EU urban strategies: when integration means innovation

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“Sustainable Urban Development and Innovation: aligning policies for change”

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Sustainable Urban Development (2014-2020)

- Art. 7 of Regulations 1301/2013 (European Regional Development Fund):
  
  "The ERDF shall support, within operational programmes, sustainable urban development through *strategies* that set out *integrated actions* to tackle the economic, environmental, climate, demographic and social *challenges affecting urban areas*"

- At least 5% of the ERDF budget is earmarked for *Sustainable Urban Development (SUD) strategies* in each Member State

- **EU integrated approach**: cross-sectoral policy, multi-level and multi-stakeholder governance, spatially diverse and community-led strategy
JRC project URBADDEV

- STRAT-Board webtool
  Unique database
  Quantitative analysis on urban and territorial strategies implemented in 2014-2020 across the EU
JRC project URBANDEV

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  Quantitative analysis on urban and territorial strategies implemented in 2014-2020 across the EU

- Handbook of Sustainable Urban Development strategies
  Methodological support
  Qualitative analysis (case-studies) on specific challenges prompted by the EU integrated approach to urban development
SUD strategies in 2014-20: key facts

- Around **1,000 SUD strategies** across EU
- **Themes.** Focus on Low–carbon economy, social inclusion, environment and resource efficiency
- **Funding.** Majority of strategies (40%) commit less than 5 million euro of ESIF contribution. However, relevant number of high budget strategies
- **Territorial focus.** City/town and Neighbourhood most frequent (76%), but Functional areas, City networks and Territories with specific features also high
- **Legacy of previous experiences + novel approaches.** 62% of strategies refer to pre-existing strategies, with 38% of strategies specifically developed

Source: STRAT-Board webtool (Nov 2020)
SUD strategies as complex policy objects

- Strategic dimension
  - Territorial focus
  - Governance
  - Cross-sectoral integration
  - Funding and finance
  - Monitoring

- Operational Programmes
  - Investments, frameworks and instruments (including R&I/Smart Specialisation)

- SUD strategies

- EU Regional Policy

- Urban development policy

- City innovation agenda

- Territorial collective action

- National policy frameworks and planning traditions

- Context-specific local knowledge

- R&I activities

- Activities enabling innovation (i.e. reinforcing institutional capacity, knowledge management and set up of collaborative spaces)
R&I investments serving inclusion

- **Novel focus on R&I.**
  Forty strategies - mainly in CZ, DK, FI, NL, SE - include TO1 (R&I) with both hard (research infrastructures) and soft interventions (promotion of innovation-led business ecosystem).

- **More in general, SUD strategies seem to approach innovation, entrepreneurship and technological upgrade as a way to reduce inequalities.**
  40% of strategies use TO1, TO2 (Information and Communication Technologies) or TO3 (Competitiveness of SMEs). At the same time, 78% of them address social inclusion, social innovation and deprived neighbourhoods.

Source: STRAT-Board webtool (Nov 2020)
Frameworks for stakeholders coordination

- **Challenge-led collaborative platforms**
  Community participation is a common feature in SUD. In a number of cases, systemic involvement of local stakeholders has led to the set up of collaborative platforms that bring together citizens, companies, NGOs and R&D organisations to create new social services and new businesses.

- **Citizen engagement is the key**
  Reggio Emilia SUD strategy - 1.5 million euro ESIF only - has implemented an incubator for social innovation, promoting bottom-up projects developed through a co-design process with citizens.

- **Building institutional capacity**
  New skills and working methods to follow up on the integrated approach. Evidence of collaboration with research organisations.
Space matters for innovation

- **Emergence of the functional area approach.**
  24% of strategies are multi-municipal, including functional urban areas or metropolitan areas, city networks and other specific territories.

- **SUD overcome the barrier between urban and rural**
  More than 50% of SUD strategy areas are rural areas.
  SUD strategies proved able to promote dialogue between urban and rural policymakers, professionals and communities.

- **Urban-rural innovation: inclusion of soft investments for green business development.**
  Under TO4 (low-carbon economy), the Gothenburg SUD city strategy strengthens urban-rural linkages through: cross-sectoral cooperation between the city and its surroundings; testbeds implementing the city Food Strategy.

Source: STRAT-Board database (Nov 2020)

More than 50% of SUD areas are rural areas.
Thank you

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