



EUROPEAN POLICY BRIEF

INTRODUCTION



GOVERNING DIVERSITY

The growing hyper-diversity of European cities is creating new challenges and opportunities for policy-makers. This policy brief looks at the governance of urban diversity across the EU. It calls for a culture change amongst policy-makers and outlines some mechanisms through which more effective policies towards diversity can be developed and implemented.

28 FEBRUARY 2014

In recent decades cities have become more economically, socially, and culturally diverse than ever before. Policy-makers are faced with new opportunities but also new challenges. They are required to use existing tools and administrative scales to develop policies that will be effective for increasingly hyper-diverse groups, who possess widely varying needs and outlooks. If handled correctly, policy can encourage enhanced competitiveness, increase social cohesion, bring new cultural vibrancy to places, and help cities to gain from the benefits offered by globalisation. At the same time there are new risks associated with social exclusion, urban disorder, and competition amongst groups for scarce resources.

This *Policy Brief* reports on the findings of the first stage of the DIVERCITIES project. It looks at the relationships between governance and diversity and highlights both the dominant trends in thinking about urban diversity that are found across the EU (and beyond) and the policy implications of these findings. It argues that national governments are often becoming increasingly hostile to all kinds of diversity. At the same time, in metropolitan areas we see a counter-tendency towards more pragmatic and positive approaches, sometimes supported by EU policy. The research shows that a new culture of diversity recognition is required within policy-making circles. This should be supported by a more honest and open set of agendas about the benefits of diversity. As this *Policy Brief* will argue, smarter planning controls and new forms of mainstreaming are also required in the delivery and formulation of urban policy. And more support should be given to local initiatives and welfare policies that promote equalities of outcome as well as equalities of opportunity.

The research for this project was undertaken in 11 EU cities: Antwerp, Athens, Budapest, Copenhagen, Leipzig, London, Milan, Paris, Rotterdam, Tallinn, Warsaw; and 3 non-EU cities: Istanbul, Toronto, and Zurich. In each case the research teams explored dominant narratives and understandings of diversity amongst policy-makers, business leaders, and civil society actors. The main focus was on the city-wide (or metropolitan) scale of analysis and area-based policy initiatives in various policy fields (e.g. intercultural dialogue, public participation, education, economic development, rights and equality, urban planning, housing). All partners produced institutional maps of key organisations, carried out an in-depth analysis of policy documents, strategies, and funding regimes, and conducted between 12-20 interviews with local stakeholders.

We have identified six comparative themes that emerge from the analysis. In Table 1, we compare the findings in each city and indicate the degree to which those themes feature in each case. Despite some notable exceptions, what is striking is the growing **similarity** of policy thinking in contexts that differ markedly.

Theme 1: A Shift From Multiculturalism to Assimilation and Integration

In most countries in recent years there has been a clear move away from an agenda promoting **multiculturalism** towards an increased use of the more restrictive terms **assimilation** and **integration**. The growing hyper-diversity of societies and cities is increasingly viewed by national governments as a threat to social cohesion. Existing policies that promoted greater pluralism and multi-cultural understanding are becoming increasingly discredited at the national level. It is claimed that these help to divide communities and individuals and undermine a collective sense of identity and co-existence. In dealing with new levels of diversity, policy-makers are now stressing the urgent need for integration and an official recognition of the similarities rather than the differences between diverse groups. In some instances this is also being driven by real or imagined threats to social order, such as religious extremism, or the insecurities caused by growing social inequalities. The extent to which this is happening in different countries and the form it is taking in specific cities reflects their particular histories and conditions.

Theme 2: An Increasing Divergence Between National and Urban Policy Agendas With Regard to Diversity

We are witnessing a growing divergence between policy agendas at city and national scales. In many cities a more **pragmatic** approach to diversity is emerging that promotes the positive aspects of difference for competitiveness and social cohesion. This is often in tension with national governments whose policies, as noted above, are generally becoming more restrictive and view diversity as a threat. Moreover, we have found that it is at the sub-metropolitan scale where some of the most progressive and innovative policies and understandings of diversity are now to be found. Local projects are working with the day-to-day effects of economic and social change on the ground and in many cases have adopted pluralist and open approaches. There is also some evidence that EU policies are supporting this process by engaging with local actors and ensuring that Member States fulfil their legal responsibilities to ensure freedom of movement.

Theme 3: An Agenda of Individual Responsibility and Equality of Opportunity

There is a widespread narrative of **active citizenship** across our case studies and an unravelling of the safety-nets provided by nationally-funded welfare state systems. There is an unwillingness to accept structural explanations for the growing social and economic inequalities that exist between groups and individuals. The emphasis, instead, is on the social mobility of citizens and the role of policy in mobilising them to overcome the everyday problems that they encounter in urban life. Individuals should boost their own social mobility and take more responsibility for integrating themselves into the mainstream of everyday society. The policy emphasis has moved away from a concern with **equality of outcomes** to a focus on guaranteeing the **equality of opportunities** for individuals. There is a bias towards more 'creative' and 'entrepreneurial' citizens and groups who are valued for what they contribute to city life. This shift has the potential to adversely impact

certain weaker groups and individuals more than others, as structural inequalities or discrimination means that not everybody has the capacity or skills to empower themselves. It should be noted that in some case study cities, such as Paris and Copenhagen, where strong welfare-republican values remain strong, there has been less of a shift in policy narratives. The same is true in other cases where policy-makers have been less willing to promote an explicit agenda of individualisation for local political reasons.

Theme 4: The Continued Importance of Area-based Interventions and Mixed Communities Policies

There remains a strong emphasis in most cities on **mixed incomes and housing policies** in particular neighbourhoods, with the exceptions of Athens (in which urban policy interventions have fractured in the wake of austerity) and Warsaw (where different policies frame discussions of diversity). Area-based interventions continue to represent an important source of intervention. The narrative of 'mixed communities' is incorporated into discussions on convergence, competitiveness, and neighbourhood cohesion. There is also a growing awareness amongst many policy-makers of the importance of age and lifestyle differences in planning for cities. What we also found, however, is a growing separation between these positive official policy objectives and the changes that are actually taking place under dominant processes of urban development. Everywhere inequalities are on the rise and urban projects are becoming oriented towards gentrification and the construction of housing for creative groups of workers. The limitations of area-based interventions in tackling such inequalities are becoming more evident and posing new challenges for policy-makers.

Theme 5: Mainstreaming and the Rise of Equality Agendas

Whilst area-based approaches are still significant, there is a clear trend towards the **mainstreaming** of policy interventions on diversity. A truly integrationist policy, it is widely argued, is one that is blind to diversity and treats everybody in the same way. The republican tradition of citizenship as a contract between individual citizens and the state is emerging in policy narratives across the EU and beyond. On the one hand, there is a progressive logic to mainstreaming. It is being used to promote more holistic forms of intervention that view inequality as something to be tackled through concerted action. On the other hand, it represents a denial of difference and assumes that the more difficult structural challenges faced by some communities (for example, in prevailing forms of intolerance and discrimination in housing and employment markets) are relatively unimportant. Universalistic legal protections for individuals and groups are put forward as the main mechanism through which the mainstreaming of opportunities will be guaranteed. There is also an emphasis on voluntarism and partnership working on the part of employers in both public and private sectors, rather than compulsion through, for instance, affirmative action programmes or legal quotas.

Theme 6: The Impacts of Austerity

The echoes from the financial crisis of 2008 are still being felt in our case study cities, although to differing degrees. There is little doubt that economic uncertainties, public funding cuts, and the threats posed by globalisation are having a negative impact on the effectiveness of social cohesion and mobility policies in many cases. There are three principal impacts that emerge from the research:

1. There is an enhanced emphasis on the importance of economic growth and the role that a diversity of skills, talent, and employment play in helping firms to maintain their competitiveness. In many cities policy-makers and business leaders have adopted an **instrumental approach** to diversity. They argue that the more diverse a workforce, the more successful its firms. Business groups, in particular, have been amongst the strongest supporters of more open and tolerant migration agendas. In the wake of austerity reforms, such arguments are becoming stronger, particular at the city level. This, in part, accounts for the growing divergence that we found in many cases between the narratives of national governments and city authorities.
2. Austerity is having a major impact on government capacities and welfare budgets. Urban programmes and interventions have been down-scaled in almost all cases, even where the

impacts of the economic downturn have been relatively light. In some cities, notably Athens and London, this is leading to a **forced devolution** of responsibilities onto individuals, neighbourhood-based communities, and civil society groups. It is also finding expression in a **new localism** in which national governments are handing powers to local actors to shape policy responses. However, in many instances these responsibilities are being devolved with no extra or reduced transfers of financial resources. In extreme cases this is leading to the abandonment of vulnerable groups and interests in local policy making and exposing citizens to new risks. Alongside this, in cities such as Toronto we are also seeing private business actors playing a stronger role in picking up welfare projects that are, in theory, intended for civil society and voluntary groups. Privatisation has the potential to become much more significant in post-austerity welfare, even though its costs and benefits to the population and to democratic systems have yet to be properly assessed.

3. Economic crisis is fuelling a more **reactionary politics** in some locations and a more **cautious approach towards diversity and migration** from governments and policy-makers. In all cities and countries studied, debates over diversity have become hotly contested. At its most acute, neo-fascist movements are emerging along with anti-immigration and anti-EU parties. There were marked differences between those cities whose populations continue to grow (such as London, Rotterdam, Toronto, and Istanbul) and those that are experiencing out-migration and even decline (Leipzig is a good example). In the former, issues such as housing provision and the availability of employment have become contentious issues. In the latter, reductions in population numbers are generating different policy concerns with in-migration seen as a long term solution by some, whereas others are concerned about the effects this might have on existing populations.

Table 1: Overview of Case Study Cities and Diversity Policy Characteristics by Theme

City	Theme 1: Shift from multiculturalism to assimilation and integration	Theme 2: Differences between city agendas and national policy	Theme 3: An agenda of individual responsibility	Theme 4: Continued importance of area-based interventions/ mixed communities policies	Theme 5: Evidence of mainstreaming and equality agendas	Theme 6: The impacts of austerity
Antwerp	***	**	***	**	***	**
Athens	*	*	*	*	**	***
Budapest	**	*	**	***	**	***
Copenhagen	0	***	*	***	***	*
Istanbul	***	**	*	**	***	*
Leipzig	0	*	*	***	0	*
London	**	***	***	***	***	**
Milan	*	***	**	***	**	***
Paris	0	**	*	***	***	*
Rotterdam	***	*	***	***	***	**
Tallinn	**	***	*	***	**	**
Toronto	*	*	*	***	*	**
Warsaw	0	*	**	*	***	*
Zurich	**	***	***	***	*	0

Key: 0 = Absent from policy narratives in the city
 * = Present to a low degree in policy narratives in the city
 ** = Present to a medium degree in policy narratives in the city
 *** = Present to a high degree in policy narratives in the city

Promote More Open Democratic Discussions and Encounters

Issues surrounding diversity need to be openly discussed. In many instances policy-makers and professionals have been unwilling to raise more 'difficult' topics such as racism, discrimination, unequal treatment, and arguments for welfare-led redistribution. In formal policy narratives diversity is often converted into simple categorisations and treated as a 'good thing' and an issue on which different interests can agree. We suggest that there should be a more **honest discussion** that gives due **recognition** to some of the core challenges and choices that policy-makers and citizens face in hyper-diverse cities. It is only through the creation of new platforms of democratic engagement that more extreme views can be countered and the realities of life in cities can be brought to light. It is through such engagements that more efficient, effective, and legitimate modes of policy-making will emerge.

Support Local Projects and Initiatives

Some of the most innovative and proactive policies towards hyper-diversity are **being undertaken by local communities and local-level authorities**. However, in many cases they are not being adequately resourced and/or are being given responsibilities that require complex professional judgements to be made that are beyond the capacities of voluntary organisations and/or overstretched local authority bureaucracies. There is also a danger that projects to support local interests become the preserve of a growing number of private consultants. Whilst this may have benefits in some places, it also has the danger of creating further layers of complexity and cost. Such activities must be closely regulated and only introduced where an evidence-based case can be made and cannot replace some of the basic tasks which the state, and its redistributive capacity, should perform.

Introduce Smarter Planning Controls

In some instances, local projects may be more effective. However, in others it may be that **smarter forms of planning control need to be exercised** in order to support more just and sustainable policy outcomes. In fast-growing cities new taxes and/or regulations on property could be used to reduce levels of gentrification, whilst capturing and recycling the benefits of development to a diverse range of groups. New social housing projects, for example, could play a major role in supporting those most in need, boost social cohesion, and encourage social mobility. In other instances where demand is weaker, policy should look to address market failures and intervene directly to produce community infrastructure. Our recommendation is that, whilst no 'one size fits all' policy towards planning is appropriate, a smarter approach that considers the full range of fiscal and regulatory options is required if policy is to encourage greater mobility, competitiveness, and cohesion. This should not be limited to piecemeal attempts to encourage active citizenship. As and where required, it may involve more direct state provision, a more balanced set of planning priorities, and the creation of stronger forums for meaningful democratic engagement with a wider range of groups and interests.

Promote Diversity Awareness and Recognition

Efforts should be made to boost the **awareness and recognition** of hyper-diversity amongst policy-makers and state officials. This may require new formal training programmes for those working with diverse groups, particularly in welfare services and planning. Policy-makers should also be better informed as to current trends and fund research that identifies the true scale and character of demographic changes in cities. This should be disseminated to a wide range of audiences. Recognising hyper-diversity is the first step towards the establishment of more effective policy-making systems.

Mainstreaming Diversity

Diversity awareness and thinking should be **embedded into the formulation and implementation of all welfare and planning policies**. It should not be seen as a bolt-on or afterthought. Nor should it be ignored, as is currently happening with ‘mainstreaming’ programmes in many cities. What seem to be ‘generic’ welfare cuts have a disproportionately large impact on more vulnerable groups. Other ‘diversity-neutral’ urban policies in fields such as housing and/or public space provision can similarly discriminate against particular groups. New regulatory requirements could be considered in which it is compulsory for organisations and policy-makers to assess the impacts of policies on hyper-diversity before they are introduced and then monitor their impacts over time. These need not be overly-bureaucratic but could encourage a new culture within institutions so that key decisions are thought about in relation to a range of wider outcomes.

Pay More Attention to Equalities of Outcome as Well as Equalities of Opportunity

In most cities inequalities have grown. Yet policy responses focus on opening up opportunities for citizens rather than seeking to ensure more equality in policy outcomes. More concern with the latter is a necessary prerequisite for enhanced policy effectiveness. By focussing only on opportunities, policies are currently failing those who are least able and most vulnerable. Individuals and communities are being given responsibilities without the resources to support their actions. There should be more of a **focus on job creation, wage increases, direct welfare support for housing, and an emphasis on the creation of more diverse economies**, rather than a limited concern with so-called ‘creative’ industries.

Promote Diversity as an Economic Asset

EU businesses will be more competitive if they employ and empower workers from a diversity of backgrounds. Too much talent is currently being ignored and recruitment practices could be greatly improved. Much of this concerns **diversity awareness**. Voluntary partnerships between business organisations and urban authorities are having positive outcomes in some of our case study cities and this is a model that could be used more widely across the EU. Some consideration should also be given to the implementation of regulated quotas and targets, although such policies could only be justified by a stronger evidence base than that which presently exists. There would also have to be agreement on how the impacts of such regulations could be calibrated, judged, and monitored.

Ensure That Legal Protections Apply to All Citizens

Under EU law all citizens have a right to access justice systems. The research has indicated how important **legal protections** are for vulnerable groups and citizens and how they provide guaranteed minimum levels of provision. With austerity cuts, however, legal structures have come under growing strain and there is evidence from some cities that they are becoming increasingly difficult to access for under-resourced groups. This constitutes a real and present threat to effective planning for hyper-diversity.

RESEARCH PARAMETERS

Our multi-method research deploys an interdisciplinary approach which draws on urban geography, political science, organisational studies, urban planning, economics and sociology. It aims to provide a comprehensive approach to the governance of complex urban dynamics and understand the case-specific characteristics of diversity in different contexts. It analyses new policy approaches that recognise and manage hyper-diversity, and suggests instruments that can work to meet a variety of demands. Field research is being conducted in 14 cities by the teams which make up the project partnership. The lead authors of this report, and the co-ordinators for the Work Package ‘Assessing Urban Policies’, are Professor Mike Raco (m.raco@ucl.ac.uk), Dr Claire Colomb, and Dr Jamie Kesten from the Bartlett School of Planning, University College London, UK.



PROJECT IDENTITY

PROJECT NAME

DIVERCITIES

Governing Urban Diversity: Creating Social Cohesion, Social Mobility and Economic Performance in Today's Hyper-diversified Cities

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FUNDING SCHEME

FP7 Framework Programme for Research & Innovation in Socio-economic Sciences and Humanities – Collaborative Project Activity 2 – Combining economic, social and environmental objectives.

DURATION

March 2013 to February 2017 (48 months)

BUDGET

EU contribution: M€ 6.5

WEBSITE AND OTHER LINKS

Project website: www.urbandivercities.eu
Twitter: [divercities_eu](https://twitter.com/divercities_eu)
Facebook: [urbandivercities](https://www.facebook.com/urbandivercities)
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FURTHER READING

Tasan-Kok, T., van Kempen, R., Raco, M., and Bolt, G. (2013) *Towards Hyper-Diversified European Cities: A Critical Literature Review*, European Commission, Brussels.

Van Kempen, R. (2013) *Hyper-Diversity: A New Perspective on Urban Diversity*, DIVERCITIES Policy Brief Number 1, European Commission, Brussels.

Individual case study city reports on 'urban policies on diversity' produced by DIVERCITIES research teams (accessed at: <http://www.urbandivercities.eu/publications/>)