



VÁTI Hungarian Nonprofit
Development and Training

Hungarian URBACT National Dissemination Point Bi-Annual Report



European Union
European Regional Development Fund

Connecting cities
Building successes



1. Cities in crisis

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Article written by Ádám RADVÁNSZKI, VÁTI Nonprofit Ltd.

In autumn 2008 the world was shocked by a financial crisis which has affected the economy. Cities, as focal points of socio-economic processes have experienced the consequences in a concentrated way. Though information on the real effects is scarce, it has been on the agenda of events and conferences to better understand the impacts and possible aftermath.



The annual conference of the [Hungarian Society for Urban Planning](http://www.mut.hu) in 2009 contributed to the better understanding of the diverse aspects of the crisis in the field of urban planning. The [conference](http://www.mut.hu) held in the town of [Siófok](http://www.siofok.hu) provided floor for discussion to find answers to the questions what could be the possible responses to the economic crisis, what is the impact of the crisis on the availability of resources for urban development and what are the potentials in urban-rural relations. The results of the discussion were summed up in each of these themes to help all the stakeholders of urban planning to build on the common knowledge and cope with the challenges accordingly. The so called "[Siófoki Agenda 2009](http://www.mut.hu)" has gained intense media reactions in Hungary.

Foto: www.mut.hu

The economic crisis gives opportunities for substantial developments in a city. The needs force innovative solutions and offer a chance to overcome the problems in a completely different way, thus fostering the changes in systems. This has potentials especially in the views of political and market relations, the planning and research practices as well as in the philosophy of administration and management. New forms of governance may bring the harmonious and cooperative development of cities and their hinterlands, cities may be forced to realise the advantages of integrated approach in urban development where the different aspects of sustainability can be pursued and the city can be directed to a development path, which respects the socio-economic as well as environmental well-being of the inhabitants.



Closing small shops, suffering SMEs due to economic crisis in Sopron (Hungary)

Foto: www.sopron.info.hu

Cooperation plays a crucial role in finding new ways for development. Policy making can rely more on the views of different stakeholders by creating ways of governance and participatory planning systems, which increases the sustainability of urban development. However, on the other hand, new ideas coming from others may boost innovative techniques to cope with the new challenges created by the crisis. In this respect the role of knowledge sharing is outstanding. The [Hungarian Focal Point](http://www.eukn.eu) of [European Urban Knowledge Network](http://www.eukn.eu) issued a [newsletter](http://www.eukn.eu) on cities in crisis in order to help urban practitioners cope with the arising challenges on a common knowledge base. URBACT can further help cities to learn from each other and find innovative solutions to recent impacts of the global economic crisis together.

Read more:

Website of Hungarian Society for Urban Planning:
<http://www.mut.hu/?module=news&action=list&fname=konferencia>

Hungarian Focal Point of EUKN:
http://www.eukn.hu/hirlevel_2009_5.htm

2. What makes a city family-friendly? – Recommendations of Hungarian experts

Article by Kyra TOMAY, VÁTI Nonprofit Ltd.

Intense media reactions followed the conference on family-friendly cities organized by VÁTI last autumn and recommendations formulated for making cities more family-friendly. Sidewalks accessible also with baby carriages; institutions equipped with nursing rooms and nappy changing facilities; toilets on the playgrounds. Such tangible developments are the best signs of family-orientation in a city. At the conference speakers

presented examples of good practices in addition to talking about the deficiencies.

A significant proportion of young couples living in big cities moves into the conurbation when their first child is born, and then their further children are born there – it is not by accident that the fertility rate within Hungary is much higher in the settlements around Budapest, than inside the capital or at the majority of the countryside. This is a clear sign that big cities are not really family- and child-friendly. In the inner districts ageing is the main and highly unfavourable demographic process, that is why we should draw attention to the danger of having fewer children in the cities and of families moving out.

Every year the [National Association of Large Families](#) confers the Family-friendly Local Government Award, which is a special award from many respects. As there is no application process, the residents of the area can notify the organisation where they have recognised good practices. In 2009 the awardees were the 16th District of Budapest, Nagykőrös, Pusztavám, Szentendre and Veszprém for varying reasons: travel discounts, baby bonds or a well-functioning welfare network.

Judit Fleischer the leader of the initiative titled “[Babakocsisokk](#)” (play on words – the title is baby stroller shock, which sounds almost the same as baby stroller users) illustrated the [difficulties of using baby strollers](#): the sidewalks are narrow and used as parking spaces in many cases, large traffic hubs can only be accessed by stairs, public institutions are not equipped with facilities for breastfeeding or nappy changing, and parks are visibly not designed to meet the needs of families with small children.

In the second part of the forum family-friendly cities: Tata, Szolnok and Sopron, three Hungarian cities introduced their good practices. During the closing debate the participants formulated a common position with the aim of promoting family-friendly values, commitment and action in cities to help in creating an environment, suitable for raising children.

Read more:

National Association of Large Families:

www.noe.hu

Website on the initiative “Babakocsisokk” (baby stroller users)

<http://5mp.eu/web.php?a=babakocsi&o=kyvbSaLc vA>

The presentations of the workshop and recommendations of Hungarian experts you can find at:

http://www.eukn.hu/hazai_rendezyenyek.html

3. “Open Space” Week on climate change: “Let’s find out together what we can do!” – Hungarian settlements co-operate to become more climate-friendly

Article by Judit RICZ, VÁTI Nonprofit Ltd.

Under the Hungarian EU Presidency in 2011 one of the priorities will be focusing on the urban challenges of climate change. How to adapt and mitigate the effects of climate change in cities is a topic getting more and more relevant each day in each European city. To tackle this challenge common actions and appropriate policy packages are needed on global, European and national level, but also good local initiatives are inevitable on the way towards sustainable cities.

The *Association of climate-friendly cities* in Hungary is such a local initiative. The Hungarian city Tatabánya (partner of URBACT project [URBAMECO](#)) was among the seven municipalities who have formed the association in 2007 with the

support of the Research Group for Climate Change of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Since this time six other settlements and one city-

district have already joined this group, while several other cities have announced their joining intentions. The association is working on local level towards raising awareness on climate change and the possibilities of mitigation and adaptation. Besides publishing [bi-monthly news letters](#), a [book on climate-friendly settlements](#), a [leaflet on “climate change and action possibilities on local level”](#), several events were held and are planned to achieve this aim.

The event “[Open Space](#)” Week (“Nyílt Tér” Hét) was organized in the 8 member settlements in autumn 2009 under the motto: “Let’s find out together what we can do!” The aim was to create a forum, platform for urban decision- and policy-makers and inhabitants to meet and discuss local challenges of climate change and find out together possible answers and actions.





Using the brand „Take and save the szentesi!” o shop entrances and on cars.

Foto: City government Szentes

Several other local events were and are being organized: movie evenings with awareness raising films on climate change, fair of climate-friendly products, excursions, and even common planting of native trees.

Foto: www.klimabarat.hu

Read more:

Hungarian Association of climate-friendly cities:

www.klimabarat.hu

About the book on climate-friendly settlements:

<http://klimabarat.hu/node/80/>

Leaflet on “climate change and action possibilities on local level”:

<http://klimabarat.hu/system/files/Eghajlatvaltozas-helyi-szinten.pdf>

URBAMECO project (with Tatabánya, the Hungarian city as partner):

<http://urbact.eu/en/projects/human-capital-entrepreneurship/urbameco/homepage/>

Related URBACT project:

URBENERGY:

<http://urbact.eu/en/projects/low-carbon-urban-environments/urbanenergy/homepage/>

5. “Take and save the szentesi!” – a model for local economic development from Hungary

Article by Judit RICZ, VÁTI Nonprofit Ltd.

The financial and economic crisis has drawn special attention to the significance of local economic potentials and the necessity of the local economic development initiatives. One option for supporting local economies is to convince local storekeepers to sell local products and local inhabitants to buy these.

“Take and save the szentesi!” (Vedd és véd a szentesit!) is a model for local economic development applied by the Hungarian city Szentes. Szentes organized a marketing campaign of local products with own branding

and a town-wide network of locally active enterprises with the aim of increasing the supply and consumption of local products.

At the beginning of 2009 the local government of Szentes conducted a detailed survey among the local SMEs to find out how these were hit by the economic and financial crisis, what are the possible ways out of the downturn and what kind of help they expect from the local government. The results of the survey showed that the local consumers mostly don't buy local products, and they mostly even do not know these. It came out that the inhabitants of the city are spending the money earned in the city characteristically in other places, larger cities 50-60 km away from Szentes. To stop and reverse this tendency and its all negative consequences the local government of Szentes started a campaign to promote the production and consumption of local goods and services: “Take and save the szentesi!” The project had five important phases:

1. Survey conducted on local entrepreneurs to explore the willingness to co-operate and activities, explaining the common interests.
2. Creation and dissemination of a marketing message which is understandable simply to all.
3. Intense marketing activities organized by the local government but in strong cooperation with the involved local entrepreneurs and advertisements posted on places provided mainly by local SMEs.
4. Strong but low cost PR activities in local and national media.
5. Analyses of satisfaction of local inhabitants (consumers) and local entrepreneurs, and exploration of possibilities to expand the model to other Hungarian cities.

The project is considered to be a huge success. It mobilized more than 600 local SMEs, which have got more than 600 advertisements possibilities free of charge due to the intense media interest, and reached approx. 20.000 inhabitants. In the formalized network 70 SMEs took actively part, but the brand is to be found on even more places. The turnover of the local SMEs has increased by 5-20% due to the estimation of the local entrepreneurs. The revenues of the local government have been maintained, and the employment was not decreasing as drastically as experienced in other cities. Remarkable results in the time of the crisis.

Several other Hungarian cities have announced their interest and intention to apply the Szentes model, first of all neighbouring cities like Csongrád, and Kunszentmárton but also Hungary's third largest city, Miskolc from Northern Hungary.

Read more:

About the project "Take and save the szentesi!":
www.szentes.hu/invest,
http://www.szentesinfo.hu/szentesielet/2009/18_0508/13.htm

Listen to the radio reportage with Imre Szirbik, the mayor of Szentes (in Hungarian):
<http://www.promenad.hu/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=47721>

Related URBACT project with the Hungarian city, Eger as lead partner: SURE
<http://urbact.eu/en/projects/disadvantaged-neighbourhoods/sure/homepage/>

6 ELEVEN community – a juvenile community place in Kecskemét (Hungary) for a more liveable housing estate

Article by Kyra TOMAY, VÁTI Nonprofit Ltd.

Széchenyiváros – housing estate of Kecskemét with 35.000 inhabitants – is a socially rundown neighbourhood where children and youth are especially in danger of crime. There were no places to spend their free time usefully or to learn how to behave in a way suitable to the norms and rules of the society. [HELPI Juvenile Information and Advisor Office](#) – supported by the local municipality – moved into the area from the inner city in 1995. Ten years later they initiated to establish a new autonomous unit, a community place to form defended institutional environment that gives place for cultural events and actions fitting the demands of local youth.



Foto: HELPI

This juvenile community place is located at Széchenyi promenade No. 11, and was set up in the 11th year of

the functioning of the HELPI Juvenile Information and Advisor Office, that were the reasons to call it 'ELEVEN' (meaning 'alive' in Hungarian, and refer to the number 11 in English). This community place is sustained by voluntary work, and active participation of the local youth with the financial support of the local government, and different civic foundations. Step by step introduction of the programmes was important to get across the community place to locals. Community development began with involving youngsters to the beautification of the environment and park attending works. With the supply of National Crime Preventing Committee the functioning of ELEVEN became systemic and the services were accessible every day (daytime playing house, evening creative workshop, net lodge etc.). Crime preventing signal system was created and managed to form legal places for street sports and street art. In the most spectacular local action called CUPFUL CITY young people compiled a free informative brochure.



Foto: HELPI

As a result of this programme next to the rundown concrete blocks a green, alive community place was formed with the active participation of the local youngsters. This area now is one of the most important spaces of urban neighbourhood regeneration, and also of the crime prevention local programmes, moreover at the national level it is recognized as a good model of the assistance of the youth.

Read more:

Web-page of the organisation (in Hungarian):
<http://www.helpi.hu/eleven/>

Article about ELEVEN and several other good practices in community crime-prevention in Falu, Város, Régió 2009/2, with English abstracts:
<http://www.vati.hu/main.php?folderID=2034>

7. How to design better city governance systems and models in Hungary?

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Article by Csilla HOFFMANN, VÁTI Nonprofit Ltd.



City governance is a hot topic all over Europe, but on the eve of the political elections in Hungary it is even more true. One reason for this is the ever urging municipal reform, which was postponed by Hungarian governments during the last decades. A thematic issue of the [Journal Tér és Társadalom](#) (Space and Society) on *city governance* raises questions, gives

answers and shows international and Hungarian examples, practices. Urban experts analyse international models and experiences for city governance and compare these with the Hungarian practice. A few examples from the volume:

Territorial cooperation between the cities and their surrounding areas is of key importance for the competitiveness and sustainability of European development. City-region cooperation of the 21st century will differ from the earlier ones, giving more emphasis to flexible, governance- and network-type structures, instead of fixed administrative organizations. City-regions have to address double-task: to solve the internal conflicts of the narrow, functional urban area and to exploit the opportunities of the broader, economic cooperation area. Based on the European experiences the article concludes that the first might need top-down regulatory mechanisms, while the latter might best function in bottom-up partnerships. In the case of the Budapest metropolitan area territorial cooperation is non-existent, neither in the narrow FUA nor in the broader economic zone. Lacking cooperation, regulations and joint development plans based on mutual trust, the Budapest metropolitan area will not be able to solve its internal problems and will be unable to exploit its advantageous European development potentials (Iván, Tosics: City-region governance: the cooperation between the city and the metropolitan area. European examples and the relevance for Hungary).

During the last decade integrative urban policies became evident in the European normative texts. The new member states suffer from different urban inequalities and the lack of coherent national urban policies. Recent research about Hungarian experience covered 9 city region areas and 86 local governments. Surveys and interviews with mayors and other local stakeholders were conducted about their attitudes towards integrated urban policy. The results are useful for strengthening the competitiveness of Hungarian cities and its surroundings. Hungarian cities adopted a series

of integrative methods, but a coherent urban public policy is missing at national level. Hungarian local government leaders need more knowledge about experience and development potential of new urban policy methods and models. (Gyöngyvér, Hervainé Szabó: Experiences of integrative city policy in domestic city areas).

Experiences of Hungarian decentralization are analysed with special attention to the municipal economy. The analysis describes the main features of so called Hungarian model of municipal economy which can be characterized by less effective decentralization and is working as a “conflict container”. The inconsistency and the role of incentives are also discussed. The main conclusions are the following:

- The Hungarian model can be considered a kind of mixture of various European models. There is no compulsory municipal financing model in the EU.
- The Hungarian way of decentralisation of state public services shows that expenditure assignments and rules of intergovernmental affairs are conflicted.
- There is a high level of de jure freedom of local decision making and contradictory to this financial system.

As a consequence of the erosion of the system calls for the reform of Hungarian local government system. (András, Vígvári: Decentralization without subsidiarity. Some additions to modernization of Hungarian model of local government system)

Read the whole volume (with English abstracts):

http://www.rkk.hu/TET/2008_1/index.html

<http://www.rattvisemarkt.se/cldoc/english.htm>

URBACT II

URBACT is a European exchange and learning programme promoting sustainable urban development.

It enables cities to work together to develop solutions to major urban challenges, reaffirming the key role they play in facing increasingly complex societal challenges. It helps them to develop pragmatic solutions that are new and sustainable, and that integrate economic, social and environmental dimensions. It enables cities to share good practices and lessons learned with all professionals involved in urban policy throughout Europe. URBACT is 255 cities, 29 countries, and 5,000 active participants

www.urbact.eu



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