

INTEGRATION, PARTNERSHIP AND ROLE OF PRIVATE OPERATORS IN THE COMMUNITY INITIATIVE URBAN

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1. URBAN and the principles of structural programming

URBAN has represented strong elements of discontinuity with respect to the past as well as the experimentation of innovative models: both regarding policies for the cities and considering the programming models tailored to structural funds.

Regarding urban policies in particular, from a system of measures concentrated almost exclusively on infrastructural actions and on the use of urban planning instruments alone, URBAN has postulated in fact the passage to an integrated approach, foreseeing the carrying out of many measures: infrastructural, training, for the creation of jobs and new enterprise. These measures have been aimed both at promoting local economic and employment development and at bringing about social cohesion and the integration of the weakest groups of the resident population in the project areas.

In this way, URBAN has come to constitute, together with a number of other Community initiatives, a field of important experimentation for the application of viable principles for all structural programming: as the territorial integration of measures and social, economic and institutional partnership at local level. Integrated territorial planning pursues a general objective of growth referred to a specific territorial sphere, in keeping with national and regional programming. The general objective and the territorial sphere itself are defined and dimensioned on the basis of the development needs of the area, and of the characteristics, potentials and vocations of the territory. The strategy for achieving the general objective is formulated by combining specific objectives and different action lines, respecting criteria of concentration and of functionality with regard to the targets of territorial development to be reached.

It should also be stated, in another aspect, that Italian and Community regional policy has progressively incorporated principles, methods and instruments aimed at strengthening the role of the local forces, also in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity: on the one hand, instruments such as global subsidies and Territorial Pacts

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have made the action of the public administrations and of local operators more central; and on the other hand, there is a broader spectrum of Community initiatives permitting more direct access of local bodies to financing by the European Union.

Also with regard to the renewed structural policies that the European Union has launched for the next ten years, URBAN has assumed a strongly experimental character. In the formulation of these policies, in some ways there has been a gradual shift of the barycentre of the measures from a typically *regional* dimension to one of *territorial* type; cities and urban policies have thus taken on a larger role in programming and in governing phenomena of local development. In this perspective, the territorial and urban/rural dimension has been explicitly recognised as an axis of priority intervention within the framework of European development policies.

To sum up, a twofold need appears therefore to have been recognised today:

that in the programming and implementation of the Community measures account should be taken directly of the needs, proposals, conditions of the context and of the executive capabilities of the various territories

and that the local forces should be, in the various phases of the programming and execution of the measures, active subjects in the partnership, and should therefore participate on a full basis in the synergetic integration and in the cooperation among the various actors of Community policy, in the different sectoral and territorial contexts.

2. The contribution of private parties in financing URBAN

URBAN's characteristics of integration demand that, for a complex, agreed objective of development and transformation of urban territories, various actors and resources must be mobilised.

In the attached table, an attempt has been made to give a first, preliminary assessment of the degree of potential involvement of private capital in the carrying out and management of "typical" URBAN measures: the latter have been taken from the mentioned Communication of the Commission, which indeed identifies (see Annex 1) an indicative list of measures that can be subsidised. The measures identified by the Commission make reference, as may be read in the Communication, to six main aggregates: the "reurbanisation" of urban territorial spaces; enterprise (entrepreneurship) and the Employment Pacts; the planning or the achieving of tangible improvements in the training and education of the marginalised, including among other things the promotion of partnerships among a plurality of agencies; the definition of integrated transport systems that are significantly more functional, economically efficient and ecocompatible; the reduction at the origin in the quantity of waste and its disposal; the efficient management

of water resources, the reduction of noise pollution and of consumption of energy from hydrocarbons; and the development of all potential technologies of the information society.

In these different spheres of intervention, it is clear that the participation of private operators can take on differentiated forms.

The first prospect that can be identified for the participation of private operators is the *classical* one of project financing, i.e. the entry of private capital in the construction and management of infrastructures that generate revenues. This prospect regards in particular Measure 5, which refers to energy, water and waste disposal, or to all sectors in which liberalisation actions have in the last few years constituted the conditions for market management of connected services; Measure 4 (public transport and mobility), for the possibility of associating private capital with the modernisation and expansion of structures and therefore with the management of transport and urban mobility; but also Measure 6 (information company), where the completion of the network infrastructures is an opportunity for the entry of private operators. It is known in fact that the Commission excludes the possibility of financing network infrastructures through structural funds (except in particular cases): but actions to encourage and support the demand and supply of services of the information company are able to create conditions for an expansion even of infrastructures.

In the second place, numerous URBAN actions concern aid regimes, in particular in favour of small and medium size enterprises. In particular, Measure 2 (Enterprise and Employment Pacts) is the one most concerned with this type of involvement of private entrepreneurship. Measure 6 (information company) provides the opportunity to foresee aid regimes, particularly in favour of enterprises operating in the Information and Communication Technologies sector or in other enterprises trying out initiatives in the commercial electronics field and that of the adoption of new communication and information technologies.

A stimulating prospect of the involvement of “private” capital and actors (even if they are bearers of public or semi-public interests) is to be sought in the promotion of initiatives of enterprises in the Third sector. As known, the European Union now fully intends to promote this sector, also for employment purposes; it is also known that this intention has found space in the structural funds: many operative programmes have in fact tried out actions to strengthen the Third sector, of social cooperation and volunteer associations. The results of these initiatives certainly have to be verified: this path is definitely a complex one, as it is necessary to be sure of the sustainability of the initiatives financed, the robustness of the organisms responsible for management, and the quality and articulation of the services offered by the structures of the social economy.

Furthermore, it should also be stated that the involvement of the Third sector is actually called for in the Communication of URBAN 2000-2006.

Considering the measures of URBAN 2, an involvement of the structures of the social economy could as a first approximation concern both the actions relating to the reurbanisation of spaces in the urban territory (Measure 1), or the safeguarding and restructuring of buildings and open spaces in degraded zones, and the conservation of the cultural and historic heritage: this also considering the social aims attributed to these actions, namely the possible creation of sustainable jobs, increased integration of the local communities and ethnic minorities, the reinsertion of the marginalised, greater security and prevention of delinquency, and efforts to curb the urbanisation of green areas or areas in uncontrolled urban expansion. Social contents are also to be observed in Measure 3, which concerns planning or the achieving of tangible improvements in the training and education of the marginalised, including among other things the promotion of partnerships among a plurality of agencies.

In conclusion, the consolidation of higher capacities of relation and orientation by the central and local administrations appears desirable. Permanently incorporating these instruments and methods in the lines of action of the administrations will make it possible, in prospect, to permanently strengthen the general strategic functions of planning and control of the territory; of speeding up and making more flexible the procedures for making infrastructures; of interacting with enterprises, with the financial sector and with other local operators, as well as with outside operators as a whole, in order to devise and carry out new initiatives of territorial growth; and of achieving the primary objectives of social cohesion and integration at local scale.

