

# NATIONAL URBAN POLICY EUROPE & NORTH AMERICA REPORT





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United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)

P. O. Box 30030, 00100 Nairobi GPO KENYA

Tel: 254-020-7623120 (Central Office)

[www.unhabitat.org](http://www.unhabitat.org)

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<b>Coordinator:</b>	Remy Sietchiping
<b>Principal Authors:</b>	Jane Reid, Lucie Charles
<b>Contributors and Reviewers:</b>	John Omwamba, Michael Kinyanjui, Themba Phakathi, Raf Tuts
<b>Editor:</b>	Vicky Quinlan
<b>Design and Layout:</b>	Herbert Kimani, Jean Robert Gatsinzi
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# FOREWORD



I am delighted to present the State of National Urban Policies Report in Europe and North America, an assessment of urban policies in the most urbanized region of the world. The report is a valuable source of information, based on UN-Habitat's case studies of the state of national urban policies in Europe and North America.

The New Urban Agenda, the outcome document of Habitat III, alongside with Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, recognized the transformative power of urbanization as an endogenous source of development, prosperity and employment. While urbanization has historically been associated with economic and social progress, and holds the potential for a more efficient and sustainable use of resources, it is crucial to acknowledge that such opportunities do not occur by coincidence, but must be harnessed through comprehensive and coordinated urban policies, accompanied with the fundamentals of urbanization – rules and regulations, planning and design and a financing model.

The leading role of national governments in the definition and implementation of inclusive and effective urban policies has been increasingly emphasized in the New Urban Agenda. As the stakes of urbanization reach far beyond the city, policies cannot be confined to a single sectorial issue and must encompass an increasingly diverse range of stakeholders. Therefore, responsibility ultimately lies with national governments to lead, direct and coordinate urban policies to enable and facilitate sustainable urban development.

The purpose of this report is not to provide a universal blueprint for national urban policies, but rather to highlight potential challenges, risks and opportunities for the development of national urban policies in Europe and North America, to spark further discussion, reflection and action. The report includes innovative practices, particularly in terms of governance, stakeholder engagement and participation, and the particularity of the supranational influence of the European Union, which illustrate the crucial importance of consensus building and collaboration in the process of national urban policies.

The report is part of a series of five regional reports assessing the state of national urban policies that complement the Global State of National Urban Policies Report, conducted in collaboration between UN-Habitat and the OECD. These studies are timely, as they follow up on Habitat III and Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, and accompany the Second International Conference on National Urban Policy, to be held in Paris, France in May 2017.

I believe that this series of regional reports contributes to building empirical knowledge on the NUP process and will provide useful insight for academia, policy makers and practitioners to further refine guidance and practice in NUP development, thus contributing to the implementation of the global agenda on sustainable development.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joan Clos', written in a cursive style.

**Dr. Joan Clos**

Executive Director, UN-Habitat

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to assess the development, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of national urban policy in Europe and North America. Surveying the experience of countries throughout this region, and highlighting both minor and major case studies, the report emphasizes the diversity of national urban policy characteristics on a regional level, but also identifies certain key regional characteristics. They include: a strong commitment to developing urban policy at national level; the widespread existence of national and regional development plans; an emphasis on balanced regional development, sometimes including restraint on growth of major cities; revitalization of urban areas as a recurrent goal; the frequent encountering of challenges in implementation, resulting in some cases in a perceived lack of impact; and the effects of government retrenchment and austerity in restraining innovation in urban policy.

Also evident among those countries that are member states of the European Union (EU), is the general influence of the EU on development of urban policy in the region through for instance various directives and the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities. This influence is complemented by the broader importance of policy learning in cross-border contexts. At the same time, weight must also be given to the influence of particular historical and political circumstances in varying states. Case studies have demonstrated the importance of these variables. In reviewing the regional overview and case studies, and considering all of these variations, the report's conclusions reinforce the need, in any case where NUP is being contemplated, for a period of patient building of political will.



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