THE STATE OF NATIONAL URBAN POLICY IN BELGIUM

Name of national urban policy	*Federal Big City Policy (Politique des Grandes Villes)*
Date of national urban policy	1999
Explicit or partial	Partial
Legal status (e.g. act of the legislature, executive order, administrative guidance, etc.)	Ministerial order
Previous/secondary policies	Regional urban policies
Stage of development	Implementation
How developed (e.g. through a participatory/stakeholder process, or act of parliament, etc.)	Participatory, through interministerial committee at federal level, with input from individual cities
Implementing body	Federal Public Service
Government system	Federal
Type of national urban agency	General planning authority
Implementation mechanism (e.g. committee, involvement of multiple agencies, national-local co-ordination)	Contracts with cities

Current national urban policy

The Belgium government's national urban policy, the *Federal Big City Policy* (*Grootstedenbeleid / Politique des Grandes Villes*), was created in 1999/2000 (Belgium Federal Public Service, 2016a; OECD, 2015). The focus is generally on social cohesion, sustainable development and urban regeneration (OECD, 2015). City contracts are the primary mechanism for implementing the policy and they have been established with 17 cities. As of 2009, these contracts are renewed on an annual basis and are named "sustainable city" contracts (*contrats "ville durable"*). The contract objectives are based on three sustainability pillars:

1. reinforce social cohesion in troubled neighbourhoods, through policies to build neighbourhood identity and create connections and accessibility;

2. contribute to reducing cities' ecological footprints; and

3. support interconnections among cities (Belgium Federal Public Service, 2016b).

In addition to this national policy, each region – Flanders, Wallonia, and the Brussels Capital region – has its own regional urban policies. These address a wide range of objectives, including fostering innovation, building partnerships between the regional and local governments, creating jobs and regenerating urban areas (UN-Habitat, 2015; OECD, 2015).

The framework for the federal city contracts is based on horizontal co-ordination among different sectors in the same administration as well as vertical co-ordination among

European, national, regional, local and neighbourhood-level stakeholders. The aim is to simultaneously pursue multiple interdependent policies (Belgium Federal Public Service, 2016b).

The Big City Policy Service (*Service Politique des Grandes Villes*) was created in 2001 to implement the *Federal Big City Policy*. It is under the responsibility of the Federal Policy Service Social Integration, Fight Against Poverty and Social Economy (*Service Public de Programmation (SPP) Intégration Sociale, Lutte contre la Pauvreté et Économie Sociale*). The Secretary of State in charge of *Big City Policy* is also the Secretary of State for the Fight Against Poverty, Equality of Opportunity, Handicapped Persons and Scientific Policy (Belgium Federal Public Service, 2016a).

While *Big City Policy* is initiated by a federal government minister, an Interministerial Committee on the City submits sustainable city contracts for approval to the Council of Ministers. This federal-level committee includes the Ministers of the Interior, of Employment, of Mobility, of Social Integration, of Big City Policy and the Minister in charge of building regulations (Belgium Federal Public Service, 2016a).

Areas covered by current urban policy

Sector	Sectoral representation in the *Federal Big City Policy* (*Grootstedenbeleid/ Politique des Grandes Villes*)
Economic development	Extensive
Spatial structure	Moderate
Human development	Extensive
Environmental sustainability	Extensive
Climate resilience	Low

Specific issues covered by current national urban policy

The *Federal Big City Policy* (*Grootstedenbeleid/Politique des Grandes Villes*) includes the following characteristics (as determined from the Big City Policy Service's website):

Criteria for national urban policies	Appears in the policy
Responds to population dynamics	X
Promotes a territorial approach (in particular urban-rural linkages)	
Addresses the urban systems (from large to medium and small cities) and the connectivity among cities	X
Prepares for infrastructure and services in cities (including public space)	X
Promotes urban land-use efficiency	
Enhances environmental sustainability and resilience to climate change	X
Develops effective urban governance systems (horizontal co-ordination and vertical alignment)	X
Promotes effective municipal finance systems	X
Supports partnership and co-operation between urban actors	X
Safeguards inclusiveness and participation in the process and outcomes (inequity, segregation, safety, etc.)	X
Ensures robust and comparable urban scale data	

Bibliography

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