

Sustainable Cities Reference Framework

Project Overview

Preface – Purpose – Product – Process

1. PREFACE

What is the context and setting for the project?

In May 2007 the European Ministers responsible for urban development signed the “Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities” with the aim to improve the policy setting for integrated urban development, with a particular focus on deprived communities.

In November 2008, in Marseille, they called for the implementation of the charter *for* the cities and *with* the cities. They also wished to increase the focus on climate change in recognition of its rising importance.

Today we face the additional challenges of a gloomy economic forecast, and long-term growing pressures on public budgets. Such changes in emphasis are natural and must be accommodated. Indeed long term projections suggest that the task will get considerably harder!

But what is the perspective as seen by the city?

Three quarter of the European population will soon live in cities, urban areas or metropolitans areas. And cities are complex organisms. They are all different. Yet they face similar challenges. There are literally thousands. And they are growing. Both in number and population. City leaders face the tortuously complex task of handling multiple, often conflicting, decisions on multiple fronts. They compete to attract the best talents, to grow their economies, to deliver resilient communities and economies, and to create great places for their inhabitants and visitors. This is increasingly important in a knowledge society, with more fussy people that are increasingly mobile.

Cities need tools to support their dialogue: to help them answer the tricky questions:

- **How best to share experience and learn between each other?**
- **How can they best cooperate to deliver a well balanced territorial development?**
- **How can they apply diagnosis, operational and assessment tools that can be shared between the elected representatives, their technical departments, professional bodies, and their citizens?**

Is the current process for doing so most efficient and effective? Our thesis is that this is not so. The dialogue is well meaning. Yet it is rather expensive to set up. It is also not as structured as it could be: or where it is, it is perhaps focused on a specific theme or profession. The need today is to understand the inter-play between these. To know how actions in one area, like physical development, will have an impact in others: like societal well being, economic return, or environment. An integrated holistic approach is more and more vital. We know that for any system to be

optimised it takes increasing levels of understanding about the impact of a change in one area to another. They need a framework and tools to support the dialogue.

There are many tripwires here too. Structural disfunctionalities. Big and small 'P' politics. Resource and capacity constraints. Large, and perhaps more particularly smaller, towns and cities require all the help they can get. They need quality tools to do their jobs. Modular tools that are relevant and useful. They all have some tools, but are they the best, and how do they find out where to find new and better ones? Building on the great ones that already exist makes much sense.

So, it is in the context of these Ministerial requests *and* the real-life needs of cities that this project was launched. It is sponsored by France following the French European Union Presidency 2008.

2. PURPOSE

Why is the project of importance, and what does it seek to achieve?

This project is important for a number of reasons:

- Europe must remain globally competitive in the long term, with the purpose to ensure the cohesion within its limit, and must influence on world wide basis particularly on such issues as climate change
- Europe cities must remain socially inclusive and attractive places, offering a high quality of life for their citizens
- To achieve this, Europe's Ministers want to see the Leipzig goals come to life
- Cities need quality means to make that so – not all, and not to every extent; but some and to significant extents
- Cities face heightening pressures from modern day challenges and need better decision support
- We must future proof our cities; our economy; our society; and our environment

This project seeks to achieve the following:

- To deliver an *accepted common framework* for sustainable urban development on which to be situated, decide and learn
- To put in place the *foundations* on which to improve the *skills and capacity* to deal with sustainable integrated urban development
- To deliver a kernel of *quality material (tools; good practices and the like)* that can evolve and be adapted to suit city needs – and that will endure
- To sufficiently *mobilise city and national bodies* to build a sustainable learning network

3. PRODUCT

What will be delivered?

There are two crucially important areas of delivery. One is a hard, tangible product. The other is soft, mindset, opinion forming. (Refer also to figure page 7).

Our belief is that there is significant value in delivering a **Reference Framework (RF)** that provides an overarching structure within which the products of the project can be made meaningful and coherent. Meaningful, importantly, to multiple diverse stakeholders that need to make aligned decisions. The Reference Framework will be composed of:

- A **'Policy Paper'** that discusses vision, goals, ambitions and scope for European sustainable cities. It will present the Reference Framework.
- The common **Core Operational Model** that translates the goals of the Leipzig Charter down to actionable objectives; that can be inspected through different lenses (the Leipzig Charter goals and strategies for action – plus maybe further axes such as for example fighting against climate change, preserving nature in the city, preserving natural resources; the three 'pillars' of sustainability; and professionally through different themes); that includes good governance as integral part; and that models the interdependencies between these objectives. Something that, although built around the necessary complexity of a city, can be inspected at different levels of detail so that it can be used simply and effectively. This is the interwoven fabric that sits at the core of the project. It provides a common framework that enables different professions and different cities to be situated and learn. From a solid basis the detail will emerge with time and use.
- An **Assessment Tool** that is consistent with the above model, and can be used relatively quickly and painlessly by city leaders and managers to baseline and monitor progress over time towards sustainability. As well as a tool that can be used to assess options, and explore the impact of a new development or set of policies.
- **Suggested Performance Indicators** (monitoring tool) that are consistent with the model (and the assessment tool) that can be used to develop quantifiable targets for a specific city, and offer measureable and meaningful comparisons – both over time, and with other cities.
- A living repository of **Research; Good Practices; Tools** and the like. Made available through web technologies.

These are the hard deliverables. They will work only if we address the soft ones too. Specifically:

- To find **"Champions"** that have used the framework and tools, that will evangelise them, and that can demonstrate the value that they bring
- To **Engage** 'sufficient' national and city stakeholders such that we create a movement that will endure. A movement that will not stop at these

stakeholders: it will extend to engage the end customers of a city – their residents, businesses and visitors.

All this must be made to work whilst recognising the natural differences that exist between cities, for all good reasons. And the specific and situational priorities, strategies and plans that city leaders put in place.

So core principles of flexibility and adaptability are key. So too the recognition that this is a non-binding charter. So the tools must be appealing. More appealing and more value adding than continuing to use the approaches we know already exist in multiple cities. The materials must be equally relevant for the smaller urban areas where sufficient capacity may not be in place, and where complexity is undesirable. And of course, it must suit deprived areas by taking into account their specific needs, approaches and challenges.

Our goal is to deliver a coherent set of products in the short term that creates the 'stickiness' to attract cities to join the process and make it a living system in the longer term. This will not occur without some continued support.

4. PROCESS

How will things get delivered; by whom; and when?

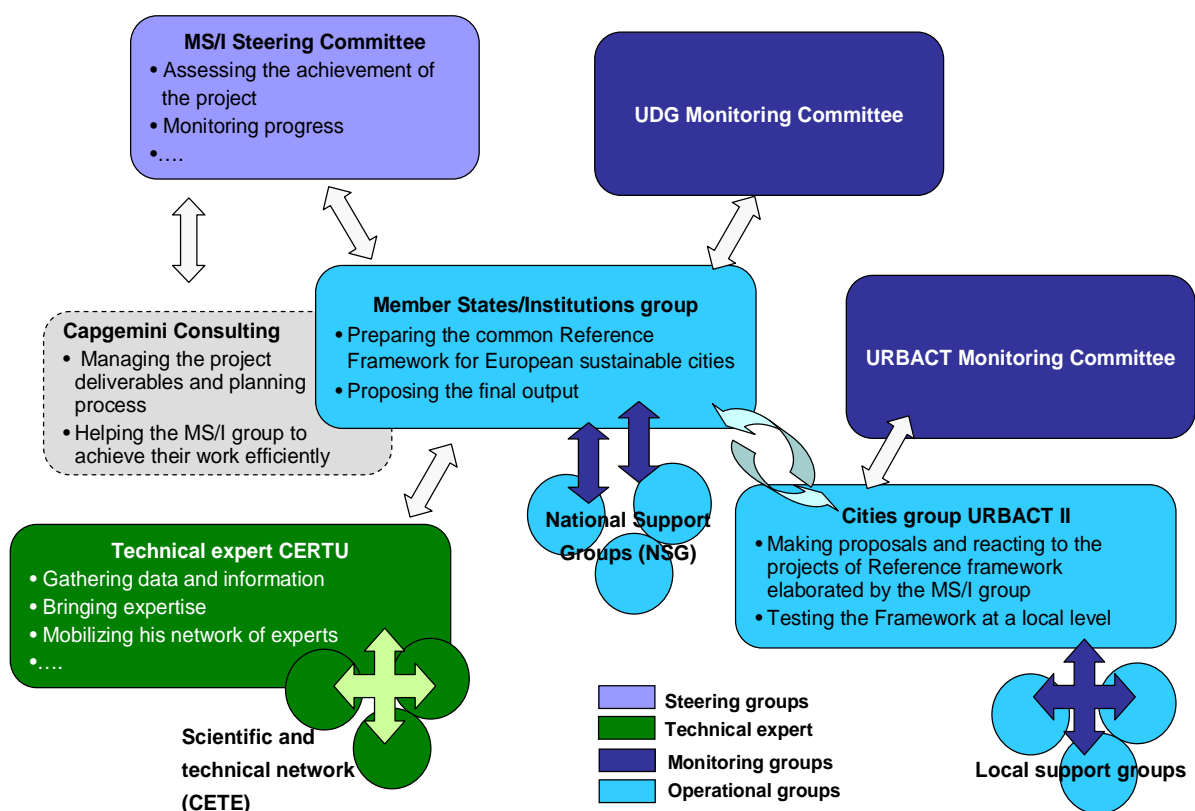
4.1 Project Organisation

The project is organised as follows:

- **Monitoring Committee:** Urban Development Group
- **Steering Committee** comprising representatives of the following: French Ministry (MEEDDM), URBACT Secretariat, the European Commission and EU Presidency countries.
- **Project Experts / Team:** comprising MEEDDM sponsors; CERTU research experts, and Capgemini Consulting project management and domain expertise.
- **Member State / Institutions (MS/I) Group:** comprising Member States (FR, DE...) and neighbouring countries (TR) from across Europe, 2 European networks of local authorities (CEMR, Eurocities), the URBACT Secretariat, the lead partner of the URBACT Cities' Group and the European Commission. Representatives of countries are typically from one/two of the Ministries responsible for the urban sustainability agenda. This meets bi-monthly.
- **National Support Groups (NSGs):** These are set up in the MS by the MS/I representative. They involve central government ministries, national agencies, other national/regional interest groups, experts, and importantly the end customer – cities. Meeting frequencies and construct is determined by the MS/I member. The role is to mobilise country stakeholders.

URBACT Cities Group (“LC-FACIL”) composed of 8 pilot cities and that provides support and challenge to the project. A specific role is also to select and support the piloting process. The pilot cities will take, test, and co-develop the products from the project.

The MS/I group and URBACT cities group form the ‘hub’ of the project. The various NSGs form the ‘spokes’. It is through this design that a collaborative open and transparent process is managed. It is through this process that MS/I members will have fuller knowledge to communicate in their NSG events.



4.2 Content Development Approach

The major elements of the approach are as follows:

- *Research* is undertaken by CERTU. This includes assessing what the current practices are in countries and cities on integrated sustainable urban policy. For this a framework comprising six elements (strategy, sustainability questions, visual assessment tool; actions; indicators, monitoring tools policy) has been used to assess some 70 cities. This forms a very robust and structured basis to develop content.
- The *principle of “adopt, adapt, create”* has been applied to ensure that existing good practices are fully assess and (elements of) them are used rather than creating new. The project team develop the process and draft materials for review and further development involving the MS/I and others.

- *MS/I members and the URBACT Cities Group* are incorporated into the design tasks to ensure a transparent and involved process. Contribution is sought between and in MS/I meetings.
- *Experts* are incorporated to illuminate areas as required.
- The *Reference Framework* is built to recognise the boundaries set by the setting and characteristics of a city, and the strategies of city leadership. It therefore offers a flexible elective ‘toolbox’ of components that can be used and further developed – an open source logic.
- *Good practices* are discovered and captured through interaction with and through the MS/I group and Member States National Support Groups (NSGs).
- *Web-technologies* are used to capture and communicate content and plans.

4.3 Stakeholder Engagement & Validation

- Engagement of MS/I members as an integral part of the project ensures that this is an inclusive design involving member states.
- NSG and URBACT Cities group participants will provide the immediacy to assess needs and priorities, and to ensure that the design is ‘with the cities, for the cities’.
- The cities of the URBACT group should provide a testing ground for the applicability of the deliverables. This process ensures the practicality and usability of the products in the field prior to their broader deployment.
- MS/I member responsibilities include mobilisation of appropriate national bodies to appropriately review and adjust policies and practices within their MS.

4.4 Key Milestones

- April 2009: Project Launch
- Q3/4 '09: Launch of NSGs
- UDG – 21st October: Draft Reference Framework available
- November : Mid-term evaluation
- November 25th: URBACT Annual Conference, incl. workshop on Reference Framework
- UDG – 11th March 2010: Final discussion of draft RF



- April 2010: Finalisation of the Framework (?)
- DG meeting – 28th April 2010: RF discussion
- April 2010→: Implementation phase of the Framework (?)
- June 2010 : Ministerial Commitment
- From June 2010 : testing the RF by the URBACT pilot cities and others who wish so

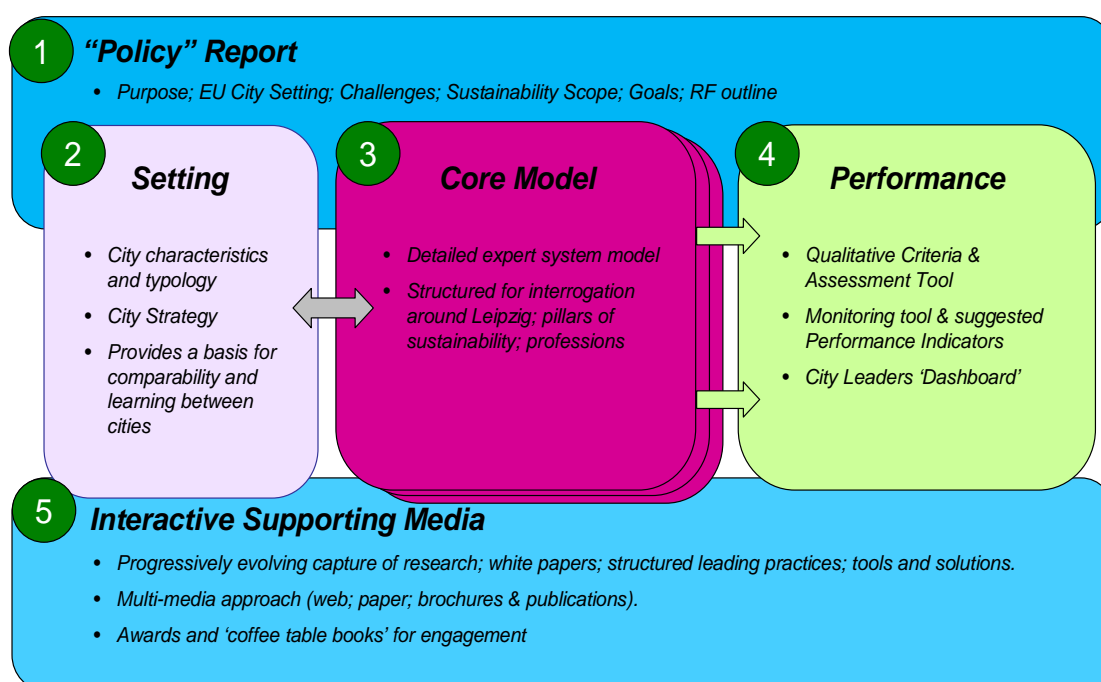
ANNEX

Sustainable European Cities

Reference Framework Overview

Pictorially, the Reference Framework Model has 5 main components, as shown below.

These will emerge in different levels of detail at different points in time. They will involve different levels of co-development with Members States, institutions and cities. They will be represented by different media.



Further detail on the purpose, form, audience, method of development, schedule of delivery and means of deployment will be communicated in due course.

The important overall features of the model that it is worth bearing in mind are:

- A **common framework for dialogue** between cities
- An **adaptable model** that can be tailored to specific city circumstances
- A **thoroughly researched product set** that can instil confidence in the user
- A **comprehensive toolkit** that can support cities large and small