth of experience in developing and implementing innovative measures and are best placed to lead and manage funding programmes, to coordinate with all stakeholders and institutions and advance the aims of the UCEU and of the European Union as a whole.

*In conclusion the participants declare that*

16. They shall continue to play a key role in the efficient implementation of the Union's Cohesion Policy, aware of the need for full utilization of the potential of every capital, each with their own diverse and often complex circumstances, each with a capacity to offer strong added value both to policy formulation and policy realization,

17. They consider that in the shifting priorities and challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the European Union's cohesion policy should, always in the spirit both of equity and solidarity, also become sharper and more focused in terms of the real needs of the inhabitants of the capital cities,

18. They maintain that territorial cohesion necessitates an integrated approach given that appropriate place- and scale-based approaches are the best tools to achieve integration of policies and interventions,

19. Equally, achieving the goals set out here implies adhering to the principle of subsidiary and seeking the maximum participation by local authorities, fully aware that as the tier of government closest to the citizens, they are aware of citizens' needs and are best placed to determine and respond to those needs,

20. They shall continue to work closely with all regional, national and EU institutions and participate in the debate to promote the goals of cohesion and in particular to attain inclusive and sustainable capital cities, seeking more effective coordination, synergies and partnerships.

Approved in Nicosia on 30 October 2009 by UCEU member cities of Amsterdam, Athens, Berlin, Bratislava, Brussels, Budapest, Copenhagen, Dublin, Helsinki, Lisbon, Ljubljana, Luxembourg, Madrid, Nicosia, Stockholm, Tallinn, Vienna and Warsaw.

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