The New Leipzig Charter and the JRC's urban activities

Exploring the role of science for policy post 2020

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Foreword

It is with great pleasure that the Secretariat of the European Urban Knowledge Network EGTC presents this study, commissioned by the Territorial Development Unit of the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission.

Under the 2020 German Presidency of the Council of the EU, the Ministers responsible for urban matters, the European Commission and key urban actors agreed on the governance principles and implementation instruments for sustainable urban development, as reflected in the newly adopted New Leipzig Charter. The political and strategic framework of the New Leipzig Charter offers a perspective from which to rethink the science-policy interface beyond 2020.

The research was conducted while the negotiations on the EU budget for the 2021-2027 period were still ongoing. Discussions about the European Commission's proposed new instrument, the European Urban Initiative, form part of these negotiations. With the aim to strengthen integrated and participatory approaches to sustainable urban development, the European Urban Initiative will create more synergies, improving efficiency, and building connections in the field of urban policy, research and practice.

Our hope is that this report's findings will provide a basis to further the discussion on cooperation between the urban research and policy spheres. We consider this cooperation as an essential element towards supporting evidence-driven policymaking and relevant stakeholders in the complex, evolving ecosystem that is EU urban matters.

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Acknowledgements

Executive Summary

This study investigates **the role that the Joint Research Centre (JRC) can play in supporting urban policymaking within the framework for sustainable urban development proposed by the New Leipzig Charter** (NLC). It analyses how the core urban activities of the Territorial Development Unit of the JRC (JRC.B.3) align with the NLC's overarching framework, and how these could be strengthened beyond 2020. The study considers both gaps and opportunities in the wider EU urban science-policy interface, triggering a **broader reflection on the role of science for policy in the post-2020 programming context**.

In fact, both the NLC and its Implementation Document, are closely linked with the post-2020 Cohesion Policy of the European Commission and the proposal for a European Urban Initiative (EUI). As a new instrument to de-fragment EU urban policy, research, and practice, the EUI will offer opportunities to establish an effective science-policy interface that supports urban policymaking at all governmental levels. In this context, the NLC strategically stimulates the debate about the role and potential of science for policy in the EU. In particular, it builds on **the need for 'Better knowledge'** as propagated by the Urban Agenda for the EU (UAEU), which the EUI also commits to support.

Against this background, the study considers it meaningful to align the urban activities of the JRC.B.3 with the priorities of the NLC and its Implementation Document. Such an exercise can help to further strengthen the evidence-base for sustainable urban development policies in the EU.

The New Leipzig Charter

The New Leipzig Charter provides a **non-binding strategic policy framework** for sustainable urban development in the EU which aims to mobilise **the transformative power of European cities for the common good**. Adopted on 30 November 2020 at the informal meeting of the Ministers responsible for urban matters, the Charter is accompanied by an Implementation Document. This strategic document calls for the collective action of EU urban actors at different governance levels in order to **ensure the continuation of the UAEU**, the main delivery mechanism of the NLC.

Embedded in strategic EU and global sustainability agendas, the NLC traces a range of **principles of good urban governance** needed in order to empower cities to transform: 1) urban policy for the common good; 2) an integrated approach; 3) participation and co-creation; 4) multi-level governance; and 5) a place-based approach. As articulated in the Charter, these five principles should be applied to the **three dimensions of European cities** (just; green; and productive; with digitalisation as a cross-cutting dimension) and to their **different spatial levels** (the neighbourhood; the given place/town/city; and the functional area). **Additional prerequisites** needed for cities to be empowered are strengthened urban governance and adequate policies and funding.

The urban dimension of EU policy and the post-2020 context

The NLC is one amongst several milestones achieved through intergovernmental cooperation on urban matters and enshrined in the so-called *urban acquis*. At the same time, a series of resolutions and decisions by European institutions has contributed to **consolidating the 'urban dimension' of EU policies**. In this respect, **the European Commission plays a cardinal role**, especially in terms of the support provided to the UAEU, from the very first pilot phases to its final assessment.

In fact, the post-2020 outlook of the UAEU also depends on the outcomes of the negotiations over the 2021-27 EU budget, including the Commission's new Cohesion Policy and **the proposal for the European Urban Initiative** under Article 10 of the new ERDF/CF Regulation. As a new instrument aimed at providing coherent support for all urban areas, building on the work of the thematic UAEU Partnerships, the EUI will

capitalise on existing synergies among EU urban actors. In particular, through one of its key strands, *b.2) support of knowledge, policy development and communication*, the EUI aims to **de-fragment urban knowledge sources and foster cooperation within the EU urban science-policy interface**. The work of the JRC.B.3, as an important provider of knowledge for policy is particularly relevant to two of the work streams of the EUI, namely, the creation of a *Knowledge Sharing Platform* to coalesce under one roof all EU urban knowledge sources; and the *support provided to the post-2020 UAEU*, to give legacy to its multilevel governance work.

Methodology

The study employs a qualitative methodology, combining secondary research with primary data analysis collected via key stakeholder interviews. It involves **a three-stage process** which combines:

1. *content analysis*, to appreciate the links between the NLC and the urban activities of the JRC.B.3;

2. a *fitness check*, based on the European Commission's evaluation criteria of effectiveness, relevance, coherence, and added value;

3. a *two-level gap analysis*, to explore both gaps within the JRC.B.3's work and opportunities within the wider EU urban science-policy interface.

The NLC and the urban activities of the JRC.B.3

The ongoing activities of the JRC.B.3, carried out by its cities team, are tailored to policymakers at different levels of government. The study involves the review of three central strands of activities / outputs coordinated by the cities team, within the scope of the Knowledge Centre for Territorial Policies (KC TP). These are:

1. **policy implementation support tools**, including the STRAT-Board; The Handbook of Sustainable Urban Development Strategies (2020); The European Handbook for SDG Voluntary Local Reviews (2020); and support provided to the UAEU;

2. **data analysis and modelling capacities**, including the Urban Data Platform plus (UDP+); the LUISA Territorial Modelling Platform; and the Re-Open EU portal;

3. **the Community of Practice on Cities (CoP-CITIES)**, including The Future of Cities report (2019 - ongoing); the City Science Initiative (CSI) and city labs; and the CoP-CITIES newsletter.

The analysis also integrates the review of a fourth transversal activity: **exploratory research (ER)**, including the *Citown* research project.

Each reviewed strand demonstrates **strong links with the key elements of the NLC**. Specifically, policy implementation support tools such as STRAT-Board, the SUD Handbook, or the VLRs Handbook can empower cities with 'Better knowledge' on policy guidelines, practices, funding instruments, and other resources. All these support tools show potential to strengthen urban governance models towards shared definitions of the common good.

Moreover, data analysis and modelling capacities allow policymakers to visualise, analyse, and compare territorial data and trends across different urban scales in Europe and according to different thematic dimensions. Platforms such as the UDP+ and LUISA contribute to the creation of a pan-European knowledge base to inform more evidence-driven, place-based policymaking. Particularly, LUISA has an important forecasting capacity, making it possible to anticipate future urban challenges and impacts.

Furthermore, the CoP-CITIES facilitates informal and regular exchanges between science and policymaking at the city and European levels, fostering co-creation, multi-

stakeholder participation, and multi-level dialogue. The CoP-CITIES also recognises the transformative power of urban areas to push forward societal change, supporting the capacity-building of cities in identifying and tackling urban challenges, via place-based, integrated and evidence-informed approaches.

Lastly, exploratory research on urban issues carried out by the JRC.B.3 has the potential to go beyond thematic questions and challenges identified in the NLC, offering the opportunity for scientific research to fulfil a forecasting role and to inform policymaking ahead of time with 'Better knowledge'.

Assessment findings

The fitness check shows that **the JRC B.3 provides unique services at the European level**; from the analysis and modelling of quantitative and qualitative territorial data, to the aggregation of knowledge on different instruments for localising SUD strategies, to fostering transnational science-policy exchange and collaboration, and the anticipation of future knowledge needs. In this respect, the cities team supports policymaking with knowledge that is both place-based *and* embedded in the overarching European context. This gives the JRC's activities a **strong added value**. Moreover, the application of the cities team's activities in the context of the NLC (and the future UAEU) – could be both **effective** – in providing aggregated knowledge for policy across thematic areas and governance levels – and **relevant** – in addressing knowledge needs for integrated, place-based, participatory urban development aimed at the common good. The fitness check also reveals that the different activities coherently complement each other, while showing **strong synergies with the vision of the NLC**: for cities to be empowered as vectors of change towards a more sustainable model.

Gaps and opportunities for cooperation within the EU urban science-policy interface(s)

The reviewed activities are in principle well-aligned with the vision for sustainable urban development provided by the NLC. In practice, **some gaps and challenges are noted** in relation to the knowledge support that the JRC can provide towards the realisation of the NLC.

Firstly, **the cities team's activities can be made more visible** to (and therefore more used by) all targeted urban stakeholders, particularly Member States – who, together with cities are proposed as key implementing parties of the NLC. In this respect, the involvement of national-level actors could enhance the potential for fostering the kind of multi-level dialogue needed to align policymaking across scales.

Secondly, **knowledge outcomes of the cities team's activities can be made more applicable by policymakers.** In fact, there is often a gap between scientific knowledge and its translation into policy recommendations. This calls for the expertise of intermediary organisations to make such a changeover and translate scientific outcomes into practical messages for policymaking.

Thirdly, the **institutional embeddedness of the JRC as a scientific body creates trade-offs**. Considering that the JRC's activities largely respond to knowledge demands *ad hoc* (based on needs of the Commission's policy DGs or of CoP-CITIES' members), this can limit the full capitalisation on the forecasting capacity of science to anticipate – and drive – future knowledge needs of policy.

In order to address these challenges, the study exposes both the **need and scope for cooperation** between key knowledge providers and users in the EU urban science-policy-practice interface(s). In fact, because of the multi-level, multi-sectoral nature of urban policymaking in the EU, there is no one singular science-policy interface but rather multiple ones, where science, policy and practice-based actors interact. The multiple synergies existing among knowledge providers operating in these different interfaces point to **opportunities for more structural forms of cooperation**, and therefore for

de-fragmentation of knowledge and efforts. Here, structural cooperation with both science-based and other actors can amplify the impact of the JRC's urban activities by enhancing their visibility, access, and relevance.

Conclusions and ways forward

As a strategic political document, **the New Leipzig Charter offers scope for science to fulfil an important foresight role**, which is especially **relevant to supporting the 'Better knowledge' pillar of the UAEU**, to which the NLC intends to give legacy.

Setting out a non-binding policy framework for the sustainable development of European cities, the NLC also urges the collective mobilisation of and cooperation between governmental and non-governmental actors, from policymakers at different levels, to practitioners and researchers. Indeed, **multi-level cooperation is envisaged as a key prerequisite** for the NLC and the (future) UAEU to be successful.

Considering the post-2020 programming context and the Commission's proposal for the EUI, concrete opportunities for cooperation among urban actors from the policy, science, and practice spheres emerge. In this respect, **rethinking the role of the science-policy interface** beyond 2020 becomes ever timelier.

1 Introduction

This study investigates the extent to which the Joint Research Centre (JRC), the European Commission's science and knowledge service, can support urban policymaking within the framework for a sustainable urban future proposed by the New Leipzig Charter[1] (NLC). Ultimately, the study aims to trigger a broader reflection on the role of the post-2020 EU urban science-policy interface in support of the strategic vision of the Charter.

Adopted under the 2020 German Presidency of the EU Council, ***The New Leipzig Charter – The transformative power of cities for the common good*** provides a non-binding policy framework for intergovernmental cooperation on sustainable urban development beyond 2020. Together with its **Implementation Document** (entitled *Implementing the New Leipzig Charter Through Multi-Level Governance: Next Steps for the Urban Agenda for the EU*), the NLC aims to ensure the continuation of multi-level governance and cooperation under a future Urban Agenda for the EU (UAEU).

These strategic documents are closely linked with the post-2020 Cohesion Policy of the European Commission, which will introduce new governance and funding schemes, including the **European Urban Initiative** (EUI). Functioning as a bridge between intergovernmental cooperation and the Commission's policies, the EUI will offer new opportunities to establish **an effective science-policy interface that supports urban policymaking at all governmental levels** (EC, 2019).

In fact, the NLC highlights the importance of EU support frameworks and mechanisms for achieving its vision, posing important questions for the EU science-policy interface in the context of post-2020 programming. By asking how existing urban knowledge providers and initiatives can help to create a more structural, data-driven knowledge base to better inform and design urban policies and actions, the NLC stimulates in important ways the debate about the function and potential of science for policy in the EU. This importantly builds on the need for 'Better knowledge' urged by the Urban Agenda for the EU, to which the NLC intends to give legacy.

As the European Commission's science and knowledge service, the JRC is an important science for policy provider, whose *raison d'être* is 'to bring evidence into the policymaking process' and, through this evidence, to 'produce an impact on EU policy' (JRC, 2016, p.14). The JRC's Territorial Development Unit (JRC.B.3) and its cities team contribute to and support the production and dissemination of scientific knowledge tailored to EU territorial policy needs, covering macro-regional, urban, rural, neighbourhood and development policies and their intersections.

In this sense, **the study considers aligning the current and future activities of the JRC.B.3 with the priorities of the NLC and its implementation document as key**. Such an alignment can contribute to stronger linkages between research and policymaking, and, ultimately, strengthen evidence-based sustainable urban development in the EU.

With reference to the role of science for policy in the EU, the **main research question** of the study is:

> *How do the current activities of the cities team align with the vision for a sustainable urban future as envisaged by the NLC (and its Implementation Document)?*

By answering this guiding question, the study also seeks to explore any **potential gaps** and **identify opportunities** for further alignment, considering the wider EU urban science-policy interface. In addition, it is analysed what role scientific research can play in support of policy as part of the NLC and against the backdrop of the EUI.

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[1] The latest, publicly available draft text of the NLC used in this report was presented and discussed with relevant stakeholders during the Directors-General Meeting on Urban Matters (DGUM) of 21 October 2020.

The urban activities of the JRC

Over the past few years, the JRC has gradually intensified its research focus on urban matters, establishing the *Knowledge Centre for Territorial Policies* (KC TP) to inform and support the wide spectrum of EU territorial policies, as well as EU thematic policies with a territorial outlook. As a Commission-wide initiative, the KC TP offers a variety of knowledge services (see **Figure 1**) supporting policymakers in Europe and beyond.

These services range from territorial data analysis and modelling activities, to policy guidance and policy implementation support tools, to fields studies and exploratory research, brought together in the Community of Practice on Cities (CoP-CITIES).

Figure 1. Activities and tools of the Knowledge Centre for Territorial Policies. The authors, adapted from Vitcheva, 2019.
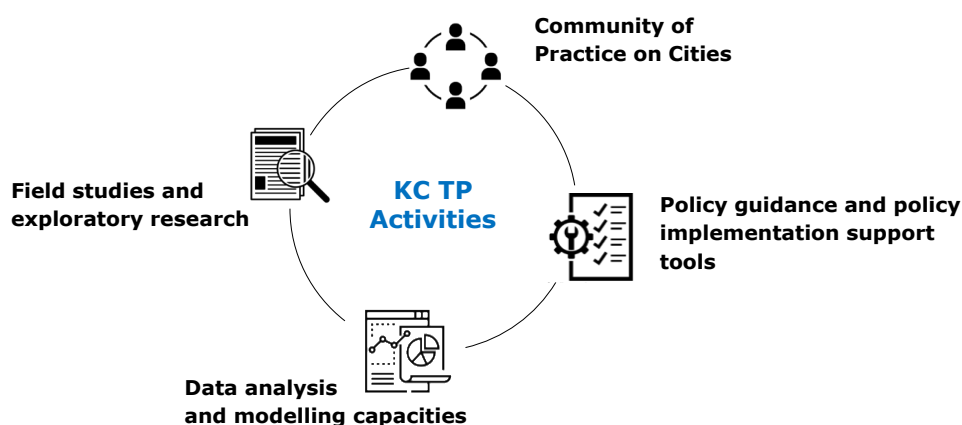
Within the scope of the KC TP, the JRC.B.3 cities team works with different Directorate-Generals (DGs) of the Commission, involving key European and global stakeholders through their services. Their mission is 'to inform policymakers, in a transparent, tailored, concise and independent manner, about the status and findings of the latest scientific evidence' (JRC, 2016, p.16).

Three[2] main strands of activities carried out by the JRC's cities team (within the scope of the KC TP) are central to the review. These comprise:

1. **Policy implementation support tools,** including the STRAT-Board; The Handbook of Sustainable Urban Development Strategies (2020); and The European Handbook for SDG Voluntary Local Reviews (2020);
2. **Data and tools under the Urban Data Platform plus (UDP+) and the Territorial Modelling Platform (LUISA);**
3. **The Community of Practice on Cities (CoP-CITIES),** including The Future of Cities report (2019 - ongoing); and the City Science Initiative (CSI).

The review of a fourth strand, **exploratory research (ER)**, as a transversal activity within the JRC, is also integrated into the analysis.

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[2] This selection does not represent the full breadth of JRC's urban activities but rather its current and most important knowledge for policy services. The desk research pointed to several additional outputs. The review of such products was integrated into the analysis.

2 The New Leipzig Charter (NLC)

The New Leipzig Charter – The transformative power of cities for the common good provides a non-binding policy framework and guiding policy principles to realise local and global sustainability agendas by mobilising the transformative power of European cities. It has been adopted under the German Presidency of the EU Council on 30 November 2020 at the informal meeting of the Ministers responsible for urban matters.

It calls for collective action on the part of all governmental and non-governmental actors in the EU: policymakers, practitioners and researchers. Alongside the NLC, a second political document has been adopted – the NLC's Implementation Document entitled *Implementing the New Leipzig Charter Through Multi-Level Governance: Next Steps for the Urban Agenda for the EU*. This document aims to ensure the continuation of the Urban Agenda for the EU (UAEU), which is generally regarded as the main instrument to implement the NLC's principles.

Key elements of the NLC

Reiterating the core message of the original *Leipzig Charter* (2007) – that we must move past the silo mentality and towards an integrated approach to urban development – the NLC capitalises on its contingent political momentum to leverage digitalisation, innovation, and green, just transitions. Against the backdrop of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and its *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs), the *New Urban Agenda* (NUA), the *Paris Agreement*, and the *European Green Deal*, among other milestones, the NLC provides a **non-binding, strategic policy framework for sustainable urban development of the European city**. In this sense, the NLC is strategically embedded in the European context, acknowledging the EU support for integrated urban development, the UAEU, as well as the *Territorial Agenda 2030.*[3]

For its goals to be achieved, it calls for enhanced cooperation between different territorial and governance scales, emphasising the **transformative power of cities** to realise the pertinent European and global agreements at the urban scale, **in pursuit of the common good**.[4] Its key elements are summarised below.

Figure 2. The NLC's framework for sustainable urban development in a nutshell. The authors, 2020.

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[3] A strategic document to strengthen EU territorial cohesion beyond 2020, to be finalised and approved under the German Presidency of the EU Council in December 2020. See: https://www.territorialagenda.eu/home.html.

[4] According to the latest available draft, the common good includes general welfare, reliable public services, as well as reducing and preventing new forms of inequalities, including social, economic, environmental and territorial inequalities (German Presidency of the EU Council, 2020).

By acknowledging the enduring validity of the original Leipzig Charter's principles focused on the integrated approach to city making, the NLC traces a broader range of **principles of good urban governance**: urban policy for the common good; an integrated approach; participation and co-creation; multi-level governance; and a place-based approach. Taken together, these five principles provide a powerful common ground from which all urban policy actors can work together towards wider scale objectives – like the SDGs and the European Green Deal.

According to the Charter, urban transformation is based on the integration of the social, ecological and economic dimensions of sustainable development (German Presidency of the EU Council, 2020). These **three dimensions of European cities** are reflected through the delineation of 'the just', 'the green', and 'the productive' city. As an increasingly important aspect of contemporary urbanism, **digitalisation** is added not as an individual dimension but rather as a major cross-sectoral trend affecting all dimensions of sustainable urban development (ibid.).

Similarly, **three spatial levels of European cities** are distinguished, reflecting the different scales at which citizens' everyday interactions take place: the neighbourhood, the given place/town/city (according to administrative and political boundaries), and the functional area. The respective needs and potentials of these scales are taken into account, demanding increased efforts at the European, national and regional levels to support cities unlocking their transformative power. In particular, the NLC's text fleshes out strengthened urban governance and adequate policies and funding as **key requirements in order to empower cities to transform**.

Policy milestones towards the urban dimension of EU policy

The 2007 Leipzig Charter as well as its 2020 successor have emerged within a dynamic policy development. **Urban matters in the EU are subject to inter-governmental coordination**. Correspondingly, the informal ministerial meetings organised during Council Presidencies have been the key forums for the development of the so-called **urban acquis**.[5]

2007 German Presidency	2008 French Presidency	2010 Spanish Presidency	2011 Hungarian Presidency	2015 Latvian Presidency	2016 Dutch Presidency	2020 German Presidency
Leipzig Charter	Marseille Declaration	Toledo Declaration	Territorial Agenda 2020	Riga Declaration	Pact of Amsterdam	New Leipzig Charter

Important milestone documents in this regard are:

- The 2007 **Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities**, promoting integrated urban development and employing a particular focus on deprived neighbourhoods;
- The 2008 **Marseille Declaration**, adopting the Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities[6] (RFSC);
- The 2010 **Toledo Declaration**, formulating the need for integrated urban regeneration in times of economic crisis;
- The 2011 **Territorial Agenda 2020**, 'the starting point for the discussions on the renewal of the territorial agenda' (van Lierop, 2020, p. 2) and at the same time 'only the latest in a long line of strategic documents' (ibid.) on the territorial

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[5] To be understood as 'a shared conceptual framework, leading to agreement on the objectives and principles of urban development' (van Lierop, 2015, p. 2). See: https://epthinktank.eu/2015/07/15/developing-an-eu-urban-agenda/.

[6] The RFSC is an online toolkit for local European authorities that are involved in or are willing to start a process of integrated and sustainable urban development. See: www.rfsc.eu.

dimension of policies as well as on the overarching objective of territorial cohesion within the EU;

– The 2015 **Riga Declaration,** outlining the prospects of an 'EU Urban Agenda' and highlighting the key role of small and medium-sized urban areas;

– The 2010 **Pact of Amsterdam,** formalising the UAEU working programme and launching the UAEU pilot phase with multi-level thematic Partnerships.

In parallel, **the 'urban dimension' of EU policies** has incrementally grown over recent years, with the aim of addressing urban matters from the perspective of EU-level policymaking, and mindful of the potential impact of (sectoral) EU policies on urban areas. European institutions' publications have both influenced and been influenced by this movement towards a greater focus on the urban in EU policies. Such publications include the European Parliament 23 June 2011 resolution on the European Urban Agenda and its Future in Cohesion Policy (2010/2158(INI)); the 9 September 2015 resolution on the urban dimension of EU policies (2014/2213(INI)); the European Committee of the Region's opinion Towards an Integrated Urban Agenda for the EU [OJ C 271 of 19 August 2014]; and the Implementation assessment of the Urban Agenda for the EU [OJ C 387 of 25 October 2018] (for a summary see: van Lierop, 2019, p. 6).

The European Commission plays a cardinal role in promoting this urban dimension and, in particular, in supporting the development and implementation of the UAEU. This is reflected, among other things, in its support and coordination role in the UAEU's pilot phase delivery (i.e. by way of coordinating the UAEU Technical Secretariat, made possible by joint Commission-EP funding worth EUR 2.5 million for the first three years; see van Lierop, 2018, p.5).

The post-2020 European urban dimension and the role of science for policy

The Urban Agenda for the EU has been proposed **as a valuable implementation instrument of the NLC** in the mandate and structures defined by the Implementation Document. However, its outlook as of late 2020 remains uncertain, and is linked to the outcomes of negotiations around the EU's 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF).[7]

As described in depth by the UAEU assessment published by the Commission in 2020, the Agenda can be described as a 'qualified success' (Ipsos Mori, Technopolis Group and Economisti Associati, 2020, p.107). While the application of an 'innovative' and – in the eyes of many – 'ground-breaking' (idem, p.109) multi-level and multi-stakeholder approach is regarded as its main achievement, several shortcomings remain: the uncertain implementation of Partnerships' actions, a 'lack of clear and transparent processes, requirements and specific objectives' (idem, p.111), and an uneven level of stakeholder engagement and limited outreach, to name the most pertinent.

In its proposal for a new Cohesion Policy framework for the 2021-2027 period, the European Commission highlighted the **need for an overarching framework 'to strengthen integrated and participatory approaches to sustainable urban development'**, and to provide a 'stronger link to relevant EU policies, in particular to Cohesion Policy' (2019, p.1). This framework is the **European Urban Initiative** (EUI). As a new instrument, under Article 10[8] of the ERDF/CF Regulation proposal[9], the EUI should provide 'coherent support for cities' (ibid.), building on the thematic priorities of

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[7] The seven-year financial plan to regulate the EU budget after 2020. See: https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/eu-budget/long-term-eu-budget/2021-2027_en.

[8] Art.10 of COM(2020) 452 final. 2018/0197(COD).

[9] The ERDF/CF Regulation proposal has been partly amended in May 2020 as part of the European Commission's response to the COVID-19 crisis. The latest text is available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/com_2020_452_en_act_v8.pdf.

the UAEU, addressing all urban areas. Originally, the EUI consisted of three strands. Only two remain after inter-institutional negotiations throughout 2019 and 2020:

a) support of innovative actions; and
b) support of capacity and knowledge building, policy development and communication.

The original strand c) is now combined with the revised strand b) (**support of knowledge, policy development and communication**), which encompasses 'the deepening and evidence-based demonstration of urban facts and policies together with capitalising and disseminating results of experiences and expertise "from the ground"' (EC, 2019, p.2). The JRC is explicitly mentioned, alongside other institutions, as one of the 'knowledge providers and initiatives' (ibid.) relevant for this strand.

As part of strand b.2 (a sub-strand of b)), the so-called **Knowledge Sharing Platform** (KSP), stands out as a future EUI work stream that could incorporate the JRC's (urban) activities. According to the (still relatively scarce) public information available on the overall EUI architecture and governance, the KSP should provide an interactive platform that would host and share all EUI activities' outputs, with a focus on making the vast horizontal and vertical urban knowledge of the EU accessible to a broad range of stakeholders. Among other things, the responsible Directorate General (DG REGIO) mentions 'Urban and Territorial Dashboards, databases of urban experts and good practices, [...biannual] survey[s] of cities' support needs, [and] links to other EU initiatives and programmes' (EC, 2020a) as examples that will fall under the KSP.

Figure 3. Proposal for a Knowledge Sharing Platform within the EUI. The authors, 2020; adapted from EC, 2020a.

Another foreseen work stream of the EUI is **support provided to the post-2020 UAEU.** This furthers the ambition of the NLC to continue the legacy of multi-level governance enshrined in the UAEU. However, the concrete activities – and their potential linkages to the JRC's (urban) activities – are yet to be published.

3 Methodology

This study takes a **qualitative approach,** being largely inductive and relying on the use of both secondary and primary research methods. It is defined by a **three-stage process**, which combines different analysis techniques.

Content analysis is employed to investigate to what extent the cities team's activities reflect and can contribute to the realisation of the key elements and concepts envisaged by the NLC (**Figure 2**). Facilitating the '*subjective* [authors' italics] interpretation of the content of text data' (Hsieh and Shannon, 2015, p.1278), content analysis allowed the scope of the urban activities of the JRC to be interpreted from an insider's perspective.

Building on the preliminary findings of the content analysis, the second research stage involves a **fitness check**[10] of the JRC's urban activities based on the established assessment framework and criteria defined in the European Commission's *Guidelines on Evaluation*[11] (2017). The selected activities are thus reviewed to assess (*ex-ante*) how they can support the framework for sustainable urban development promoted by the NLC, taking into account their *effectiveness*, *relevance*, *coherence*, and *added value* (see **Annex 1**).

A **two-level gap analysis** is undertaken to identify: a) gaps within the activities of the JRC's cities team in relation to the vision of the NLC; b) whether, within the wider EU science-policy context, these gaps can be filled by cooperating with other actors. By exploring both current gaps and complementarities among key actors in the field, it was possible to formulate recommendations for more structural cooperation within the post-2020 science-policy interface.

Secondary and primary data analysis

The study complemented secondary research with primary data collection through key stakeholder interviews. The analysis relied primarily on the collection and review of secondary data provided, upon request, by staff of the JRC.B.3 and sourced via desk research. Care was taken to note any potential bias in the sources provided by the JRC directly and via their communications channels (website, social media, etc.).

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[10] According to the European Commission (2017, p.52), a fitness check refers to 'an evaluation of a group of interventions [or activities] which have some relationship with each other', thus justifying a joint analysis. Fitness checks are meant to assess whether the group of activities is fit for purpose 'by assessing the performance of the relevant framework with respect to [proposed] policy objectives' (ibid.).

[11] See also: https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/law-making-process/planning-and-proposing-law/better-regulation-why-and-how/better-regulation-guidelines-and-toolbox_en.

Secondary research

Extensive secondary research was undertaken to review the relevant documents, including technical and non-technical reports, and other sources, such as workshops, conference presentations, etc., both online and as part of the JRC's offline archives. These data sources provided information on the B.3 Unit's mission, modus operandi, core activities and tools.

Single oral and written interviews

Primary data collection via single oral and written interviews with key stakeholders[12] was used to both validate findings from secondary research and retrieve information that otherwise would not have been accessible from written sources. Key stakeholder interviews, in line with the study's central aim, contributed to adding a critical, interpretive layer to the analysis (see **Annex 2**).

Limitations of the study

A series of limitations to the chosen research approach and methods can be identified. In part, these are inherent to the nature and scope of the study itself.

Firstly, the **limited time and investigative scope of the research** made employing any quantitative methods irrelevant. As the purpose of the research was to qualitatively assess (*ex-ante*) the urban activities of the JRC.B.3 in relation to the vision for a sustainable urban future envisaged by the NLC, quantitative evidence was not needed.

Secondly, the **small size of the interview sample** – resulting from strict time limits – meant that important perspectives on the research questions may have been missed.

Thirdly, **the selection of specific interviewees introduced a potential element of bias** which, in this study, could not be mitigated by choosing a larger sample nor by interviewing 'more objective' stakeholders (Yin, 2011).

Furthermore, because the main purpose of the interviews was to grasp the perspective of key figures in the field, **little attention was given to achieving age and gender diversity among interviewees**, limiting the representativeness of the research findings.

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[12] In order to identify interviewees, a purposive sampling approach was taken. The identified key stakeholders fulfil cardinal positions in the JRC.B.3 and other organisations, playing a role in the EU science-policy interface as both providers and consumers of urban scientific knowledge. While the list is not exhaustive, identified interviewees represents different perspectives within the field and have insider knowledge on both the normative and operational nature of science for policy activities within the EU.

4 The NLC and the urban activities of the JRC.B.3

The key outputs and ongoing activities of the JRC.B.3 are tailored to policymakers 'at different levels of government: from local to supranational' (Fioretti, C., 2020). Through these activities, and within the scope of the European Commission's Knowledge Centre for Territorial Policies (KC TP), the JRC's cities team contributes to filling important knowledge gaps relating to the urban dimension of European and, increasingly, local policymaking.

Policy implementation support tools
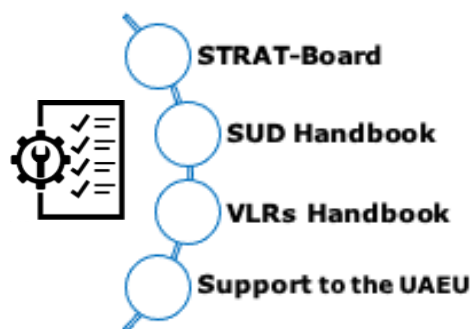
Through applied research activities that filter and make sense of the abundance of scientific knowledge(s) in the European sphere, the JRC strengthens the evidence base for policymaking in Europe and beyond (Vitcheva, 2019). In the urban realm, the B.3 cities team offers different **support services and tools to urban policy implementation and design in the EU**. These are based on processes of knowledge aggregation and management, through which practical messages for policymakers at the different European territorial scales are distilled. These tools are meant to bridge the gap between science and policy, thus linking policymaking with digestible and usable evidence.

Links with the New Leipzig Charter

The NLC is strategically embedded within both European and global agendas for sustainable development, advocating for the need to support cities in locally translating them. In this direction, tools such as STRAT-Board, the SUD Handbook, or the VLRs Handbook **offer a pan-European framework for cities to locally adapt, implement, and monitor strategies** in the framework of Cohesion Policy, the UAEU, or the 2030 Agenda, towards the SDGs. Thus, they can **empower cities with 'Better knowledge' on policy guidelines, funding instruments, and other resources to strengthen urban governance models towards** shared – European and global – definitions of **the common good**.

STRAT-Board

STRAT-Board consists of **an interactive, online platform mapping Sustainable Urban Development (SUD) and Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) strategies** implemented under the framework of Cohesion Policy 2014-2020 across Europe. Officially launched at the 2018 European Week of Regions and Cities (EWRC), STRAT-Board aims to offer a 'continuously updated state of play' (Pertoldi, 2018) on how European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) support integrated territorial – and urban – development. It maps more than a thousand strategies in the 28 EU Member States (now 27), enabling users to filter and explore their implementation based on different criteria including: type of strategy (SUD and non-SUD); type of funds; thematic objectives of Cohesion Policy 2014-20 tackled; territorial delivery mechanisms[13];

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[13] These include different mechanisms defined by Cohesion Policy 2014-2020. Among the SUD delivery mechanisms mapped are: the Operational Programmes (OP), the Priority Axis, Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI), and Community-led Local Development (CLLD). Among the non-SUD delivery mechanisms mapped are: ITI and CLLD.

territorial focus[14]; the percentage of population covered by strategy; and the percentage of ESIF contribution per strategy.

The Handbook of Sustainable Urban Development (SUD) Strategies

Complementary to STRAT-board is the Handbook of Sustainable Urban Development (SUD) Strategies.[15] This handbook aims to provide **methodological support for local authorities, Managing Authorities, and other relevant stakeholders involved in designing and implementing SUD strategies** (in line with art. 7[16] of the current ERDF Regulation and art. 9 of the future one). By unpacking the 'EU approach' to SUD under Cohesion Policy, the SUD Handbook supports stakeholders in adapting it to local contexts. Conceived as a handbook for 'policy learning on the place-based, integrated and strategic approach to urban development' (Fioretti, 2019), it analyses SUD strategies, linking (the urban dimension) of Cohesion Policy to the territorial governance of different European realities. By doing so, the SUD Handbook gives suggestions on how to design, implement and monitor effective strategies. It allows local policymakers to learn from data (STRAT-Board), practice (cities' experiences), and additional resources (existing guidelines or instruments on specific topics available at the international, European, national, and local level). These are presented and clustered according to **six core building blocks[17]**, which epitomise the six principles of the European integrated approach to urban development – the so called 'EU approach'. To various degrees, the Handbook's building blocks also reflect the scope and principles of the UAEU and the NLC (**Figure 2**) and can be seen as fostering a place-based (building block 2), participatory and multi-level governance (building block 3), and integrated approach (building block 4) to city-making, which is perceived as a collective transformative roadmap (building block 1) towards a state of desired change, supposedly, the 'common good'.

The European Handbook for SDG Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs)

One of the flagship Science for Policy reports of the JRC.B.3, the European Handbook for SDG Voluntary Local Reviews[18], represents **a key tool to support local authorities in preparing reviews of SDG implementation** known as voluntary local reviews (VLRs). It provides 'examples of official and experimental indicators that municipalities can use to monitor local SDG implementation' (IISD, 2020b) based on fourteen reviews presented since 2018 in contribution to the 2030 Agenda. The indicators offer local authorities the opportunity to 'establish baselines for their communities, compare action with that of other cities, and monitor their progress on addressed specific challenges' (ibid.).

Thus, the European Handbook for SDG VLRs aims **to truly support the localisation of the 2030 Agenda**, offering city administrations a roadmap with guiding steps, from establishing the management method, to setting up co-creation meetings with stakeholders, to evaluating the project. Through this process, local implementers share experiences, challenges and lessons learnt, and explore possible partnerships to address any current gaps or areas for improvement. The methodological support provided by the Handbook in setting up place-based VLR processes (from design, to implementation and evaluation) can also capacitate local governments to engage with communities, thereby 'strengthening the accountability and inclusiveness of their policymaking' (IISD, 2020a).

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[14] Including: 1) areas within a city / town (districts or neighbourhoods); 2) cities, towns or suburbs; 3) functional areas; 4) city network(s); 5) regions; 6) other specific territories.

[15] Also referred to in this report of 'Handbook of SUD Strategies' or 'SUD Handbook'.

[16] Namely, Article 7 ERDF makes integrated sustainable urban development (ISUD) a compulsory feature of Cohesion Policy implementation [Regulation (EU) No 1301/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013; amended on 23 April 2020 in response to COVID-19].

[17] Namely: 1) the strategic dimension; 2) the territorial focus; 3) governance, which is multi-level, multi-stakeholder, bottom-up and participatory; 4) cross-sectoral integration; 5) funding and finance; 6) monitoring.

[18] Hereafter also referred to as the 'Handbook for SDG VLRs 'or 'VLRs Handbook'.

In fact, VLRs can be seen as an important vehicle to support local action, and to further the common good, as enshrined in the SDGs.

Like other policy implementation support tools, this Handbook constitutes an evolving project whereby the JRC aims to test the data and methods presented with selected cities, as a way to 'update and improve the methodology for local SDG monitoring' (IISD, 2020b).

As a Commission service, the JRC has provided general as well as specific knowledge support to the UAEU Partnerships. In particular, the JRC is a **partner in the UAEU Partnership on Security in Public Spaces and in the UAEU Partnership on Sustainable Use of Land and Nature-Based Solutions** (SUL-NBS). To support the latter partnership, the cities team provided important data inputs through the modelling capacities of the LUISA platform. As put forward in the Partnership's Action Plan:

> 'urban planning is a strongly structured discipline well rooted in… European urban history and overlaps with many other policy areas. Scientific research on urban planning topics is active at European level and the Partnership has strongly relied on the support of academic structures connected to the partners' (UAEU Partnership on SUL-NBS, 2018, p.11).

As part of its support to the UAEU, **the JRC.B.3 also contributed to The State of European Cities report** (2016), which used territorial impact assessment (TIA) to analyse the performance of European cities 'with regard to the priority themes of the Urban Agenda for the EU [...] as well as the 2030 Urban Sustainable Development Goal of the United Nations to make cities safe, inclusive, resilient and sustainable' (p.11).

Data and tools under the Urban Data Platform plus (UDP+) and modelling capacities

UDP+

LUISA

Re-Open EU
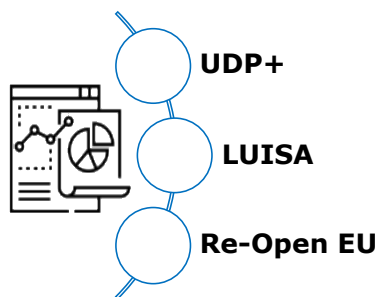
As part of the KC TP's advanced analytical and modelling capacities, the cities team directly manages and coordinates two important platforms: the **Urban Data Platform plus** (UDP+) and the **LUISA Territorial Modelling Platform**. Data and tools under these online environments are strongly interlinked and can support EU urban policymaking across different governance levels with an analytical and quantitative evidence base.

Links with the New Leipzig Charter

The UDP+ represents a unique platform to **visualise, analyse, and compare territorial data and trends across different urban scales** in Europe – from the city, to the functional and metro-regional level – **and according to different thematic dimensions**. More than aggregating data to measure the performance of territorial actors, from individual cities to Member States and the EU as a community, against national, European and global sustainability agendas, it **contributes to building a pan-European knowledge base to inform more evidence-driven, place-based policymaking**. Similarly, modelling activities via LUISA have an important **forecasting capacity** which can anticipate urban challenges and impacts, thereby **providing 'Better knowledge' for policy**.

The UDP+

Launched at the 2016 EWRC, the UDP+ was presented at the Habitat III Conference of the UN, in Quito, 'as part of the EU contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals and towards the global Urban Agenda' (Baranzelli, 2017). It consists of a joint initiative of the JRC and DG-REGIO, providing 'a single access point to common indicators [data] on the status and trends of more than 800 cities in Europe' (Baranzelli, 2017). As **a territorial and urban data visualisation platform**, the UDP+ is seen by the JRC as a key tool to strengthen the EU (urban) science-policy interface (Baranzelli, 2017). Indeed, through its *Territorial Dashboard* (T-BOARD), accessible via the 'My Place' tab, and the previously mentioned *STRAT-Board,* accessible via the 'Strategies' tab, **users can view and compare data across a range of social, economic and environmental variables for any given location(s)**. These include data on current states of play, trends and strategies (covering different urban verticals, from social inclusion, to climate change, to ageing, etc.). By gathering thematic information European cities, Member States, and regions, the UDP+ aims to become a central European repository 'for all quantitative information available at the regional or sub-regional / urban level' in the coming years (Auteri, D., 2020). It plans to use a 'Territorial Interoperability Framework'[19] (currently under development), which will make it possible to combine information from different data providers, such as EUROSTAT, national or local statistical offices, research institutions, regional and local authorities and any other authoritative source of information – both administrative and experimental.

LUISA – Territorial Modelling Platform

The LUISA Territorial Modelling Platform is employed for *ex-ante* evaluation of European policies, measures, and initiatives that might have a direct or indirect territorial impact. It is referred as a tool for Territorial Impact Assessment[20] (TIA) in the frame of the Better Regulation Package[21] of the Commission. LUISA is based on the concept of land function[22] for cross-sector integration and for the representation of complex system dynamics. Beyond a traditional land use model, LUISA adopts a new approach towards activity-based modelling based upon the endogenous dynamic allocation of population, services, and activities.

LUISA's ultimate products are **'spatially explicit' indicators**, that are clustered according to specific themes (environmental, social, economic, etc.) at various level of aggregation (EC, 2019b), from the very granular to the macro-regional. These indicators are fed into the UDP+ for access, sharing and visualisation. LUISA is also a useful instrument for foresight activities because of the possibility to build what-if scenarios, hence providing quantitative inputs to e.g. the discussion on the future of cities.

The platform has been widely applied in the evaluation of the Social, Economic and Territorial Cohesion of the EU and is currently employed for the characterisation of strategic corridors and urban systems in Africa.

Re-open EU

Adapting the data foundations of the UDP+, the JRC.B.3 has recently been responsible for the development and maintenance of Re-Open EU[23], a **web portal providing**

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[19] The tool currently covers (for a specific set of indicators) all cities in the world that fall under the latest UN definition of cities from March 2020.

[20] See: https://ec.europa.eu/info/files/better-regulation-toolbox-33_en.

[21] See: https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/law-making-process/planning-and-proposing-law/better-regulation-why-and-how_en.

[22] A land function can be both temporally and spatially dynamic, influenced by societal, economic or environmental processes. See: https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/publication/luisa-dynamic-land-functions-catalogue-indicators-release-i-eu-reference-scenario-2013-luisa.

[23] See: https://reopen.europa.eu/en.

essential information on the safe relaunch of free movement and tourism across Europe during COVID-19. This platform aggregates up-to-date country-specific information from the Commission and Members States on the COVID-19 health situation, on restrictions in services and other travelling-related measures. Thus, Re-open EU serves both citizens and policymakers to browse and compare information on safe travelling and policy practices across Europe.

The Community of Practice on Cities (CoP-CITIES)

The 'community'

The Future of Cities

The CSI

City labs

CoP-CITIES newsletter
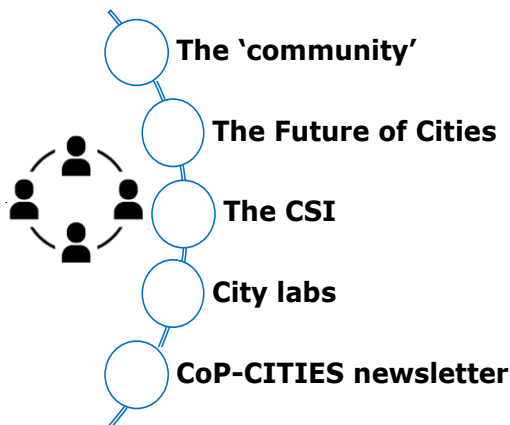
The Community of Practice on Cities (CoP-CITIES), co-chaired by JRC and DG REGIO, aims to create a virtual and physical **space for exchange and collaboration between different urban stakeholders**, complementing, from a more grassroots perspective, the policy reach of the KC TP. Launched at the 2018 EWRC, it consists of a network of urban stakeholders at various scales 'supporting knowledge exchange and peer learning on vital urban issues' (Baranzelli, C., 2020). Its virtual environment currently functions as a dissemination tool for a range of initiatives, projects, and outputs, including The Future of Cities report (2019), the City Science Initiative, city labs, and a newsletter.

Links with the New Leipzig Charter

The CoP-CITIES fosters **co-creation, multi-stakeholder participation and multi-level dialogue** – key elements of the NLC – by facilitating informal exchanges between science and policymaking at the city and European levels. Recognising the transformative power of urban areas to push forward societal change, the CoP-CITIES **supports the empowerment and capacity-building of cities in identifying and tackling urban challenges via place-based, integrated and evidence-informed approaches.**

The 'community'

As a community of practice, the CoP-CITIES brings together ongoing work and expertise on cities by JRC and DG REGIO, with the latter offering policy knowledge and the former providing scientific and technical guidance (Baranzelli, C., 2020). It is open to external stakeholders, from cities to networks of cities, NGOs, international organisations as well as research bodies.

It was created to facilitate 'a regular and frequent informal dialogue with stakeholders', **ensuring that the city-related activities of the KC TP effectively reach and are informed by stakeholders on the ground (ibid)**. In this respect, the CoP-CITIES is seen by the Commission as a key tool to strengthen European policies related to cities (EC, n.d.), that is, by acting as an overarching collaboration broker between relevant urban stakeholders. Its future goal is to not only link researchers and policymakers in the urban sphere, but also 'urban communities who might not have a permanent presence or role in the city' (EC, n.d.). In this sense, its 'community' constitutes **a bottom-up arrangement** that is complementary to more 'formal organisational arrangements such as internal Commission inter-service groups and established networks working on urban issues' (ibid.).

The Future of Cities report

The CoP-CITIES website acts as a platform extension to The Future of Cities report (2019), a 'truly key milestone' and '**the very first collaborative product of the CoP-CITIES**' (Baranzelli, C., 2020). Within the framework of the KC TP, The Future of Cities report is one of 'a wider series of flagship Science for Policy reports by the JRC' (Vandecasteele et al, 2019, p.10), produced with inputs from members of the CoP-CITIES, under the initiative of the JRC and DG REGIO. As an ongoing project, the Future of Cities wants 'to raise open questions and steer discussions on **what the future of cities can, and should be'** (idem, p.4). It identifies 'both the key challenges cities will have to address and the strengths they can capitalise on' (idem, p.10), covering a number of thematic areas, from housing and climate action, to citizen engagement in policymaking and digitalisation. Supported by an online living platform, the report is continuously updated[24] via 'additional analyses, discussions, case studies, comments and interactive maps' (ibid.).

The City Science Initiative (CSI)

Originating in 2019 under the leadership of the City of Amsterdam and a sub-group of stakeholders at the time partially involved in the CoP-CITIES (including Chief Scientific Officers[25] from single city administrations), the City Science Initiative (CSI) is now an integral part of the CoP-CITIES and is open to all interested stakeholders (Baranzelli, C., 2020). It works as **a networking platform aimed at strengthening the role of the science-policy continuum in addressing urban challenges**, contributing to the development of a 'structured approach to evidence-informed policymaking at cities' level' (CoP-CITIES, May 2020; EC, 2020b). It does this by providing opportunities – in the form of online repositories, meetings, workshops and co-produced reports – for 'cities, city networks, experts and the services of the European Commission to reinforce their cooperation' (EC, 2020b). It relies on a network of European City Science Officers (CSOs), who are professionals from more than twenty participating EU cities 'working at the interface between city-policies and research' (Nevejan, 2020, p.18).

City labs

City labs consists of **policy-research projects undertaken by the B.3 cities team in collaboration with specific city administrations**. They are a key product of the CSI, stemming partially from the requests and needs of individual cities and partially 'from the JRC's availability to provide support and put to use its knowledge in concrete and applied cases' (Baranzelli, C., 2020). A case in point is the city lab on the financialisation of housing carried out with the municipality of Amsterdam in 2019, which fed into the exploratory research project *Citown* (see below).

Bimonthly CoP-CITIES Newsletter

Launched in May 2020, the CoP-CITIES bimonthly newsletter serves as **an informative snapshot of the JRC's work on cities and a way to involve members** via callouts and an event calendar (CoP-CITIES, September 2020).

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[24] Currently, the report is being updated via three thematic CoP-CITIES briefs on 'Shrinking Cities', 'Urban-rural interactions', and 'Cities fit for the digital age', selected in consultation with the members of the CoP-CITIES during the summer of 2020. Part of this update will also involve incorporating territorial changes triggered by COVID-19.

[25] Professionals working on the interface between city-policies and research.

Exploratory Research

Exploratory research

In addition to the reviewed activities and tools, as part of its 2030 Strategy, the JRC engages in exploratory research (ER), defined by 'a "bottom up process" where DG JRC scientists [...] propose ideas for projects thematically linked to EU policy' and 'engage in **blue sky thinking which may challenge accepted paradigms'** (JRC, 2016, p.10). As explained by the JRC.B.3, in the framework of Horizon 2020, ER is a direct action that allows the JRC to 'pursue excellence' by building up novel scientific competences and knowledge to respond to future policy demands.

Although the current capacity of the JRC to spontaneously undertake research in particular areas is limited by available funds and perceived relevance for the Commission, ER was identified as **a transversal activity undertaken by the cities team to amplify impact on urban policy**, and, in particular, **to contribute to policy design with novel thinking**.

Links with the New Leipzig Charter

ER has the potential to provide scientific evidence for the different thematic dimensions of cities highlighted by the NLC. Going **beyond thematic issues and challenges** identified in the NLC, ER could also offer the **opportunity for scientific research to fulfil a stronger forecasting role**, thus informing policymaking ahead of time with 'Better knowledge'.

Citown

The exploratory research project *Citown* resulted in the study 'Who owns the city? Exploratory research activity on the financialisation of housing in EU cities' (2020). The study combines case studies of seven EU cities with findings from a city lab established with the city of Amsterdam in 2019 and data on institutional investments on housing, exploring the phenomenon of housing financialisation from a cross-sectoral, multi-stakeholder perspective. The study largely confirms the assumption that housing financialisation has a negative effect on housing affordability, highlighting the need for better and more harmonised data across the EU in order to unravel the dynamics behind it.[26]

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[26] See also the chapter on affordable housing of The Future of Cities report (2019): https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/publication/eurscientific-and-technical-research-reports/future-cities.

Assessment findings

The urban activities of the JRC.B.3 help to bridge the science-policy gap at the urban and regional level in a variety of ways. By improving and expanding harmonised data on EU cities, the JRC's cities team performs analyses on these data, thus strengthening the impact of EU support frameworks, such as Cohesion Policy, and global agreements, such as the SDGs. For example, by consolidating the EU knowledge base on SUD urban indicators and strategies via the STRAT-Board, the JRC effectively facilitates discussions related to ERDF/CF investments for urban areas departing from an empirical basis (Auteri, D., 2020).

Research and consultation activities within the scope of the CoP-CITIES, such as those carried out as part of The Future of Cities report or the CSI, can also actively **further the NLC's principle of participation and co-creation**, contributing to empowering cities to strengthen their policies and (good) urban governance. Similarly, the SUD Handbook and the VLRs Handbook provide data-driven analyses of territorial trends and examples of urban strategies implemented by European cities, which allow their target audiences (local policymakers and Managing Authorities) to learn from practice and **locally adapt both EU and global agendas for sustainable development**.

In this sense, tools such as the **SUD Handbook** have been **instrumental to defining EU place-based, integrated urban development** – which lies at the core of the NLC – via an evidence-driven approach, mainstreaming the idea in Europe (Fioretti, C., 2020).

At the same time, **some challenges to effectively supporting the NLC's framework are observed**. In fact, Member States (together with cities) will be the main actors implementing the NLC, while the main focus of the reviewed activities lies with cities and regional territories. As a result, national authorities, who could, in principle, benefit from the knowledge and tools produced by the cities team, might not be fully aware of their existence. In turn, the priorities and knowledge needs of the national level might not be fully reflected in these services. In this respect, **effectiveness could be improved by further exploring to what extent the national level can and should be taken into account**.

Another challenge to effectiveness relates to **expanding the visibility of the cities team's activities in order to reach relevant stakeholders**, in particular, national level actors and cities outside Cohesion Policy and other EU programmes. In this sense, **engagement and communication activities via the CoP-CITIES could be enhanced**, in line with the aim of the CoP-CITIES to develop into a one-stop-shop for urban stakeholders to come together and learn. Currently, the set-up of the platform[27] limits opportunities for spontaneous networking, making interactions within the 'community' reliant on the mediating and interest-matching role of JRC (Baranzelli, C., 2020).

In addition to reflecting the NLC's **emphasis on a place-based, integrated approach to urban development**, the urban activities of the JRC.B.3 are **relevant to different elements of the NLC**, including the three spatial levels of European cities – the neighbourhood, the city according to administrative and political boundaries, and the functional area – as well as their three dimensions – just, green, and productive, and digitalisation as a cross-sectoral dimension.

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[27] For privacy reasons and prerequisites of the European Commission, no information about members of the CoP-CITIES can be made public for example.

For example, by **presenting the three spatial focuses of European cities**[28], the SUD Handbook recognises different methodological challenges faced by policymakers, especially concerning neighbourhoods, politically fragmented FUAs, and urban-rural linkages (ibid, pp.51-52). Similarly, **thematic analyses** undertaken as part of the UDP+ or the ongoing consolidation of The Future of Cities report can **help urban stakeholders to understand the multifaceted nature of urban challenges in Europe**. Here, the JRC's focus on strengthening the evidence-base of EU policy as regards different sectors and thematic areas, from the environmental to the social, to the economic is particularly relevant (Fioretti, C., 2020).

Similarly, the data analysis and modelling capacities of the cities team are unique in Europe when it comes to aggregating key territorial data sources under one roof. Based on these data, both territorial trends and strategic models developed by the JRC can address current and future urban knowledge needs at different scales. **Platforms such as the UDP+** enable policymakers across governance levels to access data about their own cities and towns, thus **contributing to making policy more relevant to urban realities**, in other words, more place-based.

In relation to future trends, the **forecasting capacity** of the JRC can be demonstrated by ongoing work as part of The Future of Cities report and the CSI, including efforts to identify future urban challenges in housing, mobility, service provision, health, and the environment (Nevejan, 2020). The CSI's mapping of the impacts of COVID-19 and the creation of a repository[29] of tools to help cities and local governments deal with the crisis is an example of this. In this regard, collaboration within the CoP-CITIES can help to capitalise on such forecasting capacity to anticipate the knowledge needs of local authorities, **providing 'Better knowledge' for policy** based on both scientific evidence and practice.

However, some **challenges to relevance** remain. As a scientific body embedded in the European Commission and linked to its policy DGs, the JRC's research activities are steered by knowledge needs from within the Commission, which might **not always reflect the knowledge needs of the national level or of stakeholders on the ground**. Similarly, in the case of exploratory research proposals, funding is obtained based on selection by the Commission, limiting, to some extent, the capacity of the JRC to spontaneously explore new topics.

Lastly, relevance could be strengthened by **engaging actors outside the urban policymaking sphere**, such as citizens, community groups and other actors from civil society. This could make the urban activities of the JRC more relevant to urban realities on the ground. In this respect, the CoP-CITIES' potential for involving the so-called 'unusual suspects' could be further tapped into.

Coherence

As highlighted in the review of previous criteria, the urban activities and tools of the cities team coalesce under one broader aim: **to bridge the urban science-policy gap**, making urban policymaking more evidence-driven, place-based, integrated, and multi-level, **in line with the overarching vision of the NLC**. In this sense, the different activity strands complement one another. They also respond to the needs and aspirations defined by the European approach to urban policymaking, from filtering existing knowledge and strengthening the evidence base for policy (via policy implementation support tools, e.g. STRAT-Board, etc.) to visualising data and trends (via

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[28] Namely, 1) districts and/or neighbourhoods; 2) cities, towns or suburbs; 3) functional areas or multiple municipalities (Fioretti et al., 2020, p.51).
[29] See:
https://docs.google.com/viewerng/viewer?url=https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/communities/sites/jrccties/files/csi_covid19_repository_tools_and_information_9.pdf.

the UPD+ and LUISA), to bringing cities to the table (via the CoP-CITIES), and to providing better knowledge (via exploratory research).

To different degrees, the reviewed **activities show coherence with specific elements of the NLC**. For instance, the production of the SUD Handbook involved a consultative, participatory process where the JRC and DG REGIO came together with cities, Managing Authorities, networks and research centres to 'validate' the challenges, examples, resources, and recommendations presented in the six building blocks. Similarly, the CoP-CITIES provides a communication and engagement channel that does not simply transmit information from the JRC to the wider urban field as a one-way transaction. Rather, the **CoP-CITIES** can act as **a stimulator of participation and co-creation**; these being a fundamental part of a **multi-stakeholder, place-based approach**.

Added Value

The JRC is a **key knowledge provider to EU policymaking** and (amongst many other topics) brings forward key insights on EU urban matters, **supporting a pan-European approach to urban development.** This is important since, due to the subsidiarity principle, the EU 'does not technically have a mandate for urban policy', but 'does have a role in promoting the importance of cities and local governments to meet today's global challenges' (Fioretti, C., 2020).

Before 2016, when the JRC started intensifying its activities on urban issues, no comparable tools aggregating territorial data at the European level (i.e. the UDP+), reflecting the urban dimension of Cohesion Policy (i.e. the SUD Handbook), or mapping the effectiveness and funding mechanisms of Cohesion Policy behind different urban strategies (i.e. STRAT-Board) existed. These tools are increasingly contributing to **making the EU approach to urban development clearer** and to reinforcing it (Fioretti, C., 2020). Similarly, data modelling, mapping and visualisation tools, such as those offered by LUISA, the UDP+, and the STRAT-Board, allow users **to look at issues and model future strategies via a uniquely pan-European lens**, looking also at cross-border issues when needed (e.g. as allowed for by Re-Open EU).

Taken together, these activities offer **a mechanism by which territorial (and urban) policymaking can be made more multi-level**, offering both a 'zoomed-out' EU view and a 'zoomed-in' picture of the local level. Via the CSI, the Future of Cities project, and city labs, the JRC also shows the **potential for greater dynamic collaboration between the urban science and policy spheres**, to the benefit of both.

At the same time, **some of the activities carried out by the cities team are**, in similar formats, **also undertaken by other organisations in the field**. For example, by increasing dialogue with cities via activities and initiatives within the CoP-CITIES, the JRC seems 'to venture into the space that URBACT occupies as a community of practice on sustainable urban development' (Morgan, N., 2020). Similarly, the cities team's work on future urban issues through The Future of Cities project has strong synergies with the work of JPI UE on *Driving Urban Transitions*[30], through which individual actors from city administrations, academia, the private sector, and local initiatives are engaged via the AGORA[31] platform (Noll, M., 2020). While these can be seen as complementary, in that the target groups are not necessarily the same[32], **more emphasis should be placed on cultivating and building on synergies with other actors**, whether from the science or practice-based fields.

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[30] A public-public partnership under development by JPI UE in the framework of the next European Research and Innovation Framework Programme – Horizon Europe. The partnership's aim is to strengthen efforts towards sustainable urban development and bring knowledge and evidence into action. See: https://jpi-urbaneurope.eu/driving-urban-transitions-to-a-sustainable-future-dut/.

[31] The Agora is JPI UE's Stakeholder Involvement Platform. See: https://jpi-urbaneurope.eu/agora/.

[32] For example, the JRC directly targets cities receiving EU funding for SUD, while URBACT targets more broadly cities of different sizes, not necessarily receiving EU funds.

Gaps and opportunities for cooperation within the EU science-policy interface(s)

The JRC.B.3 provides unique services at the European level: analysis and modelling of data via the UDP+ and the LUISA platform; aggregation of knowledge on different instruments for localising SUD strategies via the STRAT-Board, the SUD Handbook, and the VLRs Handbook; and transnational science-policy exchange and collaboration via the CoP-CITIES and associated initiatives. In fact, it allows for the analysis of cross-border issues and informs strategies in a way that is potentially both place-based *and* embedded in the overarching European context. As qualified by different interviewees, this gives the JRC's services a **strong added value**. Moreover, the application of the JRC's urban activities in the context of the NLC (and the future UAEU) could be both **effective** – in providing aggregated knowledge for policy across thematic areas and governance levels – and **relevant** – in addressing knowledge needs for integrated, place-based, participatory urban development aimed at the common good, as called for by the NLC. The fitness check also reveals that the different activities coherently complement each other, showing **strong synergies with the vision of the NLC**: for cities to be empowered as vectors of change towards a more sustainable model.

Zooming in: current gaps in the JRC's urban activities

The cities team of the JRC.B.3 stands out as a key provider and aggregator of urban knowledge for policymaking both at the European and, increasingly, at the local level. Nevertheless, some gaps are noted in relation to the NLC, especially in terms of the effectiveness and relevance of the (knowledge) support that the JRC can provide towards its implementation.

1. **Knowledge services and outputs could be more visible, making possible their wider application (by all potential users)**

   The knowledge for policy services provided by the JRC's cities team are widely known and used from within the European Commission, particularly by relevant policy DGs, and increasingly by cities themselves, for instance in the framework of Cohesion Policy. However, not all potential users are engaged in their development and delivery, especially at the national level.

   In this respect, the cities team's activities could be made more visible to potential users. In particular, national level policymaking could benefit from the knowledge aggregated and produced via the UDP+, LUISA, or the STRAT-Board. National authorities could, for example, be better included in consultation processes for the design, implementation and evaluation of the JRC's activities / tools. Similarly, within the CoP-CITIES, which connects different DGs of the Commission with European organisations and local urban stakeholders such as city administrations and networks of cities, dialogue with Member States was never actively sought (Baranzelli, C., 2020). While this reflects the specific focus on the role and importance of cities at the EU level, the involvement of Member States could enhance the potential for fostering the kind of multi-level dialogue needed to align policymaking across scales, including the national one.

2. **Accessibility of knowledge can be dependent on technical expertise**

   The knowledge base of platforms such as the UDP+ or LUISA might call for further 'translation' work in order to be accessed and understood by all potential users (including policymakers at the national, regional and local level). As noted by Gaudron, M. and Bizarro, P. (2020), there is often 'a missing link between scientific

research, evidence produced and policy recommendations' which requires the technical expertise of mediator organisations (e.g. CEMR, EUROCITIES, ICLEI, OECD, etc.) to understand the work of researchers and 'translate it into policy proposals' (ibid.). In this context, 'translation' refers to the need of adapting knowledge in a way that is understandable by non-technical actors. Translation in other languages of the EU could also be relevant in this respect.

3. The institutional embeddedness of a knowledge service creates trade-offs

The institutional embeddedness of the JRC often means that research is driven by policy demands originating from within the Commission, and – more recently – from urban areas, as part of the CoP-CITIES. Arguably, the scientific activities of the JRC respond to knowledge demands *ad hoc* (based on needs of policy DGs or members of the CoP-CITIES) and this direction is seldom inverted. In other words, there has been less room for the JRC to fully capitalise on its forecasting capacity and anticipate future knowledge needs of (urban) policymaking.

Zooming out: opportunities within the NLC and the post-2020 science-policy interface

From interviews with key stakeholders in the European urban science-policy field, it emerged that **there is no one singular science-policy interface** but rather multiple ones. Because of the multi-level, multi-sectoral nature of urban policymaking in the EU, different science-policy interfaces can be observed, depending on the governance level and type of policy in question (Noll, M., 2020). This finding exposes the need and scope for cooperation between key knowledge providers and users in this field, shedding light on possible synergies, complementarities and opportunities.

1. More structural cooperation among science-policy actors can contribute to de-fragmenting urban knowledge sources and building on synergies

The JRC's focus on urban issues has intensified in the past four years, following the launch of the UDP+. In the wider EU urban science-policy interface(s), the JRC is, however, only one among different knowledge providers. Together with ESPON, JPI UE, the OECD, among others, the JRC performs an important function in producing and aggregating knowledge that is useful for urban policymakers in the EU. Other important actors fulfilling this function include universities and independent research entities, upon whose work both cities and national authorities rely for informing their policies (Buchholz, T., 2020).

While there are several instances in which cooperation among these actors has proven successful in building on synergies and expertise, this most often occurs on a case-by-case basis. For example, in line with current administrative regulations, the cooperation between ESPON and the JRC has spanned different activities and was instrumental to the delivery of key ESPON tools and projects[33] (van Herwijnen, M., 2020). Within the EUI, these types of cooperation could be made more structural (ibid.) and useful in terms of achieving EU policy goals based on shared ambitions. Synergies between the JRC and JPI UE are also evident, particularly in relation to 'mobilising and supporting cities and urban areas across Europe' (Noll, M., 2020). In the context of the NLC, structural cooperation among science-policy

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[33] For example, the ESPON's SUPER project used the LUISETTA model developed by the JRC's cities team, which allowed for land use simulation of three urbanisation scenarios in 2050 that could not otherwise be modelled. See: https://www.espon.eu/super.

actors 'can significantly contribute, not only to creating [better] knowledge, but [can also] offer […] opportunities for experimentation' (ibid.) and thus co-creation.

2. Cooperation with urban actors outside the science-policy interface can strengthen scientific policy support, preventing fragmentation

Within the scope of both the NLC and the EUI, there are also opportunities to cooperate with 'mediating actors [...] such as ICLEI, EUROCITIES, and EC programmes such as ESPON and URBACT' (Noll, M., 2020), whose work might have more direct interfaces with policymaking at the local, regional, and national level vis-à-vis the EU level, which the JRC already supports. In this sense, cooperation with practice-based and other mediating actors offers the opportunity to enhance the relevance and impact of the JRC's urban activities.

In relation to the local level, the JRC is increasingly engaging cities through its activities in a way that complements URBACT's work: the former being science-driven, the latter practice-based (Morgan, N., 2020). Without close cooperation and integration, there is a risk of working in silos and duplicating, rather than de-fragmenting efforts.

3. Stakeholder engagement can enhance visibility and use of offered services

Steps taken towards engaging stakeholders, outside the Commission and the CoP-CITIES channels, can help to promote the visibility and relevance of the urban activities of the JRC. A case in point is the Memorandum of Understanding signed with the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR). In fact, via this agreement, the CEMR commits to disseminating the activities and tools of the JRC among members – national associations of local and regional governments. This helps to ensure that relevant tools reach relevant audiences and potential users. In this sense, while local and regional governments can be further supported in implementing and monitoring SUD strategies, they can also inform and provide input to the JRC.B.3 to further develop activities and tools (Gaudron, M. and Bizarro, P., 2020).

Similarly, to enhance the potential use of these services by Member States, who are key stakeholders envisaged by the NLC and relevant to the EUI, the JRC could team up with organisations that have direct interaction with the national level, for example, the EUKN, the OECD, and ESPON. This could help to close observed gaps, providing opportunities for the JRC to further integrate national-level knowledge demands into their work, while also making their urban activities more visible and relevant (Veneri, P., 2020).

5 Conclusions

This study has sought to explore the role of the JRC, as a provider of scientific knowledge for policy, in relation to the policy framework for a sustainable urban future envisaged by the New Leipzig Charter. Reflecting on the role of science for policy post 2020, the study ultimately aims to stimulate a broader debate on **how cooperation between the science and policy spheres can support the realisation of the vision and principles of the New Leipzig Charter**. As the study proposes, this strategic milestone, together with its Implementation Document, is to provide a non-binding, strategic policy framework for multi-level cooperation on sustainable urban development in the EU for the next ten years to come, offering scope to rethink science-policy cooperation.

The research finds that the **current urban activities of the JRC have a strong potential to support the policy framework of the NLC**. In particular, **to strengthen the evidence base of urban policymaking and practice in the EU** – that is, 'Better knowledge' for policymakers at the EU, and increasingly the local level. In this sense, the JRC's knowledge services can be seen as instruments to empower both the EU and cities to design, implement, and assess better policies. They strongly **respond to the NLC's key principles of good urban governance**, in particular to the integrated, place-based, participatory approach to urban development which aims at the common good (as defined in both European and global sustainability agendas).

While these activities are in principle well-aligned with the vision for sustainable urban development provided by the NLC, in practice, **some gaps and challenges are identified**. Firstly, **the cities team's activities can be made more visible** to (and therefore used by) all targeted urban stakeholders, particularly Member States – who, together with cities are proposed as key implementing parties of the NLC. Secondly, the **knowledge produced is not 'directly' accessible by policymakers**, often requiring the need of intermediaries to translate it into policy proposals / recommendations. Thirdly, the **institutional embeddedness of the JRC as a scientific body creates trade-offs**, limiting the full capitalisation on the forecasting capacity of science to anticipate (and drive) future knowledge needs of policy.

The study also reveals that exchanges between science and urban policy in the EU occur not within a singular interface, but rather multiple ones. In the evolving ecosystem of EU matters, **urban policymaking – should and – is in fact informed by knowledge produced from both science and practice**. The multiple synergies existing among knowledge providers operating in these different interfaces point to **important opportunities for more structural forms of cooperation**, and therefore for de-fragmentation (of knowledge and efforts). Here, structural cooperation with both science-based and practice-oriented actors can amplify the impact of the JRC's urban activities by enhancing their visibility, access, and relevance.

Ways forward

As a strategic political document, **the New Leipzig Charter offers scope for science to fulfil an important foresight role**, which is ever more needed given the compounded, evolving nature of urban challenges. As called for by the Charter, this role could be capitalised on by building on the capacity of scientific actors to forecast and anticipate future challenges and knowledge needs of policymakers at different governance levels in the EU. This forecasting capacity is **especially relevant to supporting the 'Better knowledge' pillar of the UAEU**, to which the NLC intends to give legacy (through its Implementation Document). In fact, the NLC could be seen as providing the vision and political motivation for scientific services such as the JRC to more structurally support the current and future work of the UAEU Partnerships.

In this respect, there is scope for applying science to policymaking **going beyond EU funded programmes** such as those related to Cohesion Policy or Horizon programmes,

for example, by considering international, transnational, and country specific programmes. By widening the range of urban topics that can be researched as well as the audiences (and users) of such research, forecasting studies could enrich the policy framework of the NLC, identifying trends and topics that have so far been given too little political attention.

Setting out a non-binding policy framework for the sustainable development of European cities, **the NLC also urges the collective mobilisation of and cooperation between governmental and non-governmental actors**, from policymakers at different levels, to practitioners and researchers. In fact, for the NLC and the (future) UAEU to be successful, **multi-level cooperation is a key prerequisite**. In particular, dialogue and cooperation between European bodies, institutions and organisations, Member States, and regional and local authorities is fundamental.

Considering the post-2020 programming and the **Commission's proposal for the European Urban Initiative** as an instrument to de-fragment the governance structure of urban matters in the EU, concrete opportunities for cooperation among actors from the policy, science, and practice spheres will soon be discerned. With a view to building capacity and alliances of actors operating within these interfaces, the EUI commits to providing coherent support for cities (and all urban areas), ensuring the continuation of the UAEU, in line with the vision of the NLC. In this context, **rethinking the role of the science-policy interface** to help produce 'Better knowledge' and create a less fragmented knowledge base seems ever timelier.

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List of abbreviations and definitions

CEMR	Council of European Municipalities and Regions
CoP-CITIES	Community of Practice on Cities
CSI	City Science Initiative
DE2020	2020 German Presidency of the EU Council
DG REGIO	Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy
DGUM	Directors-General Meeting on Urban Matters
EC	European Commission
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Funds
ESPON	European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion
EU	European Union
EUI	European Urban Initiative
EUKN EGTC	European Urban Knowledge Network EGTC
JPI UE	Joint Programming Initiative Urban Europe
JRC	Joint Research Centre
JRC.B.3	Territorial Development Unit of the Joint Research Centre
KC TP	Knowledge Centre for Territorial Policies
KSP	Knowledge Sharing Platform of the EUI
LUISA	Land-Use based Integrated Sustainability Assessment modelling platform
MLG	Multi-level governance
MS	Member State
NLC	New Leipzig Charter
NLCID	New Leipzig Charter Implementation Document
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TA2030	Territorial Agenda 2030
T-Board	Territorial Board
TIA	Territorial Impact Assessment
UAEU	Urban Agenda for the European Union
UDG	Urban Development Group
UDN	Urban Development Network
UDP+	Urban Data Platform Plus
UIA	Urban Innovative Action
URBACT	European Territorial Cooperation programme aimed at fostering sustainable urban development across EU cities

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Annexes

Annex 1. Evaluation criteria of analysis stage 2

The evaluation criteria in the fitness check were adapted from the 2017 European Commission's *Guidelines on Evaluation*, taking into account *effectiveness*, *relevance*, *coherence*, and *added value*. They are presented below. The *efficiency* criterion was purposefully left out in that it considers the relationship between the resources used and the changes generated by an activity from a financial perspective, which is outside the scope of this research.

Effectiveness

Effectiveness considers how successful the reviewed activities can be in supporting or contributing to the delivery of key concepts of the NLC, exploring where and why the cities team's activities may fall short of doing this. To this end, the effectiveness analysis aims to identify both driving and hindering factors, as well as any unexpected or unintended effects of the reviewed activities (EC, 2017, p.346).

Evaluation question: to what extent can the activities of the JRC.B.3's cities team effectively support the NLC's overarching framework?

Relevance

The analysis of relevance evaluates whether the reviewed activities help to 'address present needs or problems' (idem, p.351) in the European urban policymaking field. Relevance was used to identify any mismatch between the objectives of the cities team and (current) needs or problems identified by the NLC.

Evaluation question: to what extent are the activities on urban issues carried out by the cities team relevant to the policy principles and key elements identified in the NLC?

Coherence

Coherence investigates how well (or not) the selected activities work together. The intention was to 'highlight areas where there are synergies' that contribute to the goal of the JRC.B.3 in relation to the NLC, pointing to 'tensions e.g. objectives which are potentially contradictory, or approaches which are causing inefficiencies' (idem, p.352) between the different activities. This evaluation criterion is particularly relevant to survey the work of the cities team as a portfolio of activities, rather than look at them in isolation - one of the core goals of this study.

Evaluation question: to what extent are the reviewed activities coherent with each other and with the NLC?

Added Value

Added value is defined as value which can be attributed to the reviewed activities, considering their overall performance against a projection of how the situation could be without their presence (idem, p.353) or in comparison with actors providing similar services, and thus value. This criterion requires to 'analyse whether any contextual change, or other factors' (ibid.) can affect the assumption that such added value could only be generated by the activities under review.

Evaluation question: what is the added value of the reviewed activities in terms of the support to the future implementation of the NLC as compared to what other actors within the EU urban science-policy interface are doing?

Annex 2. List of key stakeholder interviews

- Alessandro Rainoldi, Head of Unit of the JRC B.3, EC, 14 September 2020.
- Carlo Lavalle, Senior Expert, JRC B.3 Unit, EC, 18 September 2020.
- Tilman Buchholz, Deputy Head of Unit, Federal Ministry of Interior, Building, and Community - BMI, 7 October 2020.
- Thomas de Béthune, Policy Coordinator – Team Leader – Urban policy, DG REGIO DDG.03 Unit, EC, 12 October 2020.
- Claudia Baranzelli, Project Expert, JRC B.3 Unit, EC, 15 October 2020.

Written interviews:

- Peter Bosch, Advisor to the Deputy Director of the JRC, EC, 18 September.
- Davide Auteri, Policy Analyst, JRC B.3 Unit, EC, 21 September 2020.
- Carlotta Fioretti, Scientific Officer, JRC B.3 Unit, EC, 28 September 2020.
- Margit Noll, Chair of the Management Board, JPI UE, 2 October 2020.
- Claudia Baranzelli, Project Expert, JRC B.3 Unit, EC, 5 October 2020.
- Paolo Veneri, Head of the Regional Analysis and Statistics Unit, Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities, OECD, 8 October 2020.
- Nuala Morgan, Head of Unit – Capitalisation & Communication, URBACT, 8 October 2020.
- Marine Gaudron, Policy officer – Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion, and Pedro Bizarro, Project Officer – Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities, CEMR, 9 October 2020.
- Marjan van Herwijnen, Senior Project Expert – Statistics, Data and Maps, ESPON, 11 October 2020.

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