Handbook of Sustainable Urban Development Strategies
THE HANDBOOK IN A NUTSHELL
What is it?

- The Handbook of Sustainable Urban Development Strategies was published in January 2020 by the Joint Research Centre (JRC) in collaboration with DG REGIO.
- It provides methodological support to design, implement and monitor urban development strategies under Cohesion Policy.
What is it?

• It refers to **Sustainable Urban Development** (SUD) as supported by the European Regional Development Fund during the current programming period (2014-2020) and the upcoming one (2021-2027)

• It is structured around **six building blocks** – main principles – of the **EU integrated approach** to urban development:

  strategic dimension; territorial focus; governance; cross-sectoral integration; funding and finance; monitoring
For whom?

• The Handbook has as main targets:
  - local authorities (cities, intermediate bodies)
  - managing authorities (regions, national governments)
  - practitioners and other relevant stakeholders

• It is especially useful for public authorities less familiar with the functioning of EU funds
How does it work?

• Each chapter is dedicated to a **building-block**, and focuses on most critic and recurrent **issues at stake**.

• For each issue key **challenges** are identified, and tackled through **examples, data, potential risks** and link to other **resources**.

• For each issue a series of **recommendations** is listed.
Each building block is characterised by a different colour.

Building block

Issue at stake

Challenges

All challenges are listed at the beginning of each issue.

SYNERGIES WITH OTHER POLICY FRAMEWORKS

In this section we address:

- How to build on SUD strategy when a strategy for the city already exists?
- How to connect SUD strategies with national and global urban agendas?
- How can SUD strategies develop synergies with regional/national, Research and Innovation strategies for Smart Specialisation?

The pre-2020 SUD strategies will be designed and implemented in a context of radical transformations and rapid change. In order to cope with this fluid situation, it is crucial to find effective ways of using available planning instruments strategically. The strategic way to do things does not necessarily require a full integration of strategic frameworks and a full set of goals, but enables punctual improvement of synergies and complementarities, in several ways and domains, according to contingent needs and available resources.

The ability of cities to implement strategies using ERDF funds is mainly influenced by ECONS, 2010:

- previous experience in the field of integrated urban development;
- a conducive national/regional institutional and policy framework.

Moreover, synergies between SUD and Research and Innovation strategies prove to be of interest for EU and local policy makers.

How to build an SUD strategy when a strategy for the city already exists?

Previous experience in strategic planning and existing frameworks in place at local level can lead to different uptake of strategies.

Analysis of strategies shows that out of 41 strategies, 62% have been set up on the basis of pre-existing strategies, with of which 13% by using an integrated (wise) strategy.

Only 36% of strategies have been specifically developed to meet SUD requirements. They include all strategies in the Czech Republic, Finland, Croatia, Ghana, Malta, Slovenia and Slovakia, and a rather high proportion of strategies in Greece, Spain, Italy, Poland, Romania and the UK.

There are many SUD strategies that rely on pre-existing strategies in more developed regions than in less developed regions.

Learning from others

Highlighted content

Highlights can be part of the main text.
Additional resource

**NESTA (2013) CITY INITIATIVES FOR TECHNOLOGY, INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP (CITE)**

The City Initiatives for Technology, Innovation and Entrepreneurship (CITE) report provides city policymakers with a resource to help them develop the policy initiatives that catalyze innovation and entrepreneurship in cities. CITE comprises four main components:

- **Framework for understanding how policies in key areas can be used to support innovation and entrepreneurship at the city level:**
- **Diagnostic tool that allows cities to self-assess how they perform against this framework relative to 40 global cities:**
- **A range of examples and case studies from around the world that shine a light on best practice:**

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- **Build SUD strategies on pre-existing local strategies, where possible, and in any case, taking them into account.**
- **Devise them as specific documents, even when they rely heavily on existing strategies:**
- **Adapt the existing strategy to the OGP’s goals and logic, for example through an action plan, and include a section where it is clearly stated how the activities described contribute to the programme objectives:**
- **Ensure a similar framework, facilitating strategies across existing policy instruments and creating a learning path across programming periods:**
- **Capitalise on previous arrangements for administration and management of EU funds and projects:**
- **Provide case studies to policy makers at the local, regional and national levels:**
- **Member States should align SUD strategies to domestic policies, as much as possible in order to ensure synergies and, where an NUF does not exist, develop purpose-built schemes:**
- **Make explicit the mechanisms that show how the integrated SUD strategies are interlinked with other strategies and national policy frameworks:**
- **Gather knowledge and select actions related to other policy frameworks and funding streams:**
- **Provide national frameworks to align SUD strategies to SUDs and other supranational urban agendas:**

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**Main recommendations are structured in sub-points.**
THE SIX BUILDING BLOCKS
1. Strategic dimension

How to build a strategy as a **collective transformative roadmap** towards a future situation.

**Issues at stake:**

- Strategies as bridges between operational programmes and projects.
- Synergies with other policy frameworks.
How do we ensure that SUD strategies bridge operational programmes and local policies?

- The SUD strategy in **Rotterdam** (NL) has benefitted from better integration of policy goals (developed at city level) and policy delivery instruments (provided at operational programme level).
2. Territorial focus

How to match challenges and opportunities with appropriate type of **territory and scale**.

Issues at stake:

- Targeting neighbourhoods.
- The functional area approach.
- Urban-rural linkages.
How can we achieve cooperation among actors (municipalities) when there is not a pre-existing framework?

• The implementation of the Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) strategy for Brno (CZ) functional area served for the establishment of an inter-municipal cooperation based on governance.
3. Governance

How relevant authorities and stakeholders decide to plan, finance, and manage a specific strategy.

Issues at stake:

- Multi-level governance.
- The multi-stakeholders approach.
- The bottom-up and participatory approach.
How to build administrative capacity, and benefit from experiences available at different levels of government?

• In the Wałbrzych agglomeration (PL) the ITI has been used to create a framework of cooperation across the regional, district and local tiers, building responsibility for implementing cohesion policy in a broader range of partners, and boosting administrative capacity.
4. Cross-sectoral integration

How to promote strategies and project which are integrated, multi-sectoral and multi-dimensional, overcoming the "silos" structure characterising public organisations.

Issues at stake:

- Cross sectoral-integration within the Cohesion Policy structure.
- Cross-sectoral integration in territorial governance.
How can we integrate themes at the operational programme level?

- The **Tuscany** Managing Authority (IT) introduced for the Urban Priority Axis a programme manager in charge of vertical integration (with beneficiaries) and of horizontal integration (within administrative sectors).
5. Funding and finance

How to mobilize various sources of funding, including domestic funds, private investments and financial instruments.

Issues at stake:

• The integration of ESI funds amongst themselves and with other domestic funding.

• Involving private investors and the third sector in SUD funding strategies.

• Enhancing the use of financial instruments and financial products.
How could private sector be engaged in funding SUD?

- **Athens** (GR) managed to combine European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), European Investment Bank (EIB), national, municipal and private funds to implement its ITI for Sustainable Urban Development called ‘Athens 2020’.
6. Monitoring

How to set up **efficient indicators and monitoring systems** to measure performance and impact.

**Issues at stake:**

- Monitoring framework.
- Data on tangible and intangible effects.
- Different levels of objectives.
How can local objectives be aligned with regional, national or global sustainability agendas?

- In A Coruña (ES) the SUD strategy indicator system is an innovative and coherent instrument that takes into account indicators from several policy levels, including the global one (UN Agenda 2030, UN Habitat).
More information

urban.jrc.ec.europa.eu/urbanstrategies

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