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Urban regeneration in the EU



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Urban regeneration in the EU

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Processes
and
patterns
of
urban
Europeanisation:
Evidence
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the
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network

Processes and patterns of urban Europeanisation: Evidence from the EUROCITIES network

Tom Verhelst

Abstract

The Europeanisation of cities is seen as an important condition for the latter's successful contribution to the development of an EU urban policy. To assess the probability of this event our paper investigates the Europeanisation of the members of the EUROCITIES network, the most important trans-European city network. Using survey data gathered from 48 member cities, the study maps different elements of the cities' Europeanisation trajectory, looks for underlying patterns and figures out how EUROCITIES membership relates to this process of urban Europeanisation. The explorative analysis results in a diverse and multi-layered picture. EUROCITIES members vary strongly with regard to their internal Europeanisation process. Whilst generally not scoring very high on minimal steps such as interest in and knowledge of EU affairs, cities are more actively involved in obtaining EU funding, networking and lobbying the EU. Furthermore, urban Europeanisation seems to work as a functional toolbox rather than a linear, cumulative process. The Europeanisation patterns that are found, for instance, include



<http://www.eurocities.eu>

interest and knowledge as general preconditions of urban Europeanisation, a logic of networking that involves exchange schemes with other cities and EU institutions, as well as lobbying and to a lesser extent the establishment of an EU department which are connected to different other elements of urban Europeanisation. Finally, the involvement in EUROCITIES positively correlates with some of the most rewarding manifestations of the mobilisation of cities on the European scene such as inter-city policy exchange, obtaining EU funding and lobbying the EU institutions.

KEY WORDS

Urban Europeanisation – EUROCITIES – city networking – EU urban policy

Processi e modelli di europeizzazione urbana: evidenze dalla rete EURO-CITIES

L'europeizzazione delle città è considerata una condizione importante per il contributo positivo di queste ultime allo sviluppo di una politica urbana dell'UE. Per valutare la probabilità di questo evento, l'articolo esamina l'europeizzazione dei membri della rete EUROCITIES, la più importante rete urbana transeuropea. Utilizzando i dati raccolti da 48 città membri, lo studio traccia diversi elementi della traiettoria di europeizzazione delle città, cerca modelli sottostanti e spiega come l'appartenenza ad EUROCITIES si riferisca a questo processo di europeizzazione urbana. L'analisi esplorativa produce un quadro diversificato e multilivello. I membri di EUROCITIES variano fortemente per quanto riguarda il loro processo di europeizzazione interna. Mentre generalmente non acquisiscono molti punti su aspetti secondari come l'interesse e la conoscenza delle problematiche dell'UE, le città sono più impegnate ad ottenere finanziamenti dall'Unione Europea, nella costruzione di reti e di lobbies di quest'ultima. Inoltre, l'europeizzazione urbana sembra agire come uno strumento funzionale piuttosto che come un processo lineare e cumulativo. I modelli europei individuati, ad esempio, includono gli interessi e le conoscenze come precondizioni generali per l'europeizzazione urbana, una logica di networking che coinvolge schemi di scambio con altre città ed istituzioni dell'UE, nonché la lobbying e, in misura minore, l'istituzione di un dipartimento per l'UE che sono collegati a diversi altri elementi dell'europeizzazione urbana. Infine, il coinvolgimento in EUROCITIES è correlato positivamente ad alcune delle manifestazioni più gratificanti della mobilitazione delle città nella scena europea, come lo scambio di politiche fra città, l'ottenimento di finanziamenti dell'UE e la lobbying delle istituzioni dell'UE.

PAROLE CHIAVE

Urbanizzazione europea - EUROCITIES - networking della città - politica urbana dell'UE

Processes and patterns of urban Europeanisation: Evidence from the EUROCITIES network

Tom Verhelst

Introduction

The Urban Agenda for the EU, formalised in the Pact of Amsterdam (2016), marks a new step in the development of an urban policy in the European Union (EU). Whereas EU urban policy mainly followed a top-down logic, in which the EU triggered Member States to develop a national urban agenda, thus far (González Medina & Fedeli, 2015), the Urban Agenda now explicitly targets the active, bottom-up involvement of cities in the development of an EU urban policy. Indeed, the Urban Agenda proposes a new form of multilevel cooperation involving cities as privileged partners and stakeholders to achieve better regulation, better funding and better knowledge. According to the EU institutions, these three objectives are key to foster “a balanced, sustainable and integrated approach towards urban challenges” and, ultimately, strengthen the urban dimension in EU policy in the future (Informal Meeting of EU Ministers responsible for Urban Matters, 2016: 3-4). However, the development of an EU urban policy and the active involvement of cities in doing so is no straightforward matter. Atkinson (2001: 395) in this regard refers to the large variation in constitutional, political and financial capacities of cities and other sub-national governments and claims:

“the development of these capacities will play an important role in determining how the ‘urban agenda’ is translated into practical activities. [...] Perhaps the best hope for the future is that as local and regional authorities interact and cooperate more with one another and the Commission through EU funding programmes these capacities will gradually develop as part of a wider Europeanization process.”

The Europeanisation of cities, also defined as ‘urban Europeanisation’ (González Medina & Fedeli, 2015) thus may be seen as an important indirect lever, or even precondition, for the successful development of an EU urban policy in the end. From a general perspective Europeanisation has already been pinpointed as one of the global and most significant evolutions in local politics of the past decades (John, 2001; Denters & Rose, 2005). Shaped in the wake of the creation of the Single Market and the development of EU regional policy with its Structural Funds in the 1980s-1990s (Goldsmith & Klausen, 1997; John, 2000), the relationship between the EU and local government further developed into a reciprocal and circular process comprising different dimensions (Hamedinger & Wolffhardt, 2010; Goldsmith, 2011; cf. infra). Local authorities are for instance not only obliged to passively comply with EU legislation, the EU also offers them opportunities to actively participate in European programmes (and their corresponding funding schemes), promote local political interests on the EU stage and interconnect in

different networks in a European setting. As a result, cities have undergone profound changes (e.g. policies, practices, preferences) in response to the new European reality they have to deal with (Marshall, 2005).

Hitherto, academic research into the Europeanisation of local government has mainly focused on specific country settings (de Rooij, 2002; Guderjan, 2015) or particular elements of Europeanisation such as legal compliance (Bondarouk & Liefferink, 2016), interest representation (John, 1994; Heinelt & Niederhafner, 2008; Callanan, 2012), networking (Huggins, 2013) and EU funding (Schultze, 2003; Zerbinati, 2012). Some comparative volumes combined both approaches (Goldsmith & Klausen, 1997; Hamedinger & Wolffhardt, 2010; Van Bever et al., 2011). In response to the resulting fragmented state of the art, scholars proposed to study the dynamics and patterns of Europeanisation as a further step to obtaining a more comprehensive understanding of the Europeanisation process and its impact upon cities (Hamedinger & Wolffhardt, 2010). Our paper seeks to address this call by analysing urban Europeanisation in the particular context of EUROCITIES, the leading trans-European inter-city policy network in Europe (Griffiths, 1995). Grouping “most of Europe’s largest and most influential cities” (Griffiths, 1995: 216), we could expect that EUROCITIES represents a good case in point of the process of urban Europeanisation as it unfolds in practice. In fact, city size and resources are regularly mentioned as two important conditions of urban Europeanisation (Schultze, 2003; Hamedinger & Wolffhardt, 2010). In addition to this descriptive agenda, the paper sets out to uncover some internal Europeanisation patterns as well as to examine how EUROCITIES membership relates to the broader process of urban Europeanisation.

The paper begins by elaborating on the theoretical basis of the research. Afterwards, we introduce our analytical framework and discuss the research data and methods. The subsequent empirical section includes an analysis of the degree of Europeanisation of the EUROCITIES members and possible underlying patterns of this process. The final section presents the main conclusions of our study and their potential implications for the future of EU urban policy.

Urban Europeanisation

The Europeanisation of cities or ‘urban Europeanisation’ constitutes the central concept of this paper. From its extensive range of meaning and application we confine Europeanisation to the domestic impact of the development of European institutions, policies and identities (Olsen, 2002: 932). Applying this perspective to the local level, John (2000: 182) argues that Europeanisation entails a fundamental transformation in which local decision-making becomes an integral part of the EU, while European ideas and practices find their way to the centre of local decision-making the other way around. From this perspective urban Europeanisation is considered as a circular, dynamic and interactive process of interdependence between the EU and local government and can

be defined as “the interplay between actors and institutions on the European and the city level, which leads to changes in local politics, policies, institutional arrangements, discourse, actors’ preferences, values, norms and belief systems on both levels” (Hamedinger & Wolffhardt, 2010: 28).

It is often stated that the process of urban Europeanisation comprises three broad, interlocked dimensions (Kern, 2009; Hamedinger & Wolffhardt, 2010). The top-down or download dimension probably forms the most visible and tangible connection between cities and the EU. It refers both to EU legislation that has to be implemented at the local level and funding opportunities for cities which are created by the EU structural funds and other programmes. Whereas this Europeanisation dimension is instigated and managed by the EU, cities on the receiving side have to comply with the European legislative output and/or meet the eligibility requirements set by the EU in order to receive funding. Secondly, a bottom-up or upload dimension of urban Europeanisation originated in response to the aforementioned pressure of the EU. As EU regulations increasingly impact upon local government, it is argued that local authorities better try to have a finger in the pie when these regulations are negotiated in the first place (John, 2000). This bottom-up perspective is strongly connected to the concept of multi-level governance, according to which the EU has provided a “multiplication of extra-national channels of sub-national political activity” (Hooghe & Marks, 1996: 73). For local government the EU thus creates an additional arena to promote its interests and influence decision-making processes (de Rooij, 2002; Fleurke & Willemsse, 2006; Kern, 2009). In the logic of bottom-up Europeanisation, cities act proactively as initiator of the relationship with the EU, either individually or organised in a network or partnership arrangement. This final element relates to horizontal cooperation as the third dimension of urban Europeanisation. Ad hoc or formal organisations, networks or partnerships of local authorities enhance the opportunities to qualify for European funding, keep track of European legislation or advocate local interests in the European arena. Additionally, they form a valuable asset for cities *in se*. Via the exchange of best practices and sharing information, experience and resources, cities might enhance their individual capacity and produce collective innovative solutions for universal problems (Kern & Bulkeley, 2009). Inter-city cooperation may also operate as a valuable instrument to subdue the damaging effects of the “inter-urban rivalry” to attract capital investment, urban tourism and conference markets or financial support from upper-level government (Griffiths, 1995: 215).

EUROCITIES: peak association of cities in the EU

This paper investigates the Europeanisation of cities that are part of the formal trans-European city network EUROCITIES. EUROCITIES was established in 1986 by six European second cities (Barcelona, Birmingham, Frankfurt, Lyon, Milan and Rotterdam) in light of a Rotterdam conference on the role of the city as engine of economic

recovery. Whereas the joint involvement of the cities was mainly centred around ad hoc conferences in the pioneering years, the network became more formally structured from 1991 onwards. In its current form EUROCITIES is comprised of 108 big cities as ‘full member’ (i.e. cities/metropolitan areas located in EU member states or the European Economic Area, being an important regional centre with an international dimension and a population of at least 250.000 inhabitants), 18 associated members (i.e. cities/metropolitan areas outside the EU or EEA under the same qualifications as full members), 46 associated partners (i.e. local authorities not qualifying for full/associated membership) and 5 associated business partners. Geographically, the network spans 39 countries (see figure 1, data retrieved from the official website www.eurocities.eu in April 2017). The organisational chart of the network includes a headquarters in the heart of the European quarter in Brussels which hosts the network staff, an executive committee (12 members), 6 thematic fora (culture, economic development, environment, knowledge society, mobility and social affairs) and 1 transversal forum (cooperation) including specific working groups each. The network also collectively participates in a number of European projects.

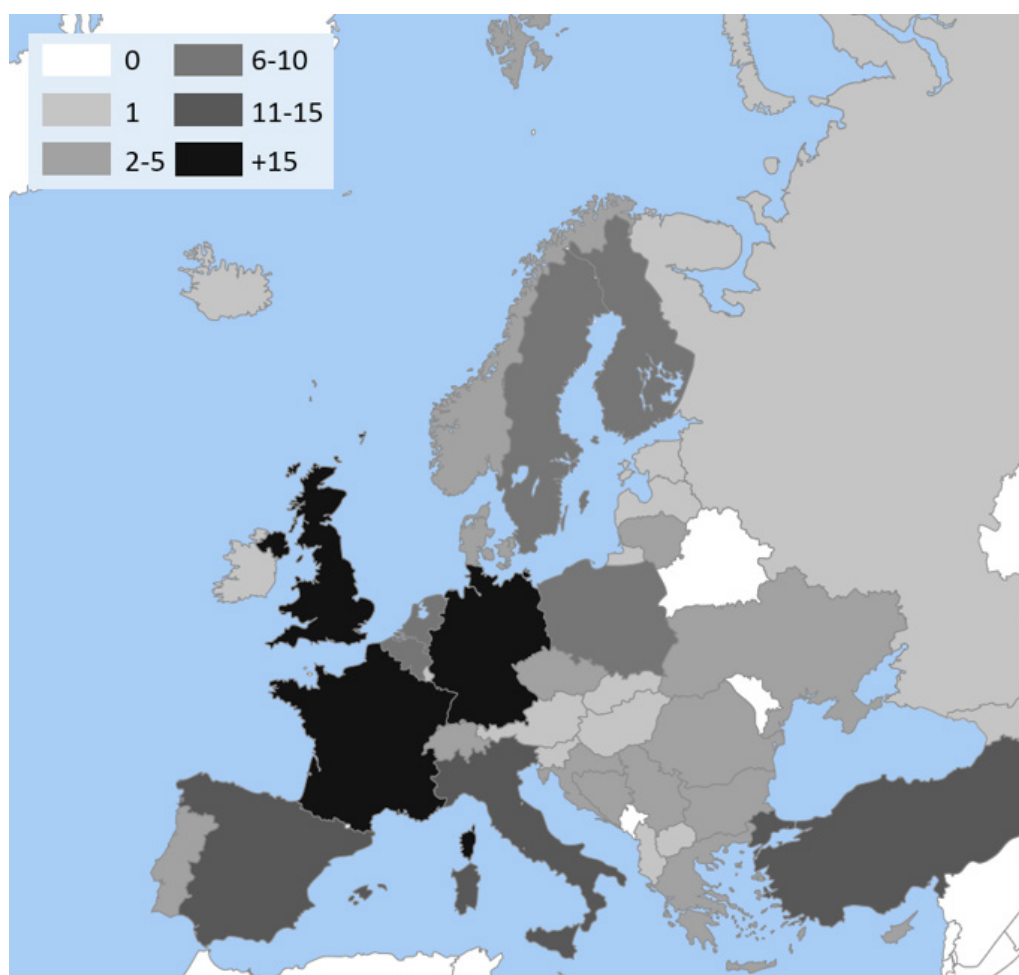


Fig. 1 - EUROCITIES members per country

From the very outset, EUROCITIES was perceived as an instrument to redress the EU's failure to develop a coherent policy framework in response to the joint problems European cities are facing such as urban deprivation, unemployment, economic recession, aging population and environmental degradation. Furthermore, the network was driven by the belief that such policy framework should better take into consideration the position of cities, as well as the effect of EU policy on those cities (Sampaio, 1994: 287-288; also Griffiths, 1995). So the establishment of an EU urban policy clearly lies at the heart of the EUROCITIES activity. In fact, the network is convinced that cities will define the future life of Europe by determining the social, economic and environmental progress in the EU (Griffiths, 1995: 217).

Griffiths (1995: 220) points to the variance in motives between cities and city groups (parties, politicians, officers) to join the network. Especially for cities that did not qualify for the European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund, a financial motive (i.e. seeking access to European funding) certainly underpinned the decision to join the network. Yet equally important were practical motives (e.g. exchange of experience, know-how, ideas; informal contacts; first-hand information on EU affairs; city profiling) and, increasingly, the political objective of fostering a coherent European urban policy. These motivations concur with the general aim and operational routines of EUROCITIES which are basically twofold (www.eurocities.eu). Firstly, the network explicitly seeks to influence and cooperate with the European institutions on common problems (e.g. by shaping the opinion of stakeholders in Brussels and shifting the focus of European legislation so as to allow city governments to cope with the strategic challenges at the local level). As such, EUROCITIES aims at amplifying the important role of local authorities in the EU multi-level system. Secondly, EUROCITIES serves as a platform for sharing knowledge and exchanging ideas amongst its members¹. Finally, Griffith (1995: 218) adds helping non-EU cities to get familiar with the EU and supporting Central and East-European cities in their transition towards democracy and market economy as two additional secondary goals of the network in its initial stages. Given the number of current members from these regions (figure 1), EUROCITIES seems to have achieved some success in its objective to integrate cities outside the EU into "an expanded European political and economic space" (Griffiths, 1995: 218).

Connecting the aforementioned goals and actions to our theoretical conception of urban Europeanisation, we can state that EUROCITIES very much embodies the multifaceted nature of the urban activity at EU-level. Indeed, as a trans-European inter-city network EUROCITIES generally comes under the horizontal dimension of urban Europeanisation. In the network cities unite on a European scale to exchange knowledge, expertise and best practices. Yet simultaneously, the network acts as a conduit for information about European legislation and a facilitator of collective participation in European projects (top-down function), as well as a collective lobby vehicle to approach the EU institutions (bottom-up function). Regarding the latter, EUROCITIES is even regarded as one of the most important and influential networks of cities and local authorities in the European polity (Schultze, 2003; Heinelt & Niederhafner, 2008; Atkin-

son & Rossignolo, 2010). This peak position stems from several reasons. Internal organisation is certainly one of them. The internal information exchange, for instance, profits from the work of the Secretariat and staff exchange schemes supported by the European Commission (Sampaio, 1994). The thematic fora play an important part in this respect as well in terms of information dissemination, response coordination and project guidance (Griffiths, 1995). Secondly (and partly following from the above), as a collective actor EUROCIITIES can build on strong expertise, vast resources, influential members and a clear focus on major urban/metropolitan issues (Griffiths, 1995; Schultze, 2003; Heinelt & Niederhafner, 2008). Finally, the extensive outreach of the network meets the preference of the European institutions to engage with actors who represent the interest of local government in a collective, aggregate fashion (see Callanan, 2012).

EU urban policy: vantage point of urban Europeanisation and EUROCIITIES involvement

The development of the EU urban policy might serve as a pre-eminent example of the circular Europeanisation process and the active involvement of EUROCIITIES therein. Initially, the EU's geographical policy focus on regions as well as its sectoral focus on agriculture and fisheries somehow pushed urban policy questions into the background (Griffiths, 1995; also Stewart, 1994). This situation changed from the 1990s onwards with the establishment of the pioneering URBAN Community Initiative in 1994 (Carpenter, 2006), the publication of two Urban Communications by the European Commission and a 'European Urban Forum' (Atkinson, 2001). These and other urban initiatives were prompted by a complex mixture of structural socio-economic problems (e.g. social polarisation, exclusion and segregation, unemployment, poverty, fiscal crisis, industrial decline) which predominantly occurred at the city-level (Stewart, 1994; Atkinson, 2001; Carpenter, 2006). The rationale behind the burgeoning field of urban policy was, and still is, the belief that these common problems should be tackled on a European scale (Sampaio, 1994). In fact, cities host almost 80% of the EU citizens, they are centres of the social and cultural life (Atkinson, 2001) as well as the engines of economic growth and competitiveness (Carpenter, 2006). Cities also offer the appropriate scale for enhancing the democratic quality of the European polity, e.g. fostering citizen participation, and dealing with environmental challenges (Stewart, 1994).

Given the limited legislative and political powers of the Commission with regard to urban policy, we should conceive of the EU urban policy as a collection of 'soft instruments' (Atkinson & Rossignolo, 2010) or 'micro policies' (Carpenter, 2006). The 'urban agenda' or 'urban *acquis*' involves, amongst others, the explicit recognition of the urban dimension (also in other EU policies), a common methodology of intervention, a collection of knowledge and good practices (Atkinson & Rossignolo, 2010), but also EU funded programmes rooted in the EU economic and cohesion policy (Schultze, 2003) such as URBAN, URBACT and, under the current programming period, Horizon2020,

ESPON or EUKN. Following from this particular stature as elements of EU ‘policy promotion’ instead of binding legislation (Schultze, 2003) and the limited resources attributed to these programmes, the success of the EU urban policy should be expressed in indirect and symbolic rather than economic terms. In this regard, cities can develop local capacity, trust and partnerships as well as innovative approaches to urban policy (Carpenter, 2006). Meanwhile, the EU urban policy amplifies the voice of cities in the EU and helps to emancipate cities vis-à-vis the central state (Stewart, 1994).

This final element brings us to the critical importance of coordination between government layers for the EU urban policy to succeed (Atkinson, 2001; Carpenter, 2006). On a formal level, the EU has already taken some careful steps in establishing a multi-level polity which entails the active involvement of the local level in its policy-making processes. The Commission’s White Paper on European Governance (2001), the establishment of the Committee of the Regions (1994) and its White Paper on Multilevel Governance (2009), the explicit recognition of local self-government and the subsidiarity principle in the Lisbon Treaty are items often cited to exemplify this trend (Panara & Varney, 2013). The Pact of Amsterdam now reinvigorates the ambition to actively and structurally involve cities in the development of an EU urban policy on the basis of the partnership principle. EUROCITIES is thereby formally acknowledged as one of the privileged partners to represent the urban interest. Already two decades ago, Griffiths (1995: 215) summed up the network’s assets for assuming such role:

“Given the combined political and economic weight of its member cities, the ambitions of its leading figures, and the success it has enjoyed so far in forging effective working relationships between itself and key elements of the decision-making apparatus of the European Union (EU), EUROCITIES looks set to become one of the major influences in the evolution of a European urban policy.”

And even though scholars have been sceptical about the effective implementation of such multi-level partnerships in practice thus far (Atkinson, 2001; Schultze, 2003), EUROCITIES would still be able to push the EU urban agenda as what Schultze (2003: 129) calls “the main urban policy lobby”.

Analytical framework of urban Europeanisation

The theoretical overview of the Europeanisation concept has indicated that Europeanisation not only engenders valuable opportunities (e.g. EU funding, interest representation, knowledge exchange) and challenges (e.g. legal compliance) for local government. It has also been demonstrated that these processes considerably impact upon the internal organisation and operation of the cities. Several authors have therefore classified local authorities according to their ‘degree of Europeanisation’. Goldsmith and Klausen (1997) for instance distinguished between counteractive, passive, reactive and proactive local authorities on the basis of a comparative country study. These four catego-

ries largely coincide with retrenchment, inertia, absorption and transformation as the four general outcomes of the Europeanisation process or continuum put forward by Radaelli (2000).

This paper applies the analytical framework developed by John (2001) to assess local authorities in terms of their position in the Europeanisation process (figure 2). John classified the different elements of urban Europeanisation as nine consecutive, ascending steps on a ladder. In the minimal phase at the bottom of the ladder, local authorities merely seek to meet the EU's legal requirements (i.e. transposing European directives and regulations), gather information about European policies and rules, and disseminate European information to the private and public sector. Once the authorities enter the second, financially orientated, phase they aim at maximising their efforts in the competition for European funding and use these European funds to facilitate the economic regeneration of the locality. The subsequent third phase in the Europeanisation process is called networking. It includes two further sports on the ladder: linking with other local organisations participating in the EU as well as participating in formal EU international networks (such as EURO-CITIES) and co-operating in joint projects. In the final phase local government can be called 'fully Europeanised'. The cities then incorporate EU policies in their internal policy agenda and participate in the process of EU decision-making, e.g. advising the EU on implementation issues.

Connecting John's Europeanisation ladder to the different theoretical dimensions of urban Europeanisation suggests that a fully Europeanised city engages in both top-down (step A, D and E), bottom-up (step H) and horizontal (step F and G) activities whilst adjusting its internal organisation and operation (step B, C and I) along the way. The following section sets out how we operationalised this analytical framework in order to measure urban Europeanisation in the EURO-CITIES network.

Data and methods

The basic research question of the paper asks to what extent EURO-CITIES members are Europeanised along the lines of John's ladder of Europeanisation. To answer this question the paper draws on survey data that have been gathered by the administration of the Belgian city of Antwerp in the context of an internal training program in cooperation with EURO-CITIES. In 2015 (April-May), an email-survey was sent out to the European liaison officers (i.e. official EURO-CITIES contact persons) of all EURO-CITIES members at the time (N=181). Given their function in the city administration, these respondents are well-placed to give an informed opinion on the state of Europeanisation in their respective cities. The survey procedure resulted in a final dataset of

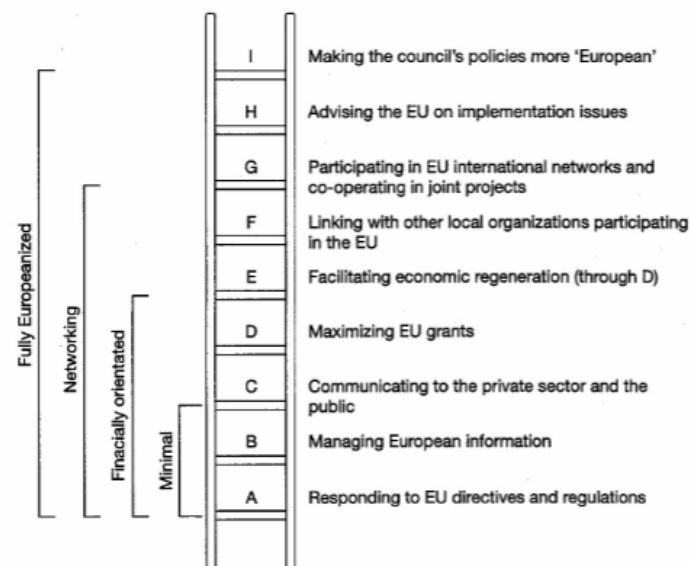


Fig. 2 - Ladder of Europeanisation (John, 2001: 72)

48 European cities, representing a response rate of 26.5%. The dataset includes both members from the executive committee (5), full members (32), associated partners (9) and associated members (2) from 17 countries². The original (and unpublished) dataset was made available to us upon request.

The survey covered a vast range of topics dealing with urban Europeanisation from a predominantly administrative perspective (see Appendix 1 for original questions). Our theoretical Europeanisation ladder is operationalised as follows³. In the minimal phase, our analysis includes the management of European information (i.e. interest for European affairs and satisfaction with the knowledge/follow-up of EU policy/legislation in the city administration) as well as the communication of European affairs to an internal (i.e. city departments/personnel), political (i.e. local politicians) and external (i.e. citizens/businesses/civil society) ‘audience’. Three follow-up questions are used to further substantiate these minimal steps (i.e. the object of the interest in as well as the knowledge/follow up of EU affairs in the city administration, the object of the internal communication of EU affairs in the administration). The subsequent, financially orientated, phase is measured by the maximisation of EU grants (i.e. the extent to which the member cities make use of funding opportunities offered by the EU). Thirdly, our analysis contains the links with other local organisations participating in the EU (i.e. inviting officials/politicians from other cities) as an item covering the networking phase. Finally, most emphasis is placed on the fully Europeanised phase including advising the EU on implementation issues (i.e. how does the city lobby towards the EU institutions?) and making the city’s policies and organisation more ‘European’ (i.e. establishing an EU department and a training program on EU affairs, adapting policies from other European cities, organising visits to EU institutions for local politicians or city personnel, inviting EU officials to the city and aspiring to increase the interest for EU affairs in the city administration).

The second aim of the paper is to uncover certain underlying patterns of urban Europeanisation in our survey data. Following up on the descriptive analysis of the cities’ scores on the individual Europeanisation items, we also create a general index of urban Europeanisation by adding up the scores on the 12 items of the ladder⁴. In this way our analysis gives insight into both the diversity and the scope of the cities’ Europeanisation process. Furthermore, we also run a series of bivariate analyses scrutinising the association between the 12 different empirical items of our Europeanisation ladder to uncover more fine-grained patterns of Europeanisation. In fact, taking into account the theoretical picture and underlying rationale of the Europeanisation ladder, we could for instance expect that high-end Europeanisation (e.g. lobbying the EU, making the city policies more ‘European’) is often a function of the first, minimal steps in the process.

Our final research objective is to examine whether EUROCITIES membership matters for understanding the wider Europeanisation process of its members. Is membership of this prestigious network the herald of a strong and encompassing process of internal adaptation to Europe overall? To tackle this question we also run a series of bivariate analyses between the 12 Europeanisation items of our study and two items representing

EUROCITIES membership. The first is the ‘membership history’ (i.e. the number of years cities have been member of the network at the moment of response). This figure is based on a membership list received from EUROCITIES. The membership history in our dataset ranges from 1 to 23 years ($N=47$, $X=15.2$, $S=6.9$). The second item refers to the ‘involvement in the network’ represented by an index that has been constructed in consultation with a EUROCITIES officer. Quantifying such involvement is obviously no straightforward matter. For instance, participation to network fora and working groups is based on their relevance to the city policies and priorities, yet travel expenses for network meetings may equally put a financial strain on the participation rate (Griffiths, 1995). As such, being strongly involved in but a few areas might result from a deliberate policy choice as well as financial restrictions – and does not necessarily reflect the city’s total impact in the network *per se*. We tried to paint a nuanced picture of the members’ involvement by considering different elements for our index⁵. The scores for the cities in our dataset vary considerably from a modest 0.7 up to 13.4 ($N=48$, $X=5.5$, $S=2.7$). This result points to a remarkable and strong difference in at least the formal engagement of cities in the network. Due to the skewed frequency distribution of this variable, however, we recoded the index in three equal groups of 16 cities for the analysis further on⁶.

The Europeanisation of EUROCITIES members

The first part of our empirical analysis examines the Europeanisation of the EUROCITIES members on the basis of the Europeanisation ladder developed by John (2001). The results of this exercise are presented in table 1. In John’s analytical model, the first phase of the ladder contains the minimal steps of cities’ Europeanisation trajectory. We operationalised this phase in three items: the city administrations’ interest in EU affairs, its (perceived) knowledge and follow-up of EU policy/legislation and the communication of EU affairs to three different audiences, i.e. the city personnel/departments (internal), local politicians (political) as well as citizens, businesses and civil society (external).

A first striking result is the fact that a considerable group of city administrations in our dataset are not very (14.6%) or only modestly (58.3%) interested in/enthusiastic about EU affairs. The same goes for the perceived knowledge and follow-up of EU policies and legislation which is considered satisfactory by barely 20% of the EU liaison officers. Such low figures suggest that even a pioneering European city network comprises reactive (or even passive) cities as much as truly proactive ones in terms of an Europeanised (administrative) attitude and culture when it comes to managing European information. Furthermore, these low scores on both items immediately question the very linearity and cumulative order of the Europeanisation ladder. Some additional questions probed further into the interest and knowledge of EU affairs in the city administration. With regard to the object of the interest in EU affairs, our survey hints that city administrations are mainly interested in EU affairs on a functional basis and following from

their internal competences. In fact, most interest goes out to more practical items which substantiate the task package of the administration such as EU funding (73.9% high interest) and to a lesser extent European projects (42.2%) and best practices in other cities (39.1%). The ‘political’ side of urban Europeanisation (e.g. lobby activities of the city, participation in EU consultation) but also the urban impact of EU policies and legislation does not receive much interest from the city administration. Thematically, environment (60.4%) is the spearhead of EUROCIITIES’ policy agenda city administrations most actively monitor, more than mobility, economic development and international cooperation (monitored by some 40% of the members each). EUROCIITIES members are less familiar with knowledge society, culture and social affairs (25-29%).

The third step on our Europeanisation ladder implies the dissemination of EU affairs to the political and administrative branch of the city as well as society at large. Whilst almost every city administration communicates on EU affairs internally (93.8%), this numbers drops to 75% and 62.5% with respect to local politicians and the external world (i.e. citizens, businesses and civil society). Yet taken together (see table 1) more than 80% of the cities included in our survey do have a routine of communicating on EU matters to two of the aforementioned target groups or more. Arguably, such figures would exceed our expectations of the average local authority in Europe. There is only a smaller group of city administrations that (still) seems to work more isolated on Europeanisation dossiers. If we then take a closer look at the internal dissemination of EU information, we find a trend that is consistent with the administrations’ interest in EU affairs in the first place. Most communication concerns EU funding opportunities (internally disseminated by 87.5% of the cities), followed by other instrumental elements such as European projects managed by the city (77.1%), participation in the EUROCIITIES network (77.1%) and best practices in other European cities (56.3%). Europeanisation items of a political nature (e.g. lobbying, participation of the city to the EU consultation process) are less frequently discussed internally (around 35%).

Ascending the Europeanisation ladder one step further brings us to the financially oriented phase of cities’ European engagement. A clear majority of EUROCIITIES members (68.7%) indicate that they apply for European funding in a successful way. A second group (14.6%) does apply as well but not always in a successful manner (yet). This success potentially varies according to the particular type of programme and its qualification criteria (e.g. Structural Funds versus Community Initiative) or the internal experience with and expertise on funding processes (e.g. some cities have only recently begun to apply). Additionally, a third group (16.7%) exists which does not (yet) apply for European funding. The respondents mentioned the unawareness of the opportunities, complexity and time constraints as possible reasons for this non-participation.

The finding above seems to confirm the contention that cities do not only join EUROCIITIES with Euro bills in mind. Scrutinising the following phases of cities’ Europeanisation trajectory provides further evidence to support this claim. As regards informal links with other local authorities in the EU (i.e. the networking phase), the table indicates that a large majority of EUROCIITIES members sometimes (70.2%) or even often

(21.3%) invites officials and/or politicians from other European cities. This figure underlines the importance of horizontal Europeanisation *in se* as expressed by the strong connections, interactions and exchange schemes between local authorities in a European setting. It also pertains to the mission of the EUROCITIES network which obviously facilitates such exchange. The final phase in cities' Europeanisation process is called the fully Europeanised phase. It consists of advising the EU on implementation issues and, finally, making the city's policies and organisation more 'European'. The table shows that, when asked how the city lobbies towards the EU institutions, only a small minority of EUROCITIES members (10.4%) tends to refrain from every lobby activity whatsoever. We might reasonably assume that this abstention also implies not being actively engaged in, or being aware of, lobby activities of EUROCITIES as a collective actor. The largest group of cities (45.8%), however, predominantly relies on the collective lobby work done by EUROCITIES (or other European networks). Hence, apart from being an effective network facilitator EUROCITIES appears to fulfil its collective lobby mission as well. Finally, the large number of cities (43.8%) who lobby the EU institutions also in a direct way – most of them in combination with the collective EUROCITIES lobby – exemplifies the strength of the network as a grouping of Europe's most powerful and influential cities.

The remaining items in the table refer to the Europeanisation of the cities' internal policies and organisation. Generally, EUROCITIES members tend to score quite high on the different elements of this form of high-end Europeanisation. In a considerable group of cities (87.2%) increasing the interest or enthusiasm for European affairs in the city administration is part of the political and/or administrative agenda. Some 80% of the member cities at last sometimes invite EU officials to the city. Visits to the EU institutions for city personnel or politicians, on the other hand, are at least sometimes organised by nearly 75% of the cities. In two thirds of the members cities then a department or unit for European affairs has been established whilst some 30% have set up an internal training programme on European affairs for the city personnel. As such, it appears that the relatively high degree of cities' organisational adaptation to Europe somewhat contrasts with the lower scores on some items at the bottom of the Europeanisation ladder. Finally, in almost 60% of the EUROCITIES member cities the EU liaison officer could think of a city policy or initiative that has been inspired by a policy from another European city. This result further suggests that EUROCITIES appears to succeed in fulfilling its mission to engender, or facilitate, the exchange of knowledge and best practices between its member cities.

Considering the different elements of the Europeanisation trajectory of EUROCITIES members outlined above, a nuanced picture comes forward. The general Europeanisation profile of EUROCITIES consists of cities which establish a European department, model policy (initiatives) to the practice of other European cities, lobby the EU institutions in a collective way, disseminate information about the EU to a diverse audience and successfully apply for European funding. Accordingly, we could argue that the average EUROCITIES member takes a broad range of steps across the different Europe-

Table 1. The Europeanisation of EU-ROCITIES members

Phase	Step on Europeanisation ladder	%	N
Fully Europeanised	Making the city's policies/organisation more 'European'		
	Policy inspired by other (European) city	58.3	48
	EU department	66.7	48
	Training program (on EU affairs)	29.2	48
	Visits to EU (for personnel/politicians)		48
	- Often	14.6	
	- Sometimes	58.3	
	- Never	27.1	
	Invitation EU officials (to the city)		47
	- Often	12.8	
	- Sometimes	68.1	
	- Never	19.1	
	Ambition to increase interest (EU affairs)		47
	- It is on the political and administrative agenda	21.3	
	- It is on the political or administrative agenda	65.9	
- There is no such ambition	12.8		
Advising the EU on implementation issues			
Lobby EU		48	
- Directly and relying on EUROCITIES/other European networks	43.8		
- Relying on EUROCITIES/other European networks	45.8		
- The city does not actively lobby	10.4		
Networking	Linking with other local organisations participating in the EU		
	Invitation other cities		47
	- Often	21.3	
	- Sometimes	70.2	
- Never	8.5		
Financially orientated	Maximising EU grants		
	EU funding		48
	- We apply and are successful	68.7	
	- We apply but are not (always) successful (yet)	14.6	
- We do not apply	16.7		
Minimal	Communicating on European affairs		
	Communication audience (internally, local politicians, externally)		48
	- All three groups	52.1	
	- Two groups	29.1	
	- One or no groups	18.8	
	Managing European information		
	Satisfaction knowledge EU		48
	- Satisfied	18.7	
	- Neutral	50	
	- Not satisfied	31.3	
Interest EU affairs		48	
- High	27.1		
- Neutral	58.3		
- Low	14.6		

anisation dimensions to become fairly Europeanised in practice. Still for each item we also find a group of cities lagging behind, or choosing not to walk the route to Europe. Additionally, the average member city sometimes invites officials from the EU or other European cities and also organises visits to the EU institutions for personnel and politicians the other way around. Meanwhile, the interest in and satisfaction with the knowledge of EU affairs in the city administration should (still) be called mediocre – even though boosting the interest is placed on either the political or the administrative agenda in many cities. Some cities have also designed, or offered, a training program in EU affairs for their personnel.

Beneath this general surface the strong variance between the different member cities becomes even more apparent when we add up the scores for the 12 different items into an overall index of urban Europeanisation ranging from 0 to 24. On average, the members of the EUROCITIES network tend to be fairly Europeanised indeed ($X=13.59$, $S=4.04$). Yet the individual city scores nearly span the entire spectrum of the index with a minimum score of 4 and a maximum of 20. Whereas a particular group of cities might be called truly proactive in terms of the Europeanisation process they have been through, the largest group would probably (still) qualify as reactive whilst the network also seems to include cities that have remained more passive to this day.

Instead of being a linear and cumulative trajectory, urban Europeanisation thus rather seems to function as a toolbox from which cities select, develop or implement a specific combination of elements. The literature has indicated that this combination originates from, amongst others, the specific city context (e.g. resources, organisational culture and history) as well as deliberate policy choices (e.g. by political and administrative policy entrepreneurs) (Hamedinger & Wollhardt, 2010). To reveal more fine-grained patterns in our toolbox of urban Europeanisation we now statistically examine the associations between the 12 different Europeanisation items in our analysis. Table 2 presents the Kendall's tau-scores and the significance level of the associations between these 12 items. Only significant results are displayed in the table⁷.

A first striking result of this exercise is the positive correlation of two items of the first phase of the Europeanisation ladder, i.e. the minimal phase, with many items on the upper sports. Not surprisingly, our analysis acknowledges the interest of the administration in EU affairs as a general precondition for the Europeanisation of the city and its administration. When city administrations are strongly interested in EU affairs, cities tend to score higher on different other elements of the Europeanisation process as well. Arguably, the mechanism might also work inversely, for instance when visits to the European institutions translate into an intensification of the interest of the city

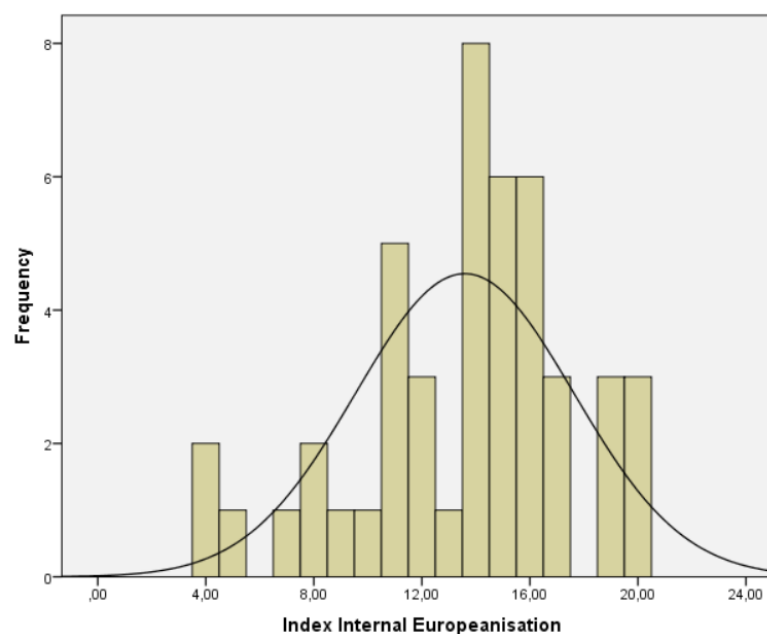


Fig. 3 - Europeanisation index of EUROCITIES members

Table 2 - Bivariate association between the Europeanisation items

	Policies inspired by other city	EU department	Training program	Visits to EU	Invitation EU officials	Ambition to increase interest	Lobby EU	Invitation other cities	EU funding	Communication audience	Satisfaction EU knowledge
EU department	.299**										
Training program											
Visits to EU	.296**	.260*									
Invitation EU officials		.241*		.316**							
Ambition to increase interest		.244*									
Lobby EU				.300**		.266*					
Invitation other cities				.288**	.363***						
EU funding											
Communication audience											
Satisfaction EU knowledge			.284**				.418***		.422***		
Interest administration				.370***	.251*	.355***	.383***			.226*	.423***

* $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$

administration in European affairs. A similar positive effect is found concerning the knowledge and follow-up of EU affairs. This item appears to be particularly relevant to the financial and regulatory mobilisation of the city towards the EU (i.e. seeking funding and lobbying).

These linear patterns of Europeanisation, however, do not recur systematically in the subsequent phases of the process as they have been theorised in John's ladder. The communication of EU affairs and successfully applying for European funding, for instance, are two features of Europeanisation which are not significantly connected to the subsequent steps on the Europeanisation ladder. Establishing an internal training programme on EU affairs for the city personnel is not significantly associated with many other Europeanisation items higher on the ladder either. Still cities might indirectly benefit from these programmes since they correspond with higher levels of satisfaction with the knowledge and follow-up of EU affairs in the city administration. Finally, some particular patterns may be singled out in the networking and fully Europeanised phase. Establishing a department for EU affairs tends to go hand in hand with both the organisation of visits to the EU institutions for local politicians and city personnel, the invitation of EU officials to the city, an ambition to increase the interest of the city personnel in EU affairs as well as inter-city policy exchange. However, some of these associations are only significant at a very modest level ($p < .10$). Secondly, the city's lobby function not only seems contingent upon the interest in and knowledge of EU affairs, it is also connected to the organisation of visits to the EU and the ambition to enhance the European interest in the administration. Lastly, a pattern of networking and policy learning emerges which is driven by exchange schemes between the city, officials or politicians from other European cities and the EU.

The third and final part of our empirical analysis now explores how EUROCITIES membership relates to this general picture of urban Europeanisation. On the one hand, such analysis indicates that the historical involvement in the network (i.e. the number of membership years) is not significantly associated with the Europeanisation of member cities as such (i.e. the general index), nor does it concur with any of the single items from the Europeanisation toolbox in a significant manner. The particular involvement of the cities in the network, on the other hand, is significantly correlated with the Europeanisation process. Cities that are strongly involved in the network tend to be strongly Europeanised in general (Kendall's tau = .271, $p = .024$). More specifically, such strong involvement often goes hand in hand with inter-city policy learning or exchange (Kendall's tau = .244, $p = .076$), lobbying the EU institutions (Kendall's tau = .391, $p = .003$) and successfully applying for EU funding (Kendall's tau = .221, $p = .095$). These three items probably represent the most tangible benefits of urban Europeanisation for cities. Hence, once again our analysis seems to suggest that EUROCITIES succeeds in achieving its basic objectives – even if this is mostly the case for its highly involved members. We could therefore also perceive the involvement in EUROCITIES as a significant indicator of the overall degree of Europeanisation amongst its member cities.

Conclusions

The Urban Agenda and the Pact of Amsterdam (2016) give new impetus to the development of an EU urban policy and the role of partnerships in doing so. Starting from the premise that the Europeanisation of cities is one of the preconditions for the effective inclusion of cities in these partnerships, our paper analysed the multi-dimensional Europeanisation process of cities from the leading European city network EUROCITIES. This network not only groups Europe's biggest and most influential cities, it is also formally acknowledged as one of the privileged partners in the Pact to develop the Urban Agenda.

What are the main lessons to be learned from this exercise? Firstly, even a well-established and prestigious network such as EUROCITIES contains a substantial internal variance between truly proactive members and more reactive or even passive ones in terms of urban Europeanisation. This variance is noted in general terms as well as between the different constituting parts of the Europeanisation process. For instance, in some cities the administration does not fulfil some of the basic criteria of urban Europeanisation such as being interested in and informed about EU affairs. Moreover, the interest and knowledge of the administration mostly concern items that relate to its specific task package (e.g. funding opportunities, EU projects, best practices from other cities) and less the items belonging to the political sphere (e.g. lobbying, participation in EU consultation, impact of EU legislation). Many cities, on the other hand, better respond to the challenging features of Europeanisation such as networking, lobbying the EU institutions and adjusting the city's policies and organisational structure (e.g. policy exchange with other European cities, establishing an EU department, inviting EU officials to the city). The overall intensity of the cities' Europeanisation trajectory also evolves from being very modest to quite substantial.

Secondly, urban Europeanisation should probably be understood as a hands-on and tailored toolbox of different components rather than the linear and cumulative ladder that was used to structure the analysis. Whilst European interest and knowledge of the city administration often mark high-end Europeanisation, this linear mechanism is not repeated consequently throughout the Europeanisation process further on. For our particular group of cities the (successful) use of EU funding opportunities is less connected to the other elements of the Europeanisation process for instance. On the other hand, additional patterns of urban Europeanisation did occur. Establishing an EU department tends to set other elements of urban Europeanisation into motion. Moreover, a network logic involves policy exchange as well as mutual visits between city officials and politicians, other cities and the EU institutions. Lobbying these EU institutions is often co-determined by other Europeanisation items as well.

Finally, our analysis has demonstrated that the collective dimension of urban Europeanisation matters. Even if EUROCITIES membership might not always guarantee intensive urban Europeanisation overall, it can alleviate some of the pressure on its individual members to become effectively engaged with Europe. In this regard collective

action can compensate for what individual cities lack in terms of resources, capacities or even explicit motivation. Particularly for activities relating to its core mission as a collective lobby actor and facilitator of policy exchange, the network appears to be useful – even if our data suggest that highly involved member cities profit more than others. Given the involvement of EUROCITIES members in lobbying the EU, policy exchange and networking, our paper provides support for the idea that strong trans-European city networks such as EUROCITIES can play a key role in the development of an EU urban policy that effectively reflects the interests of cities and meets the challenges they are increasingly confronted with. Further research will have to evaluate whether, and to what extent, EUROCITIES will actually succeed in this endeavour. Meanwhile on an academic level large-n research could complement our explorative study and examine whether the findings summarised above also apply to smaller municipalities or other city networks (e.g. national and European associations of local government, thematic city networks). Such approach would also allow for more elaborated statistical testing in order to yield more robust conclusions.

ENDNOTES

1 The five main themes which top the current political agenda of the network are: cities as drivers of quality jobs and sustainable growth; inclusive, diverse and creative cities; green, free-flowing and healthy cities; smarter cities; urban innovation and governance in cities.

2 Belgium (1), Cyprus (1), Denmark (1), Finland (2), France (5), Germany (4), Greece (1), Italy (5), Latvia (1), Netherlands (5), Poland (2), Slovakia (1), Spain (8), Sweden (4), UK (5), Bosnia and Herzegovina (1) and Turkey (1).

3 Three sports of John's Europeanisation ladder are not addressed in the analysis: responding to EU directives and regulations, facilitating economic regeneration through EU grants and participating in EU international networks/co-operating in joint projects (this step is taken by every respondent city due to its very membership of the EUROCITIES network).

4 For each item a score of 0, 1 and 2 corresponds to the least, medium (if applicable) and most Europeanised response category displayed in table 1. Response categories are presented in descending order of Europeanisation.

5 The index adds the participation rate in EUROCITIES fora ($[\text{fora memberships city}/\text{total fora}]^*4$), working groups ($[\text{working group memberships city}/\text{total working groups}]^*3$) and projects ($[\text{project memberships city}/\text{total projects}]^*2$) and assigns extra scores for (co-)presidency of the fora (2 and 1.5) and working groups (1 and 0.5), membership of the executive committee (1) and function in the executive committee (president 2.5, vice-president 2, treasurer and secretary 1.5).

6 Strongly involved (6.3-13.4), averagely involved (4.5-6.3), weakly involved (0.7-4.5).

7 Kendall's tau scores indicate the association between variables at ordinal/scale level. Due to the small sample size of our study we distinguish between three different levels of significance ($p < .10$, $p < .05$ and $p < .01$).

Appendix 1: questionnaire

What is the degree of interest and/or enthusiasm for European affairs in your city administration? [high/neutral/low]

What kind of content generates most interest among city personnel? [no interest/some interest/high interest] (evaluate each item)

- European projects managed by your city
- EU funding opportunities
- Urban impact of EU policies and legislation
- Lobby activities of your city
- Best practices in other European cities
- Participation of your city in EUROCITIES and/or other European networks
- Local politicians participating to meeting at European level
- Participation of your city to EU consultation processes

Are you satisfied with the knowledge and follow-up of EU policies and legislation in your city administration?
[satisfied/neutral/dissatisfied]

In which policy areas is the knowledge and follow-up of EU policies and legislation highest? (choose maximum 3 areas)

- Culture
- Economic development
- Environment
- International cooperation
- Knowledge society
- Mobility
- Social affairs

Who does your city administration communicate to on European affairs? (multiple answers possible)

- Internally, towards city departments/personnel
- Local politicians (members of the board and/or city council)
- Citizens
- Businesses
- Civil society
- Other

What is the content of the internal communication within your city administration on European affairs? (multiple answers possible)

- European projects managed by your city
- EU funding opportunities
- Urban impact of EU policies and legislation
- Lobby activities of your city
- Best practices in other European cities
- Participation of your city in EUROCITIES and/or other European networks
- Local politicians participating to meetings at European level
- Participation of your city to EU consultation processes

Do you make use of funding opportunities offered by the EU (centralised funding programme such as Horizon200 or European Regional Development Fund)?

- We do not apply as there is no interest
- We do not apply as we are not aware of the opportunities
- We do not apply as it is too complicated/time consuming
- We apply but are not successful
- We apply and are successful
- Other

Are EU officials and/or officials/politicians from other European cities invited to your city? [never/sometimes/often]

- EU officials
- Officials/politicians from European cities

Does your city organise visits to EU institutions or EU agencies? [never/sometimes/often]

- For city personnel
- For politicians

How does your city lobby towards the EU institutions? (multiple answers possible)

- In a direct way
- The city relies on work done by EUROCITIES and/or other European networks
- The city does not actively lobby
- Other

Does your city have a central department or unit for European affairs? [yes/no]

Does your city have a training programme on European affairs for city personnel? [yes/no]

Is there an ambition in your city to increase the degree of interest and/or enthusiasm for European affairs among city personnel? (multiple answers possible)

- Yes, it is on the political agenda
- Yes, it is on the agenda of the city administration
- No

Do you know of any policies/initiatives implemented in your city that were inspired by a policy from another European city, e.g. after learning about it at a EUROCITIES meeting? [yes/no]

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