



HEAD OFFICE

10 Rue du Commerce  
1000 Brussels, Belgium  
+32 2 285 41 63  
yepp@epp.eu

## **Enhancing evidence based urban decision making - Urban realism**

*Adopted at the YEPP Council Meeting in Helsinki, 18.02.2023*

### **Having regard to**

- the YEPP's resolution "Climate Realism (a standard for measuring and calculating Green House Gas emissions and Carbon Footprints)" 30.09.2022, in Bucharest which proposes the creation of European Standard for measuring and calculating Green House Gas emissions and Carbon Footprints.
- The European Commission's SUMI framework. A set of indicators that support cities to perform a standardised evaluation of their mobility system and to measure improvements that result from new mobility practices or policies.
- The EPP's resolution "Smart and Green Cities" 05.04.2016 which calls EU to provide urban administrations with the support they require to identify the needs of their cities and the services required to meet those needs.
- the European framework for sustainable buildings Level(s). A system of indicators for assessing and reporting on the sustainability performance of buildings.
- the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy
- the European Green Capital Awards
- the Urban Data Platform Plus- EU
- the Smart Cities MarketPlace
- the Data space for smart communities - Digital Europe Programme & Eurostat's Cities (Urban Audit)
- the Regional Innovation Scoreboard
- the Indicators for Sustainable Cities (2018) report issued by European Commission
- the Competence Centers on on Composite Indicators and Scoreboards and foresight

### **Recognising that**

- Today, according to the most recent JRC studies, 75% of the world population currently live in urban areas and that is expected to significantly increase by 2050. The urbanisation rate in

Europe (EU-28) was 72% in 2015. Cities account for over 70% of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, most of which come from industrial and motorised transport systems<sup>1</sup>.

- The EU cities are they have already started their smartness journey. In fact, 88% of cities have launched digital transformation actions. 72% believe that smart initiatives have been successful in meeting policy objectives. 69% cities plan to invest in smart solutions in the future. 52% of cities planning to invest in smart solutions intend to spend between €2 million and €10 million.<sup>2</sup>
- The U.S. Green Building Council has already created the LEED<sup>3</sup> certification for Cities and Communities and the U.K. Building Research Establishment BRE has developed the BREEAM Communities<sup>4</sup> standard to both support planners, local authorities, developers and investors to integrate and assess cities, communities and regeneration projects.
- Horizon Europe 2021 -2027<sup>5</sup> will invest €53.5 billion in global challenges and European industrial competitiveness of which €15.3 billion in Digital, Industry and Space and €15.1 billion in Climate, Energy and Mobility. More specifically around €360 million in research and innovation actions linked to 100 climate-neutral and smart cities in the period 2021-23. Additionally, another the Digital Europe Programme will allocate €7.5 billion<sup>6</sup> of funding to projects related to digital skills, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, quantum computing etc

### Acknowledging that

- The smart city has been perhaps the dominant paradigm in urban planning over the past two decades. The interest in “smart city” is growing fast and the concept gives rise to multiple interpretations and definitions<sup>7</sup>. The term was originally coined by IT large corporates to introduce tech-driven solutions but as a strategy for urban development it’s been very successfully deployed under authoritarian regimes<sup>8</sup>. The rapid adoption of smart-city technology has created unforeseen conditions that could risk common civil liberties. Smart services hold the potential to replace democracy with corporate decision-making and allow

1 <https://blogs.worldbank.org/sustainablecities/cutting-global-carbon-emissions-where-do-cities-stand>

2 <https://www.vodafone.com/sites/default/files/2022-09/vodafone-fit-for-the-future-cities-report.pdf>

3 <https://www.usgbc.org/leed/rating-systems/leed-for-cities-communities>

4 <https://bregroup.com/products/breem/breem-technical-standards/breem-communities/>

5 <https://op.europa.eu/en/web/eu-law-and-publications/publication-detail/-/publication/9570017e-cd82-11eb-ac72-01aa75ed71a1>

6 <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/digital-europe-programme-eu75-billion-funding-2021-2027>

7 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0360544218323855>

8 <https://www.technologyreview.com/magazines/the-urbanism-issue/>

government agencies to shirk constitutional protections & accountability laws in favor of collecting more data.

- Smart cities can be perceived as a way to facilitate and improve citizens' life by integrating information and communication technologies. However, ICT-centered smart cities often focus on smart targets that does not necessarily lead to sustainability, in turn it makes development models obsolete over time. In fact, smart cities might focus more onto profit-driven optimization strategies that do not deliver complete efficiency than extending wings to address sustainability and sustainable growth patterns<sup>9</sup>. Therefore, considering cities' modern urban metabolic cycles that drive environmental changes and their socio-economic impact, smartness lies on cities ability to utilize of technology in the pursuit of sustainability.
- Smartness leads the development of governance but only that of processes, their activator should be the collective decision-making that includes both public and private actors (citizens, companies, etc). In that context, the necessity for a thorough multisectoral sustainability assessment of cities has risen (covering the indicators, aggregation and weighing techniques). Following the notion "you can't manage something that you can't understand, evaluate and see". The cities' assessments will provide the decision makers (citizens & authorities) with the ability to interact with urban information & systems in a comprehensive way, being aided in acquiring a "societal self-awareness", enabling an evidence-based decision making & knowledge democratization.
- The increasing deployment of digital technologies presents challenges. While smart cities can boost inclusion and accessibility, they also risk creating or cementing existing digital divides, regarding the availability of technologies and skills. If the needs of all population groups are not considered, smart city initiatives may inadvertently deepen the divides. It is, therefore, crucial to measure the performance of smart cities to ensure they achieve their objectives in terms of well-being, sustainability, and inclusion.
- The last decades city rankings have emerged influencing cities in making strategic decisions. They are contributing & influencing the evaluation, assessment, and development of urban policy. Nonetheless, most of the rankings are subject of public (scientific and political) debate. Mainly because of methodological issues, controversies exist about the extent to which rankings reflect the vision of cities or/and the actual performance of cities<sup>10</sup>. Their methodological

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S221067072200107X>  
<sup>10</sup> <https://daneshyari.com/article/preview/4373165.pdf>



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framework often is oversimplified misleading and, causing misinterpretation and misuse by unwary end-users. Furthermore, they may lack of reliable and internationally comparable data or even manipulate it. Therefore methodologies, definitions, data use, and conclusions vary wildly from ranking to ranking<sup>11</sup>.

### YEPP Calls on

- European Commission & Committee of the Regions to build upon existing sectorial frameworks & Urban Data platforms in order to create a common EU standard that allows a multidisciplinary assessment of the cities' sustainability and smartness.
- EU & Committee of the Regions to promote the critical conceptual interdependency of smartness, sustainability and democracy, through the objectives of EU Funding programmes and the EU publications to ensure the sustainability and livability of the cities
- European Commission & Committee of the Regions to further promote evidence-based policy making & policy evaluation at the local level by enabling a digital & dynamic impact assessment -including life cycle analysis, by providing one stop access to EU funded urban services & tools (valorizing Smart Cities Marketplace etc), that support regulatory sandboxes and smart city labs.

<sup>11</sup> <https://globalaffairs.org/sites/default/files/2022-01/Beyond-the-Scorecard-Report.pdf>