**“What is the added value for the City of Rotterdam to join the European ‘My Generation at Work’ network?”**

Dissertation European Studies

**My Generation at Work network?”**

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**ES3 | 3D**

**Supervisor The Hague University: Mr B.C. van der Sluijs**

**Supervisor City of Rotterdam: Ms. E. Sprangers**

**Rotterdam, May 29 2012**

**School of European Studies | The Hague University of Applied Sciences**

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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Throughout Europe cities face the same kind of problems. Therefore, a common idea occurred that there should be some sort of cooperation between these cities to solve these problems together. This common idea eventually led to the URBACT programme, which is a programme that consists of several networks of European cities who work together to foster sustainable and integrated urban development. The slogan of URBACT is ‘connecting cities, building successes’.

One of the main problems in Europe today is youth unemployment. Youth unemployment rates are rising throughout Europe. The new URBACT network ‘My Generation at Work’ wants to solve this problem, by promoting the employability of young people in a changing labour market, with a special focus on enterprising skills and attitudes. All this will be done in partnership with young people, businesses, the education sector, employment agencies and city governments. In the first phase of the My Generation at Work project, the network consists of the cities of Rotterdam, Antwerp, Glasgow, Riga and Gdansk. In this dissertation there is a special focus on the cities of Rotterdam, Antwerp and Glasgow.

This dissertation explores whether or not joining the My Generation at Work network would be of added value for the City of Rotterdam. This research was done in the form of a SWOT-analysis of the three cities of Rotterdam, Antwerp and Glasgow. The three cities were analyzed with the help of a theoretical model according to the contingency approach, which focuses on the environment of each city. By mapping the problems and challenges in each city, the current situation of each city becomes clear and this leads to a recommendation for a Local Support Group and a Local Action Plan. Mapping of the problems and challenges is done with the help of the contingency theory. Then, with all the collected information, a conclusion was drawn about what the contribution of each city would be to the URBACT network.

Research eventually showed that all the three cities have a certain amount of overlap in the challenges and problems they face. At the same time, each city also has its own strengths and unique opportunities, which can be beneficial to the other cities. For the City of Rotterdam the involvement of young people is one of its unique strengths, while for the City of Antwerp it is its focus on job matching. The developed initiative of the Youth Employability Partnerships is one of the unique strengths for the City of Glasgow, even as its further developed plans for projects and programmes on the topic of youth unemployment. With these strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of each unique city in mind, it becomes clear what cities can bring to the My Generation at Work network and what they can learn from other cities. Eventually, this cooperation would lead to an added value for all participating cities, by implementing the best practices on its own unique model of its own city.

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# INTRODUCTION

At the moment, youth unemployment rates in Europe are higher than ever and are still increasing. This is a problem which a lot of European countries and cities are facing. This is also a big problem for the City of Rotterdam. Because this is an issue that a lot of cities face, Rotterdam wants to exchange knowledge and experience with other European cities through an European programme, called URBACT. The URBACT programme involves several projects all throughout Europe.

The city of Rotterdam, as a major European city, is already involved in several European projects. In 2011, Rotterdam took the initiative to start a new project, namely: ‘My Generation at Work’, in which it will be the Leading Partner. Together with four other European cities; Antwerp, Glasgow, Riga and Gdansk, the project aims to promote employment, entrepreneurial skills and enterprise skills of the young generation. The project focuses on the exchange of knowledge, social innovation and operating in an international urban network.

The project and these issues formed the starting points of this research. With reference to these starting points, the following central question was formed: *“What is the added value for the City of Rotterdam to join the European My Generation at Work network?”*

Research will be done on what exactly is the added value for the city Rotterdam to join a European co-operation project, such as My Generation at Work. This will give the city of Rotterdam a clear idea about what it wants to achieve in this project, how it would like to achieve this and what its strengths and weaknesses are.

## Content

In this dissertation, first the used theory will be discussed and explained. In the methodology, amongst others, the central question and the sub questions can be found and it will be explained how the research was carried out and which tools were used. The dissertation can basically be divided into three different parts. First there is a more general part, where the URBACT programme will be discussed more into depth, even as the possible advantages of joining an URBACT network. This part gives a good overview of some background information, which is needed for a better understanding of the later parts. The second part of the dissertation will consist of case studies. There will be analyses of three different cities; Rotterdam, Antwerp and Glasgow. These analyses will deal with the current situation of each city in terms of youth unemployment and labour market development. These analyses will eventually lead to the third part, where there will be a comparison of the three analyses and in addition to that a conclusion and recommendations on a very concrete and practical level. This is also the part where the answer to the central question can be found.

Because of this practical connection between theory and practice, the City of Rotterdam can use this comparison in the further development of the project proposal.

## Motivation Currently I am in my third and last year of my bachelor degree of European studies. One of the aspects of this final year, which is also part of the graduation process, is an internship in the second semester at a company/organization of choice. Between January and June 2012, I am doing this internship at the City of Rotterdam. Another part of the graduation process is a dissertation, which I chose to combine with my internship. The reason why I chose to do so is because in my opinion this combination will add something to my internship-time, as well as to my dissertation: it is *the* opportunity to combine my day-to-day practical activities with an actual research. At the same time, it would be a great experience to contribute something to my assignment providers, in this case my supervisors at my internship. It is an extra stimulant to get more in depth into a specific topic.

The main topic of this dissertation is youth unemployment in a changing labour market. The reason why this topic was chosen lays partly in the fact that the topic had to be adapted to the wishes and demands of my assignment providers. The chosen topic was a topic which was relevant for the organization at the time of my internship. My assignment providers and I searched together for a suitable topic which would be of value, both for the organization as for me. While discussing the dissertation topic my supervisors and I took my personal preferences and the organization’s needs constantly into account. By choosing this actual topic, a perfect combination of interest on both sides was found. Besides that, the chosen topic will definitely be of relevance to the European Studies programme. It covers European policy, it deals with European partnerships and it deals with what European collaboration can mean on a local scale, on a very concrete level. The topic of youth unemployment in a changing labour market covers one of Europe’s biggest issues at the moment. To conclude, it is an ideal topic to make the connection between theory and actual practice.

## Assignment Provider As already stated in my motivation, the City of Rotterdam assisted me with finding a suitable topic for my dissertation. The department in which I am doing my internship is the Department of Investment Policies and Funds. At this department all sorts of funds are being applied for and are being divided over several projects in the city. My supervisors coordinate and manage international cooperation projects between cities financed by different European funds. They have a lot of experience in the field of European funds and European collaboration. One of the European programmes the City of Rotterdam is involved in, is the URBACT programme. This is a European programme for international cooperation that promotes sustainable urban development. One of the URBACT projects that the City of Rotterdam participated in in the past was ‘My Generation’ which ended in 2011 and was about promoting the potential of the young in cities.

In December 2010, URBACT launched the third call for proposals. The City of Rotterdam decided to submit a follow-up proposal of the My Generation project; ‘My Generation at Work’. The proposal for this new project was submitted in March 2012. I assisted my supervisors during the writing process. The information I collected for the actual writing was also used as desk research for this dissertation. This dissertation will especially become relevant for the organisation as soon as the proposal will be approved and the project enters the so-called Development Phase (see annex 2 for more information). The outcomes of this dissertation and the research done will be used to develop the project proposal further.

While writing this dissertation, my assignment providers assisted me to stay on the right track and to stay close to the original assignment. They helped me not to get lost in all the information available, provided me with suitable feedback and ensured that the core of the issue would be addressed. Besides that, my assignment providers also guided me in the contacts with the City of Glasgow and the City of Antwerp, which are part of this research.

# THEORY

The cases researched and the URBACT programme itself are quite dynamic. This dynamism comes in the sense of the constantly changing environment, stakeholders, political conceptions and objectives. Therefore a theory is needed which can deal with this practical impact and changes, while at the same time maintaining consistency. Therefore a theory was chosen which would be relevant for this practical approach and can link theory and practice. The answer for this was found in the contingency approach. This approach has got quite a pragmatic and practical angle, which is of absolute relevance in this research. Besides that, it also helped me a lot further theoretically. The contingency approach states that there is not only one right way, but that every case itself is unique and therefore demands a different solution. This is the whole idea about the URBACT programme as well, that cities learn from each other and that cities can pick the elements that will fit best into their own unique situation. With the assistance of this theory it will be proven if there is an added value for the city of Rotterdam to join such an international network as the URBACT My Generation at Work network, because it helps to point out the strong and weak points, and the opportunities and threats of each unique case.

When looking at topics such as labour market development and the problems therein with youngsters, it is very important that organizations such as municipalities stay involved. This prevents these issues to become issues that function outside of politics and live their own lives. The contingency approach makes that the issues and the municipalities stay connected, because it states that the effectiveness of an organization depends on the connection of environment and organization (‘t Hart & van Twist, 2007). If the organizations and municipalities are involved, this will lead to contingency between the URBACT Local Support Group and the Local Action Plan. These elements will be explained later on in this dissertation (also see annex 2 for more information).

First, in this theoretical part will be explained what kind of research was used and why. After that, the contingency approach will be elaborated on, as well as the SWOT-analysis. To conclude the combination between the theories used will be explained.

## Public administration research with a practical twist

For this dissertation a more public administration kind of research was chosen. This is because public administrational research is more focused on finding solutions for current issues then on developing new and big theories. The reason for this is that a lot of research objects are unique, which makes it difficult to develop any general applicable theories. Public administrational research is mainly about complementing existing theories with new ideas, assumptions or hypotheses. It points out the shortcomings or contradictions of existing theories. Besides that, public administrational research is often more practical than theoretical. It mainly takes into account the level of applicability and focuses on finding solutions in or for the public administration of a certain country. Often this happens on behalf of organizations or individuals from public administration (Van Thiel, 2007, p. 7-13). This is of relevance for this research since it aims to provide recommendations which are quite practical and the topics addressed in this dissertation are quite practical as well. In public administrational research, trend research is another important element. Trend research detects and analyses social developments and makes predictions about the possible consequences of these developments. In the analysis and case studies, trends in the different cities will be researched.

In the public administration theory there is an increasing focus on the environment. There are several public administrational approaches to organization and management. One of them is the system approach and the other the contingency approach. According to the system approach, public organizations are in constant touch with their environment. Organizations will get a certain amount of input from their environment, with concrete issues such as manpower and budget, but also less concrete issues such as wishes, demands and information. There is also a certain amount of output from the organizations itself, such as taxes, subsidies etc. Therefore a transformation takes place in the organization. The environment reacts on the products and services the organization delivers. The eventual effect of the products of organizations, the outcome, is determined by the responses of the environment. The organization gets feedback in the form of information about what happens in the environment with the results of its activities (Van Thiel, 2007). This focus on the environment is also relevant for this research because the environment is a very important aspect of this research and earns an important place in the analysis and case studies.

## Contingency approach

As already stated, the contingency approach puts a great emphasis on the environment and especially on the connection between this environment and the organization. The effectiveness of the organization depends on the degree of contingency that exists between the organization and its environment. Characteristics of the environment and the organization should be adapted to each other. When there is a lack of contingency between the two, this will decrease the effectiveness of the organization. The contingency approach was developed of dissatisfaction with the existing approaches, which state that there is only one correct form of organization. The contingency approach states that there is not only one correct form of organization. The approach focuses on several dimensions of the environment, which can be found in the table (Bovens, ’t Hart & van Twist, 2007, p.244-250).

This table gives a clear overview of the contingency approach and it maps the link of the approach with practice. The practical approach has already been applied in this table. This is done, to not lose sight of this link, which is very important for this research.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Dimensions of Contingency approach |  |
| Dynamics:  *degree of predictability* | The dynamic dimension deals with changes in an environment of an organization which are quite unpredictable. Another aspect of this dimension is turbulence, which refers to the irregular characteristics of developments in the environment. A turbulent environment is an environment which is very dynamic. The more dynamic the environment, the more flexible the structure of an organization will and must be. In a stable environment, conditions under which an organization must function can be predicted. When the environment constantly has different requirements, a more flexible structure is needed.  Link dissertation: the cases analyzed all experience quite a dynamic environment. |
| Complexity:  *degree of comprehensibility* | An environment can be simple or complex. This dimension stresses to what extent an environment is familiar and understandable. The more complex the environment, the more decentralized the structure of an organization must be. This is because not everything can be organized from one central point in an organization that deals with a complex environment.  Link dissertation: there will be a focus on the cities of Rotterdam, Antwerp and Glasgow, which all deal with complex environments. |
| Heterogeneity:  *degree of uniformity* | An environment is heterogenic if it can be divided into different sub-environments. The less uniform the environment, the more the organization will tend to split up in specialized units focused on the specialized sub-environments. A heterogeneous environment does not directly mean that it is not a stable environment or that it is difficult. A heterogeneous environment itself can be really stable and simple.  Link dissertation: Besides the fact that heterogeneity is a typical feature of a city, the three cities from the analyses, are all very different, and therefore heterogenic. This could lead to new insights for the other cities. |
| Hostility:  *attitude towards environment* | The environment can be in favour of the organization or not. The attitude of groups outside of the organization gives an indication of the degree of hostility. Extreme hostility compels quick and decisive action. Complexity forces to decentralise.  Link dissertation: Hostility has everything to do with attitude and how people experience changes that are going on in society. There are a lot of groups in society that are ‘hostile’ against the city. In this dissertation hostility comes into play, when the attitude of the youth in the three cities will be addressed. |

## SWOT-analysis

To make a clear comparison between the three cities, the SWOT-method was chosen. A SWOT-analysis makes it possible to get a clear view of the environment and the position of the organization in that particular environment. Important aspects in this phase of the research are to divide the several factors which have an influence on the organization, into strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats by mapping this in a SWOT matrix.

The SWOT-analysis gives a clear structure for analyzing the three different cities and is the first step of making a comparison. A SWOT-analysis consists of, as the letters may already suggest, an analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of an organization. By analyzing the strengths and weaknesses, one will make an internal analysis of the organization. While by analyzing the opportunities and threats an external analysis will be made, in which the environment plays a big role. In other words, the strengths and weaknesses are aspects that the organization can influence. The strengths and weaknesses depend on influences from outside, and are therefore issues that the organization cannot control. These internal and external analyses together form the situation analysis.

By categorizing the three different cities in such a way, it will become easier to eventually compare every unique case. A SWOT-analysis on its own does not say very much yet. That is why a combination with the contingency approach was chosen. This combination leads to strong and concrete conclusions and recommendations (Bovens, ‘t Hart & van Twist, 2007).

According to the SWOT method, the core expertise of an organization can be determined. This core expertise can eventually be the base for new developments. By pointing out strong points against external opportunities, new chances come into view. This makes it easier and more uniform to compare these cities in the analysis.

## Schematic overview (theoretical model)

The cities of Rotterdam, Antwerp and Glasgow all face problems and challenges, which will be analyzed with the assistance of SWOT (blue boxes). Because the cities are all unique and have a unique environment as well, the contingency approach (red arrows) will be used. The combination of the SWOT-analysis and the contingency approach maps the current situations of the cities. In this way, the cities can be distinguished and analyzed. By mapping the problems and challenges of a city, the situation and the current status of the city becomes clear. According to the situations of the cities, two concrete actions will take place: a Local Support Group will be formed, which will develop a Local Action Plan. These two actions are linked with each other. Comparisons between the cities can be made, with the help of the theory and the four dimensions of the contingency approach (dynamics, complexity, heterogeneity and hostility). Together this will lead to the potential contribution of each city to the URBACT network.

Local Action Plan

Problems

Potential Contribution City to URBACT

Situation City

(Antwerp, Glasgow, Rotterdam)

URBACT Local Support Group

Challenges

*Figure 1: Schematic overview research method and sub questions (Ellen van der Geer, 2012)*

# METHODOLOGY

## Central questions and sub questions

The sub questions of this research are constructed in such a way that they will help to answer the central question best. The sub questions are built up in connection with the information all the partner cities in the URBACT network submitted about their cities. This input from each city was used for the project proposal as well. Mapping the problems and challenges of each city and putting this in a SWOT analysis, gives a good overview of the situation of each city. With this clear overview, a Local Support Group and a Local Action Plan, which are also connected with each other, can be formed. With all this information it can be determined what the potential contribution of a certain city can be to the URBACT network.

Central question:

*“What is the added value for the City of Rotterdam to join the European My Generation at Work network?”*

Sub questions:

*General:*

* What are the main aims of the URBACT programme?
* What are the possible advantages of participating in an URBACT network?

*Analysis*:

* What are the problems and challenges faced by Rotterdam, Antwerp and Glasgow in relation to youth and employment?
* What are the policies and concrete actions developed by Rotterdam, Antwerp and Glasgow so far in relation to these problems and challenges?
* Who can be involved in the initial URBACT Local Support Group to be set up during the Development phase by the partner city?
* What could be the scope of the Local Action Plan to be developed by Rotterdam, Antwerp and Glasgow within the framework of the network?

*Comparison*:

* What is the potential contribution of Rotterdam, Antwerp and Glasgow to the network activities and what does the partner expect from the My Generation at Work network?

## Case selection

In this research case studies are carried out on three different cities: Rotterdam, Antwerp and Glasgow. The My Generation at Work project consists of five cities, namely: Rotterdam, Antwerp, Riga, Glasgow and Gdansk. Considering the time frame given for this dissertation, there was not enough time to analyse all five cities. Therefore, a more broad analysis on only three of the five cities was chosen. These three different examples give a clear and general view about what three different cities can learn from each other and what kind of similarities and differences these three cities have. Of course, these three cities are not characteristic for this problem and there are several other cases and cities which can be studied. However, by analyzing these three particular cities the aim is to proof, even on a small scale, how cities can learn from each other and can contribute something to an URBACT network. The reason why the cities of Antwerp and Glasgow were chosen to compare with the City of Rotterdam is because Antwerp and Glasgow have more overlap in problems and issues with Rotterdam and therefore are the most interesting partners for Rotterdam.

## Research methods and techniques

In this dissertation, in order to come to a clear recommendation, case studies are being used. A case study is a research strategy in which several cases of the topic being researched, are being researched independently and analyzed afterwards. The cases chosen do not have to be rare or all the same. One or multiple cases are chosen which are representative cases for the topic of research (Van Thiel, 2007). In this dissertation a collective case study was used, because a number of cases are studied in order to investigate some general phenomenon (Silverman, 2005).

The research is based on qualitative research (Silverman, 2005). The data needed was collected, ordered and analyzed. This analysis is done in the form of a SWOT-analysis. This is because a SWOT-analysis is a perfect tool in alignment between organization and environment (Van Thiel, 2007). The input for the SWOT-analyses are the policy documents, other scientific literature and supporting interviews with local public administrators. The given theories were used and later projected on practice. By precisely mapping the strengths and weaknesses and thereby the connected opportunities and threats of the several cities as well, a conclusion can be drawn about to what extent the city of Rotterdam has something to offer to other cities and to what extent it can learn something from other cities. This will lead to the final conclusion if it would have added value for the City of Rotterdam to join the My Generation at Work network.

## Document analysis

For this dissertation desk research was done using several sorts of documents. This covers documents both from the three cities, as well as documents from outside the organization. A lot of policy documents about the topic were used, such as policy documents from the three different cities on labour market development and the role of youngsters on this labour market. All these documents were provided by the cities themselves. Besides these policy documents, scientific articles were used to support these policy documents. These scientific articles and literature were used to gain information about the situations from the separate cities and about labour market developments in general. In addition, literature was also used on more general themes such as European policy making and European co-operation. Basically, literature on the integration of the European Union into the

day-to-day life of the European citizen.

## Interviews

To get more in depth information, several supporting interviews have been held with stakeholders and experts from the cities of Rotterdam, Antwerp and Glasgow. For the analysis of the City of Rotterdam interviews were held with Marike Dijksterhuis and Marie Louise Bot, both from the economic and the labour market department. For the City of Antwerp the contact person was El Hassan Aouraghe, who is also an expert on the topic and could provide a lot of insight information about the situation of the City of Antwerp. For more input and in depth information from the City of Glasgow, Julia Abel and Marie McLelland were approached. Both are active at the Education department at the City of Glasgow, which deals with both youngsters and the labour market. Questions were asked concerning the current situation of the three cities, the problems each city faces, the opportunities, the strengths and what could be done better. The reason why these persons were all being interviewed, is because they are all experts in the field of this topic and helped to hit the core of the situation of each city.

## Definitions

**Europe2020**: Europe2020 is the EU’s growth strategy for the coming decade. It is set up in such a way that the EU will become a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy. These priorities will make it that the EU and the Member States deliver high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion. Five ambitious objectives – on employment, innovation, education, social inclusion and climate/energy – to be reached by 2020. Each Member State has adopted its own national targets in each of these areas (European Commission, 2012).

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

**Labour market**: the market in which workers find paying work, employers find willing workers and wage rates are determined, it is about the supply of available workers in relation to available work.

**Youth**: Under youth we understand the group of young people aged between fifteen and twenty-five. These group is just entering the labour market or likely to enter the labour market in a few years.

**Brain drain**: the emigration of highly trained or qualified people from a particular country and/or area.

**Mismatch**: a failure to correspond or match, in this context we are talking about the mismatch between education and the labour market.

**Local Action Plan:** Action plan that URBACT partners develop in response to local issues. Local Action Plans should provide for each partner a concrete roadmap and a range of solutions to tackle the core issues identifies at the start of the URBACT project. This Local Action Plan is co-produced by the Project Partners and the Local Support Group.

**Local Support Group:** each URBACT partner is required to set up a Local Support Group, which gather the local stakeholders most concerned by the issue addressed by the project. The Local Support Group co-produces the Local Action Plan and makes sure that exchanges have an impact on local practices and policies.

**MyGeneration@Work**: A proposed new URBACT project about improving the connection between young people and the labour market. The project will be a co-operation between the cities of Rotterdam, Antwerp, Glasgow, Riga and Gdansk. The My Generation at Work project wants to promote the employability of young people in a changing labour market, with special focus on enterprising skills and attitudes. The network will produce three sets of practical results: reduced drop-out and brain drain with new connections between education and work, (self) employment for young people in identified economic sectors and creation of hubs and effective multi-stakeholder partnerships in co-creation with young people.

# URBACT

## Introduction

During these times of crisis cities and towns all over Europe face the same challenges and problems. The main and the most common challenges which are being faced are:

* globalisation
* climate change
* demographic changes
* economic crisis

Because of the overlap in problems and challenges, there came a sense in Europe that cities should work together to solve these common problems best. The result of this overall sense was that the European Commission, Member States and two Partner States (namely: Switzerland and Norway) assigned an ambitious objective to the URBACT II European Territorial Cooperation programme. This programme is developed to foster European collaboration and assist European cities and towns in becoming engines of growth and jobs, while at the same time striving to be attractive and cohesive (URBACT official website, 2012).

On 3 March 2010 the European Commission proposed a ten-year strategy for reviving the economy of the European Union, called Europe2020. Europe2020 is the EU’s growth strategy for the coming decade. In the changing world we are living in nowadays, the EU wants to become a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy. This should help the EU and the Member States to deliver high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion. The Union has set five ambitious objectives on employment, innovation, education, social inclusion and climate/energy, to be reached by 2020. Each Member State has adopted its own national targets in each of these areas (European Commission, 2012).

One of the requirements of URBACT is to incorporate this Europe2020 objectives into its projects. As already stated employment and education are two of the five objectives of the Europe2020 Strategy.

The sub question of this chapter is part of the general part of the dissertation and will be as follows:

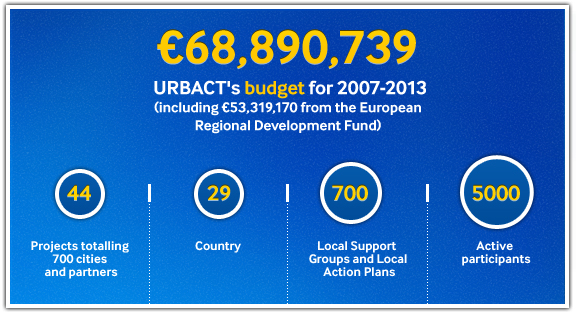
* *What are the main aims of the URBACT programme?*

## URBACT

The URBACT programme fosters sustainable and integrated urban development. The slogan of URBACT therefore is: “connecting cities, building successes”. The URBACT programme is considered as a living programme and takes the consequence of the financial and economic crisis into account. Besides that, it aims to incorporate the Europe2020 strategy in its objectives.

The European Union wanted to promote balanced dynamic urban development in Europe and therefore decided to create the URBACT Programme in 2002.The URBACT programme follows in the footsteps of the European URBAN programme, which focused on an integrated and participative approach to urban renewal in deprived neighbourhoods. The first URBACT projects started in 2003 and the outputs from these 28 projects, focusing on six key topics, were published in 2006. URBACT II, the continuation of URBACT, started in 2007 and will end in 2012. In the URBACT II programme, 44 projects participated in nine areas of expertise.

Since the establishment of URBACT II in 2007, more than 300 cities of all sizes from 29 countries all over Europe have been exchanging knowledge and working together in the framework of URBACT, mobilising a working community of 5000 people (URBACT official website, 2012).



*Figure 2: Facts & Figures (URBACT Official Website, 2012)*

## Main objectives/topics

In order to produce a real impact with this transnational exchange and to achieve concrete results in each of the partner cities, URBACT tried to establish a strong methodology which is called the URBACT method. This URBACT method relies on mutual assistance between cities (the so-called transnational exchange), action-orientated (each city commits to elaborate and adopt a Local Action Plan), a participative approach (each city co-produces its Local Action Plan with a Local Support Group bringing together concerned stakeholders) and a strong methodological support (guidance from the URBACT Secretariat and from thematic experts).

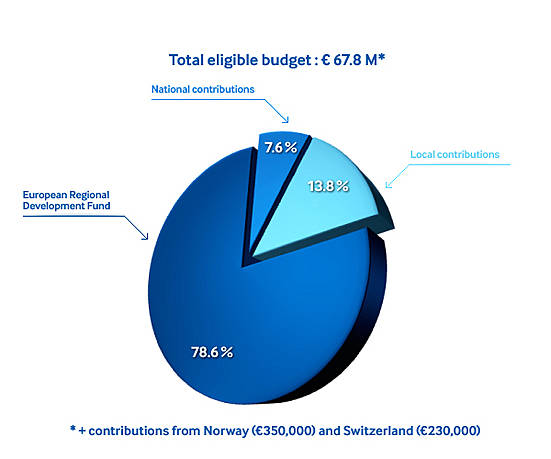
As from the beginning, the URBACT programme consists of several thematic clusters. All these different clusters gather a number of projects and cover all the common urban challenges faced by European cities and towns:

* Active inclusion
* Cultural Heritage & City Development
* Disadvantaged Neighbourhoods
* Human Capital & Entrepreneurship
* Innovation and Creativity
* Metropolitan Governance
* Quality Sustainable Living
* Low Carbon Urban Environments
* Port Cities

## Finances

The European Commission defines and coordinates the overall activities linked to structural fund use in European regions. As part of these actions, the URBACT programme and its projects are partly financed by the Commission, which contributes 78% of the budget via the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The ERDF was established by the Community in 1975 and plays an important role in providing aid for economic and employment restructuring. The other part is taken care of by the Member and Partner States itself. National contributions are based on the population of the country in proportion to the total European population. Cities and regions contribute to URBACT’s budget proportionally to their involvement in the programme (Cini, 2007).

URBACT projects consist of two phases and deal with a total budget of between €150.000 and €710.000, covering both phases. This budget finances all the projects activities, including meetings, communications, travel, publications, etc. There is an additional amount available for each project to cover the costs of thematic and methodological support provided by experts approved by the programme, this is €50.000 (Working Group) or €125.000 (Thematic Network). The implementation of Local Action Plans is covered by the partners or, if possible, by European operation programmes such as ERDF, European Social Fund, etc (Official URBACT website, 2012).

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*Figure 3: URBACT Budget*

*(URBACT Official Website, 2012)*

## My Generation at Work

My Generation at Work is one of the nineteen projects, which was approved in the third call for proposals in March 2012. As already stated, all the thematic clusters are related to the pillars of the Europe2020 strategy for innovative, sustainable and inclusive cities. The My Generation at Work project fits perfectly in the innovative cities pillar. The topic of the My Generation at Work network is therefore at the very core of the Europe2020 strategy and the challenges cities are facing today in the economical and fiscal crisis, and far into the future.

The main objective of the My Generation at Work network is to promote the employability of young people in a changing labour market, with special focus on enterprising skills and attitudes. This will be done in partnership with young people, businesses, the education sector, employment agencies and the city government. The My Generation at Work network will fall under the cluster of active inclusion.

## Conclusion

The URBACT programme and its networks can be described shortly in three concepts:

* *Cities*: URBACT is all about cities, from all sizes. It enables these cities to work together and to develop solutions to major urban challenges. It aims to do this by reaffirming the key role cities play in facing increasingly complex societal changes. Other cities can adapt solutions from partner cities to their own context.
* *Solutions*: URBACT helps cities to develop new, and sustainable solutions to major urban challenges. These solutions integrate economic, environmental and social dimensions.
* *Share*: the URBACT programme is all about sharing knowledge and expertise. To come to certain solutions, URBACT tries to empower cities to share these good practices and lessons learned with all professionals involved in urban policy throughout whole Europe.

# ADVANTAGES OF AN URBACT NETWORK

The vast majority of Europeans live and work in urban areas. Today, over 70% of the European citizens live in urban areas (Urban Audit, 2012). These people all face the same sort of problems. Therefore, it is definitely an advantage that cities can collaborate via the URBACT programme on an European level. One of the main objectives of URBACT is to improve the living circumstances in an urban area and, as the majority of the European citizens live in urban areas, a lot of people can benefit from this programme.

In this chapter, which at the same time is the last and concluding chapter of the general part, the following sub question will be answered:

* *What are the possible advantages of participating in an URBACT network?*

A reason why cities may choose to participate in an URBACT network is because it can be useful to gain knowledge, while at the same time the city can be a contribution of added value to other cities. Involvement in an URBACT network can lead to integrated sustainable solutions that can inspire other cities. Besides that, also pragmatic solutions for one city can be found by joining the URBACT networks. This can be found by exchanging experiences among URBACT partners and through working in the field with the most dedicated parties and driving forces on certain issues. Another possible advantage of joining an URBACT network is the fact that URBACT finances a great part of the project. Especially in times of crisis, cities do not have that much money to spend. With the money that the cities receive from URBACT certain projects can actually been carried out (Van der Vleuten, 2007).

On its official website, URBACT stated some possible advantages of joining an URBACT network. These possible advantages are stated here below and explained. Later on in this dissertation it will become clear if these possible advantages are also applicable for the City of Rotterdam.

Possible advantages of joining an URBACT network:

* *Build strong links with city practitioners and policy makers who are facing the same challenges as you*. This will eventually lead to new insights on certain issues and recommendations, which can eventually lead to solutions. These strong links are not only useful during the duration of the project, but also afterwards and in the future.
* *Discuss and share knowledge with peers*. This will also lead to new insights and new information on the topics discussed. In this way, cities can be of added value for each other.
* *Benefit from methodological and financial support*. Joining an URBACT programme comes with an budget provided by URBACT and also with a (at least one) Lead Expert. Cities obtain this methodological and financial support and can benefit from it. This will be of added value for the project itself and is an aspect on which the cities can save money.
* *Develop a concrete and effective urban development project in your area (the Local Action Plan)*. The Local Action Plan is one of the concrete outcomes of an URBACT project and provides the city with an concrete and effective urban development project, which consists of concrete solutions and policies.
* *Highlight commitment alongside the European Union to integrated and sustainable urban development*. Integrated and sustainable urban development is something all European cities strive for and which perfectly fits into the Europe2020 strategy. The URBACT programme is one of the many tools to confirm this commitment.

# CITY OF ROTTERDAM

In the development phase of the project proposal each city sets up some expected effects and formulates its main goal about what they want to achieve by joining the My Generation at Work network. After some internal discussions, between all the departments involved, the City of Rotterdam set its main goal at enterprising Public-Private partnerships. Therefore the main focus will be on strengthening the existing multi-stakeholder cooperation platforms for the labour market. The city of Rotterdam wants to do this in co-production with young people, with a specific focus on the medical and technical sector.

Before joining the My Generation at Work network the City of Rotterdam made a clear overview of the main challenges it faces. The main challenges of the City of Rotterdam are:

* better matching between young people to the economic growth sectors and by this reduction of youth unemployment
* prevention of brain drain and by doing so making the city more attractive for higher educated graduates and their families.
* the increasing flexibility of the labour market (My Generation at Work official application form, 2012).

With this focus, challenges and goal in mind, the City of Rotterdam has formulated the following expected effects by participation in the My Generation at Work network:

* The City of Rotterdam expects to get more effective cooperation, this cooperation will come in the form of the Local Support Group. This Local Support Group will strive for effective cooperation in terms of concrete actions taken, one of the results will be job creation. There will be a special focus on the platforms for the medical and technical sector, with the aim to comprise at least thirty stakeholders that represent all major educational institutes and major businesses in Rotterdam
* The City of Rotterdam wants to extend its platforms with young people. They want to involve them from the beginning on towards the end. It wants to turn the involvement of youngsters on an incidental basis (which is the current situation) to involvement at a decision making level.
* Besides that, the city expects that successful connections will be made between young people with low and high opportunities on the labour market. This will make the labour market more heterogenic.
* The City of Rotterdam expects that at the end of the My Generation project an estimated amount of 1.000 young people are involved in job creation projects and events. These youngsters will be involved in a structural manner and in a co-creative way.
* The City Council of Rotterdam has set a target for 2014 on increasing the engagement of higher educated young people in the city and in the region. The expectation is that the My Generation at Work project will be a contribution to help realizing this target.
* The last expected effect of the My Generation at Work network is that the curve of the increasing youth unemployment in Rotterdam gets reversed because of the contribution of job creation. This aspect can be linked to the dynamic dimension of the contingency approach, because this deals with changes in the environment of the organization which are quite unpredictable (My Generation at Work official application form, 2012).

In this chapter the following sub questions will be addressed:

* *What are the problems and challenges faced by Rotterdam in relation to youth and employment?*
* *What are the policies and concrete actions developed by Rotterdam so far in relation to these problems and challenges?*
* *What could be the scope of the Local Action Plan to be developed by Rotterdam within the framework of the network?*
* *Who can be involved in the initial URBACT Local Support Group to be set up during the Development phase by the partner city?*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Strengths   * Lot of experience in the field of youth and the labour market, and especially with involving youngsters * Great commitment local politics | Weaknesses   * Curve of decreasing labour (unemployment) * Mismatch on the job market (mismatch between supply and demand) |
| Opportunities   * Relatively young population * Experience with multi-stakeholder cooperation | Threats   * Brain drain * Mismatch on the job market (sectoral mismatch) |

## Internal analysis: Strengths & Weaknesses.

*Strenghts*

The City of Rotterdam already has got quite a lot of experience in the field of youngsters and the labour market. There are several projects and programmes going on in the city covering these topics. Besides that the city also has quite some experience in working together with young people, there are several platforms and networks already where youngsters are involved. To name a few of these existing programmes: JINC, Rotterdam Career City, RDM Campus, Opleidingsbedrijven, LIVABLE and many more. Besides that, the city not only has experience on a local level, but also has a lot of international experience. The City of Rotterdam is and has been involved in several international and European projects, which makes it a good and reliable partner. Furthermore, there is a great commitment from local politics in the City of Rotterdam on the topics of youth and the labour market. There is a strong political commitment to decrease youth unemployment and strengthen the labour market.

One of the examples of this political commitment is that there is a specific policy programme for 2010-2014 called “Economy and the Labour Market”. The three main objectives of this programme are: strengthening the local economy, creating a more attractive investment climate and bridging the gap between supply and demand of labour. Young people are a very important target group of the programme (Economie & Arbeidsmarkt, 2012). The City of Rotterdam also has an extensive integrated policy framework on promoting the employability of young people in the changing labour market. It is one of the main priorities of the Board of Mayor and Aldermen. Especially in the economic, social and education departments, resources have been allocated to implement this framework which consist of several sub programmes.

As a result, there is a lot of expertise and experience at the city government on the topic (Werkgelegenheidsmonitor Rotterdam, 2011). Korrie Louwes, vice mayor of the City of Rotterdam for the portfolio Labour Market, Education, Innovation and Participation, has formulated a policy agenda for her European ambitions. This has four policy priorities: integration, youth in relation to labour market development, labour market development and innovation. The vice mayor is keen to cooperate and exchange knowledge with other cities in Europe and to share best practices and lessons learned to enrich Rotterdam’s local policies. Besides the several programmes and projects, financial and human resources have been made available to implement all this.

*Weaknesses*

Youth unemployment in the Netherlands stands at 11.4% (CBS, January 2012). This is not very high compared with the rest of Europe. However, in the City of Rotterdam, with a very young population (30% of the total population is under 25), this percentage is even higher. Although all sorts of programmes and projects already exist and there definitely is a willingness to do something about the youth unemployment issue, there is still a curve of decreasing labour. Of the total number of unemployed in the city, young people form 12%. In September 2011, 4.700 youngsters were unemployed. This is an increase of 3% compared to 2010. It is expected that this unemployment will rise even more and this will definitely have influence on the attitude towards the environment. This can therefore be linked to the hostility dimension of the contingency approach. Besides that, the number of non-working job seekers in the Rotterdam region has increased compared to the previous year. On a national level however, this has decreased. Of these non-working job seekers, 49% has been searching for a job longer than 12 months. This is dangerous because the longer one is out of the labour market, the harder it gets to re-enter.

Another problem is that most of the unemployed people are low educated, 57% of the unemployed are low educated. The City of Rotterdam in general has a relatively low educated population. One of the main problems floating from this low educated population is a mismatch in supply and demand for jobs (Economische Verkenning Rotterdam, 2012). The number of jobs for lower educated people is higher than the supply, while the number of people with secondary or higher education in the labour force is higher than the number of jobs available. 42% of all low skilled jobs is done by workers that are actually overqualified. There is a serious ‘crowding’ on the lower levels of the labour market, besides the mismatch that exists between the supply and demand of jobs for lower and higher educated people. There also is a mismatch between education and the working field. This mainly has to do with attitude. School dropouts and job seekers often cannot meet the requirements of employers. A cultural gap exists between companies and youngsters, as well as a gap between the professional world and education institutes (Economische Verkenning Rotterdam, 2012). This shows that the environment of the City of Rotterdam is quite complex.

## External analysis: Opportunities & Weaknesses

*Opportunities*

The City of Rotterdam is a relatively young city with a relatively young population, 30% of its inhabitants are under the age of 25 (Rotterdam Marketing, 2012). This is a huge opportunity for the city; the young population means a population with a lot of chances and opportunities. In the City of Rotterdam one can speak of certain ‘Job Engines’, which are the main growth sectors in terms of jobs. For the City of Rotterdam these ‘job engines’ will be the medical sector (life sciences), the technical sector (harbour, energy and industry), knowledge services, consumer services and education. The current mismatch on the labour market in terms of supply and demand of jobs, occurs especially in the healthcare and technical sector (maintenance/process industry, including the port of Rotterdam), where employment opportunities will further increase in the coming years. As one can see the labour market and the environment of the City of Rotterdam are quite heterogenic.

The City of Rotterdam also has a lot of experience with multi-stakeholder cooperation and expertise on establishing and facilitating multi-stakeholder platforms on the topic of youth unemployment. The City of Rotterdam facilitates for example Public-Private partnerships between businesses, educational institutions and the local government, tackling the labour market issues in the most relevant sectors. The city here operates as the initiator and the facilitator of these networks. Rotterdam Career City and the City Lab projects could be interesting examples for the other partner cities on how to increase the engagement of highly educated young people in the city. These already existing multi-stakeholder platforms offer a lot of opportunities for the city to strengthen these platforms even more. The basis is already there. The involvement of young people in these multi-stakeholder platforms however can be improved. This is the case for high potentials with good opportunities, but also for young people with less opportunities on the labour market (Werkgelegenheidsmonitor, 2011).

*Threats*

Brain-drain is quite a threat for the City of Rotterdam, a relatively high number of higher educated people leave the city after graduation or after their first job experience. There are multiple reasons for this, varying from lack of jobs in certain sectors, to lack of suitable housing, etc. This also has to do with increased flexibility of the labour market, this therefore is also a threat for the City of Rotterdam. With more and more highly educated leaving the city, the city stays with a low educated population. The low educated are in fact the most vulnerable group in terms of youth unemployment and therefore brain drain increases the issues even more. Basically, one can state that there is a lack of dynamics (Economische Verkenning Rotterdam, 2012).

As already stated in the part where the opportunities for the City of Rotterdam were discussed, the City of Rotterdam has certain ‘Job Engines’, where job opportunities will further increase in the coming years. However, the number of students that enrol in education in the technical and life sciences studies decreases. This while these sectors offer one third of all vacancies in Rotterdam. In this so-called ‘Job Engine’ sectors, the number of job seekers is insufficient to meet the demand for labour. The main problem is that there is a lack of heterogeneity. This means that there not only exists a mismatch in terms of supply and demand, but there also exists a ‘sectoral’ mismatch, with young people choosing the ‘wrong’ studies. This also explains the fact why while there are so many unemployed, still a lot of vacancies stay unfulfilled (Economische Verkenning Rotterdam, 2012)

Concluded from the SWOT-analysis and the theoretical model stated above, the following can be concluded for the Local Support Group and Local Action Plan for the City of Rotterdam

Local Support Group:

The main goal of forming a Local Support Group should be quality rather than quantity. It is better to go for a core group of motivated people rather than for a large number of passive listeners. Another important aspect in setting up a Local Support Group is to build outwards from what already exists. The City of Rotterdam should take advantage of the multi-stakeholder platforms that already exist. Most important for the City of Rotterdam would be to keep the business sector engaged, to make sure that the platforms will be as lively and innovative as possible and to ensure that these platforms lead to concrete results. Local governors should definitely participate in the Local Support Group as well, but a strong voice should also be given to the business sector and to educational institutions. Local government should focus more on its role as initiator and facilitator, than as a dominant participant. One of the expected effects of joining the My Generation at Work network for the City of Rotterdam is to extend its platforms with young people and involve this young people from the start and on a decision-making level. Therefore in the Local Support Group young people should also be included.

Local Action Plan:

Local Action Plans are likely to have most chance of being implemented if they have been produced and validated collaboratively by key local stakeholders, and with the involvement of Managing Authorities. The Local Action Plan of the City of Rotterdam should focus on expanding successful concrete actions and projects that are implemented in the city. This instead of starting new ones. More attention should be paid on how to reach more young people with existing actions and activities. One of the main aims of the Local Action Plan should be on how high potentials and young people with less opportunities on the labour market can be better connected and learn from each other. Besides that, job creation should also form a big part of the Local Action Plan, since the City of Rotterdam also stated as one of their expected effects that they would like to see a big group of young people involved in job creation projects and events. In the end, this will contribute to reverse the curve of the increasing youth unemployment.

# CITY OF ANTWERP

Before joining the My Generation at Work network, the City of Antwerp had also set up its main goal, focuses and expected effects. The main goal for the City of Antwerp in the My Generation at Work project would be to enterprise creative dialogues between employers and young people. Therefore its main focus in the project would be on building a multi-stakeholder cooperation network to enrich youth counselling and improve contact between young people and businesses. A special focus will be put on Antwerp’s Youth Competence Centres (My Generation at Work official application form, 2012).

With this specific focus and goal in mind, the City of Antwerp stated the following expected effects of its participation in the My Generation at Work network:

- The City of Antwerp wants to develop a new network, established and active in Antwerp, that consists of the department of Works and Economics, the Youth department, Youth Competence Centre’s, public employment services, the Flemish Network of Enterprises, young people and other actors. This new network will come in the form of the URBACT Local Support Group and perfectly reflects the dynamic environment of the City of Antwerp.

* Furthermore, the city wants to develop and try out creative mechanisms to facilitate dialogues between employers in economic growth sectors and young people with a difficult background. By this creative mechanisms that facilitate dialogues, the city aims to overcome prejudices on both sides (young people and the business sector) and create a more comfortable environment with opportunities. Briefly said, the city wants to overcome the heterogeneity.
* Another expected effect of the participation of Antwerp in the My Generation at Work network is that the employability of young people with a difficult background will increase.
* The City of Antwerp also wants to develop and try out innovative tools to prevent school dropout. The aim of these innovative tools are to reach youngsters in a more effective way and change their attitude towards the environment (hostility). This will be done by involving young job coaches, counsellors and the public employment service.
* To conclude, another expected effect is that the young people in Antwerp will be assisted in finding work in innovative new programmes with employers in the city. These new programmes will be established with help of the My Generation at Work network (My Generation at Work official application form, 2012).

In this chapter the following sub questions will be addressed:

* *What are the problems and challenges faced by Antwerp in relation to youth and employment?*
* *What are the policies and concrete actions developed by Antwerp so far in relation to these problems and challenges?*
* *What could be the scope of the Local Action Plan to be developed by Antwerp within the framework of the network?*
* *Who can be involved in the initial URBACT Local Support Group to be set up during the Development phase by the partner city?*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Strengths   * Strong focus on job matching (skills & market) * Broad development of several sectors | Weaknesses   * High unemployment rate * Educational mismatch |
| Opportunities   * Broad social basis – multi-cultural environment * Broad local political commitment | Threats   * Strong multi-cultural environment * Educational gap & mismatch |

## Internal analysis: Strengths & Weaknesses.

*Strengths*

The City of Antwerp has a strong focus on job matching. By job matching the match between a certain set of skills and the demands of the labour market is understood. Before that, it seemed that there was some sort of mismatch going on here. The City of Antwerp acknowledges this mismatch and therefore develops policies that focus on both the competence side, as well as on the matching side. This job matching is a great priority for the city. In the light of job matching the City of Antwerp has set up Youth Competence Centres. Young people can obtain for example a competence certificate for informal skills and competences achieved in leisure time or school projects. This Youth Competence Centres have a lot of transnational interest and are definitely of interest to the other partner cities in the My Generation at Work network. This model has also got interest from abroad from the OECD for example. It is a very successful model to share. Other existing projects that the city runs are: Werk@telier, apprenticeships and youthatwork. These are all established to enrich job matching.

Another aspect the City of Antwerp focuses on, is a broad development of the labour market, with a special focus on several sectors. This can be concluded by the fact that the city established several sectoral networks. This is done for the six sectors which are the most important for the local economy, namely: construction, the administrative sector, industry (harbour and petrochemical activities), logistics, the hotel and catering business and the creative economy. In this several sector networks, partnerships have been built between the local authority, the local employment agencies, sectoral partners/organizations (sector bodies) and the education council (services). This shows the heterogeneity of the labour market in Antwerp and the dynamics in the city, the environment is quite unpredictable (Jacobs, Sourbron & Herremans, 2011, p.110-126).

*Weaknesses*

In Belgium, the youth unemployment rate is 20.5% (Eurostat, November 2011) and this is quite high. In Antwerp, youth unemployment rates are even higher, namely 25.4% in January 2012. Besides that, also long-term unemployment rates are rising. In 2011, the unemployed population has increased by 4.9%. Among the citizens that are over three years unemployed the percentages increase dramatically (+19.2 % in 2011). This is a true weakness because these rates are quite high compared to other Northern European cities and the longer one is unemployed, the more difficult it gets to integrate in the labour market again. Than it will become a structural problem. In the City of Antwerp also an educational mismatch can be found. There is a mismatch between supply and demand on the labour market. There are a lot of vacancies which cannot be fulfilled, while on the other hand there are many job seekers. This is because there is a mismatch between the education level, the area of education, the competences of the job seekers and the needs of the labour market. This all makes the environment of the City of Antwerp quite complex (Van Hemel & Darquenne, 2012).

## External analysis: Opportunities & Threats

*Opportunities*

As already stated, the City of Antwerp has quite a multi-cultural population. The City of Rotterdam has a mixed population as well. However, the City of Antwerp has put it explicitly as one of its main goals. This mixed population can be seen as a threat, but it also gives possibilities. A broad population means that there is a broad social basis. Because of this variety in persons, there is a great variety on the job market as well, especially on the supply side. Special attention should be paid to fight the existing prejudices. Creative mechanisms need to be found to facilitate a dialogue between the several groups. The City of Antwerp wants to learn how to bridge the gap between employers and youngsters with difficult backgrounds and it wants to learn good practices of preventive approaches to school drop outs. Potential drop outs should be reached before they leave school and be helped in finding education or work. By this, the hostile attitude of young people against the local government can probably be changed. Besides that, the city also wants to learn more about promoting entrepreneurship for young people and about developing enterprising skills. It is not only interested in regular entrepreneurship, but also in alternative ways of job creation, like self-employment. The most important focus is to help young people create alternative ways of self-employment and give them the opportunity to create their own jobs that better match with their interests and talents (Konings, Persyn & Torfs, 2012).

The City of Antwerp has got a broad local political commitment as well. Several departments are involved in the issue of youth unemployment and are showing their efforts and interest. For example, the Aldermen of Education, the Alderman of Economy and Work, the Mayor and the Council of Mayor and Aldermen showed their willingness to cooperate in the My Generation at Work project. In the preparation phase of the project there were several special meetings with the Youth department, the Education department and the Youth Competence Centres. This shows that the willingness to cooperate is definitely there, but the implementation still has to be done.

*Threats*

As already stated, the City of Antwerp has got a very multi-cultural population. Besides the fact that it can be an opportunity, as stated above, it can also be seen as a threat. This because the risk of unemployment is twice as high for people with an immigrant background and low education. Besides that, this multi-cultural population deals a lot with prejudices, both on the side of the youngsters as on the side of the business sector. This has everything to do with the hostility dimension of the contingency approach. This threat of prejudices back and forth, is quite a challenge to overcome and at the same time it is a threat to overcome the issue of youth unemployment. Besides the fact that there is an educational mismatch on the supply and demand side, there is also a gap in the sense of attitudes. The City of Antwerp has to deal with a lot of dropouts and young people with difficult backgrounds. Prevention does not seem to work, therefore another solution is needed.

After using the SWOT-analysis to point out the strengths and weaknesses of the City of Antwerp, the next step in the theoretical model would be stating directives for the Local Support Group and the Local Action Plan of the City of Antwerp.

Local Support Group

The Local Support Group for the City of Antwerp should consist of a whole new network. There are already several partnerships and contacts, but in the Local Support Group all important stakeholders should be brought together. Among these important stakeholders, people from the business sector should be represented as well as people from the educational institutions. People with a large expertise on labour market development should be presented as well. Public administrators of course will also form part of the Local Support Group, although there main job will be to facilitate and to initiate this multi-stakeholder cooperation. Last but not least, youngsters should be involved from the beginning, in the decision making process. They can provide the policy makers with in-depth information and they can represent the young people of the city of Antwerp, this will give them a voice as well. Briefly said, the heterogeneity of the Local Support Group of the City of Antwerp should be guaranteed.

Local Action Plan

In the Local Action Plan of the City of Antwerp, the Local Support Group should state some very concrete actions and goals. Main issue for the City of Antwerp would be to overcome the educational mismatch, as well in terms of attitude as in terms of supply and demand. Besides that, attention should be paid to overcome existing prejudices. There is a great willingness to cooperate between several departments of the City Council, this should be encouraged and everyone should be involved. Self-employment and enterprising skills are aspects where the City of Antwerp can gain knowledge on from the other cities. Aspects to incorporate this in its own policies and strategies should be included in the Local Action Plan as well. Creative mechanism to facilitate dialogues should also be a part of the Local Action Plan of Antwerp, because this will overcome prejudices and lead to new opportunities to overcome the issues that come with a multi-cultural population.

# CITY OF GLASGOW

“Enterprise youth gateways for employability and enterprising”, was the main goal set by the City of Glasgow when joining the My Generation at Work network. Therefore the main focus is to set up multi-stakeholder cooperation’s to enrich the contacts and services in the Youth Gateways. The aim of this multi-stakeholder cooperation is to promote employability, enterprise and to connect to business and social media (My Generation at Work official application form, 2012).

With this main goals and special focus in mind, also the City of Glasgow made an overview of the effects they expect of participating in the My Generation at Work network.

* The City of Glasgow wants to see a multi-stakeholder network established, which will be active under the Youth Employability Partnership to develop the Glasgow’s Youth Gateway. This multi-stakeholder network would be the Local Support Group of the City of Glasgow. In this Local Support Group amongst others Glasgow’s young people, employers and the Glasgow City Council Education Services will be involved. This reflects the dynamic environment of the City of Glasgow.
* Besides that, the City of Glasgow expects to see an increased involvement of young people in the Youth Gateways and by this making young people less hostile against local politics and politicians. The aim is that all young people who are classified as NEET (‘Not in Education, Employment or Training’) will be supported through the Youth Gateway.
* The City of Glasgow also wishes to see an improved sharing of data and information on the progression destination of young people. Through the Youth Gateway there will be a single set of reports shared by partners showing which young people require the most immediate support to progress to a positive destination.
* A Glasgow Youth Gateway Social Media Platform will be set up and will be a pilot for the city in developing new ways of engaging with its young people. This will change the contact of the city with the young people and at the same time the image of the young people about the local politics will change. This therefore has everything to do with the hostility dimension of the contingency approach.
* One of the expected effects is that after joining the My Generation at Work network an estimated amount of 100 young people have entered into first steps courses, 250 young people will be assisted in finding work and 300 young people have made progress into further education (My Generation at Work official application form, 2012).

In this chapter the following sub questions will be addressed:

* *What are the problems and challenges faced by Glasgow in relation to youth and employment?*
* *What are the policies and concrete actions developed by Glasgow so far in relation to these problems and challenges?*
* *What could be the scope of the Local Action Plan to be developed by Glasgow within the framework of the network?*
* *Who can be involved in the initial URBACT Local Support Group to be set up during the Development phase by the partner city?*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Strengths   * Multi-stakeholder network * Plans finished, with available budget | Weaknesses   * Strong influence of the economical crisis * Fragmented programmes, difficult overview |
| Opportunities   * Strong and big commitment of young people * Strong national network, even national commitment | Threats   * Fragmented economy and growth industries * Despite the consistency, still a lot of problems with youth participation |

## Internal analysis: Strengths & Weaknesses.

*Strengths*

One of the strengths of the City of Glasgow is that they already have quite a developed multi-stakeholder network. It has a strong focus on heterogeneity. Glasgow’s approach to reducing youth unemployment and increasing employability opportunities is led and directed by its strategic multi-agency Youth Employability Partnership (YEP). This partnership was established in 2008 and led by Glasgow City Council. The aims of the partnership are to increase and sustain the number of Glasgow’s young people aged 16-19 progressing to education, employment or training and to ensure that all young people have the necessary support and offers of appropriate learning opportunities to allow them to remain in a positive destination beyond the compulsory education stage. Glasgow has a range of toolkits, training materials, strategies and evaluations from across the YEP which are available for the other partners in the network.

Under YEP there is a special programme, which is called Glasgow’s Youth Gateway. This will be improved further during the My Generation at Work project. The Youth Gateway, Youth Enterprise Zones and Youth Skills Shops are models which will be developed and shared with the other partners in the My Generation at Work project.

Besides this already developed multi-stakeholder network, there is also a strong political commitment in the City of Glasgow. Development and Regeneration Services within Glasgow City Council took the lead in the decision to participate, with additional political support. The Head of Business and Economy within Development and Regeneration Services agreed to take part in this project. All these departments and governors are already working on the issue of youth unemployment; they know how to reach each other. The Glasgow City Council 2012 budget includes an additional 2.4 million euro for a new Youth Jobs Fund. This programme will target young people who do not have the skills or school level qualifications to gain access to an apprenticeship. It will target local employers and offer a wage subsidy and training grant to encourage employers to recruit the cities NEET young people. To conclude, the plans are there to start with and there is also an additional budget available from within the city (Matheson, 11 November 2011).

*Weaknesses*

The current financial and economic crisis has hit the City of Glasgow hard. The youth unemployment rate in the UK stands at 21.8% (Eurostat, November 2011). Whilst Glasgow has a rich and diverse employment landscape, it also has many challenges in terms of unemployment and, in particular, youth unemployment. The economic recession has increased the challenges faced by Glasgow’s young people. The last official NEET (Not in Employment Education or Training) estimate was 3.300 for the city (with 77% of this total aged 18+). There is an average of 600 new benefit claimants for 18-19 year olds per month and 20-25% of Glasgow’s school leavers are identified as requiring some kind of transitional support. Vulnerable groups of young people continue to be the most likely to be affected and those groups are the most hard to reach. This makes the environment of the City of Glasgow a complex one (Petrongolo & Van Reenen, 2011). As already stated in the strengths of the City of Glasgow, the city already has got a lot of programmes and projects running or in the planning. This variety in programmes and projects makes it quite fragmented as well. Because there is such a variety in possibilities, it is hard to maintain a good overview. This fragmented programme-offers also make it hard and confusing for youngsters where to go.

## External analysis: Opportunities & Threats

*Opportunities*

In the City of Glasgow there is a strong commitment of the youngsters. As stated, a lot of projects for youngsters are already running and they are participating in these projects as well. A lot of these projects are especially focused on the participation of young people. Young people therefore get a lot of chances and opportunities to participate. However, Glasgow wants to enrich this participation of youngsters, make it more dynamic and learn more about participatory methods of youth engagement including youth councils and youth representatives on public sector bodies. The City of Glasgow is keen to broaden its understanding on how the offer of Enterprise Skills courses can enhance a young person’s career prospects. This is an example of how the City of Glasgow wants to develop the Youth Gateway Model even further. Besides the local political commitment, which was already discussed in the strengths of the City of Glasgow, there is also a strong national commitment. Glasgow has a highly developed Youth Employability infrastructure and is a strong national partner in youth employability policy and service development. The city’s leadership is fully committed to the youth employability agenda. The city has a Strategic Employability Pipeline which includes specific Youth Employability programmes. Evaluations of these programmes will be shared with the other partners in the network. This makes the position of the City of Glasgow in the My Generation at Work project even stronger, because in contradiction to the other partner cities the Glasgow plans of the My Generation at Work network are also being carried out nationally; it is more broad-based (Youth Employability Framework 2012-13, 2012).

*Threats*

Glasgow has a complex combination of systemic and economic challenges to deal with. In the current economic downturn, competition for jobs is getting tougher and young people are finding themselves at the back of the queue. Besides that, Glasgow’s key economic growth sectors are tourism, life sciences, engineering, low carbon systems, creative industries and financial services. As one can see these sectors are quite different which can be seen as a fragmented economy with fragmented growth sectors. The City of Glasgow is keen to develop embryonic enterprises in these areas to stimulate economic growth. Because the growth sectors are so fragmented, this will be a difficult task to do. This fragmented economy links with the complexity dimension of the contingency approach. Despite of the several programmes and projects run for young people and the connection between this projects, young people still experience difficulties to find these institutions and projects. There seems to be a problem with connecting the youngsters to these programmes. The reason for this disconnection is because there are so many possibilities to choose from, that the young people feel lost. Therefore one central organization should be established and this must be communicated and promoted clearly to the young people of the City of Glasgow. This will change the hostile attitude of young people as well.

Next step in the theoretical model would be to take it further to a recommendation for a Local Support Group and a Local Action Plan.

Local Support Group

Because there already is a multi-stakeholder network available in the City of Glasgow, the Local Support Group should built further on this existing network and enrich this instead of creating a whole new network. The multi-stakeholder network that exists now is established and active under the Youth Employability Partnership to develop the Glasgow’s Youth Gateway. The Local Support Group will include actors from all different sectors, which all have a stake in the issue of youth unemployment. Examples of possible actors would be Skills Development Scotland, Glasgow Regeneration Agency, Job Centre Plus, Glasgow City Council Education Services, the voluntary sector, employers and Glasgow’s young people

Local Action Plan

The most important role for the Local Support Group would be to develop and improve Glasgow’s Youth Gateway even further and therefore this should be the aim of the Local Action Plan. The focus of this Local Action Plan should be on centralizing the programmes and projects already available, so it will become more clear and easy for the youngsters to actually get in touch with these opportunities and chances. Therefore, a good overview of the current programmes and projects is really important. For this overview data sharing will be crucial. Besides that, the Local Action Plan should also include some concrete actions and initiatives to promote and communicate these programmes and projects, to make sure the young people will be reached in the right way. One of this possibilities could be the Glasgow Youth Gateway Social Media Platform, this is also part of the expected effects stated by the City of Glasgow before entering the My Generation at Work network.

# COMPARISON

A good comparison between the three cities can be made with the assistance of the SWOT-analysis combined with the contingency approach. Rates of youth unemployment differ in the three cities. Rates in Glasgow and Antwerp for example are much higher than in Rotterdam. However, youth unemployment is definitely a big issue for all three cities. Research has shown that the three cities all deal with complex and dynamic environments. All the cities face a somewhat heterogenic environment as well. However, in some cities this is more heterogenic than in others. The City of Antwerp for example, has a more heterogenic environment than the Cities of Glasgow and Rotterdam. The City of Antwerp also has a bigger problem with a multi-cultural population, than the other two cities. Therefore, policy making in the City of Antwerp has a broader scope and is more focussed on a heterogenic environment. The form and degree of hostility also differs in the three cities. Young people in the cities of Antwerp and Glasgow seem to be more hostile, than in the City of Rotterdam. This is because in the City of Rotterdam multi-stakeholder platforms including youngsters already exist. The difference in hostility can be found in the commitment of the young people in each city. The cities of Antwerp and Glasgow have more problems reaching its youngsters. However, all three cities try to influence this hostility and want to involve young people in their plans and programmes. Besides this all, all three cities have shown that they are a unique case in their own country. This comes with its own unique problems and challenges.

To make a good comparison a few key points were selected to compare the cities. The following key points were selected because these key points came across when implementing the theoretical model on the three cities and in the previous chapters. After the analyses, the results were filtered in three key points. The first three key points are defined because these were the three main groups where the cities focused/not focused their policies on. Besides that there were some unique key features found in each city, which are definitely of importance but could not be scaled on the first three key points. That is why a unique key feature group was created:

* Political commitment
* Commitment of the young people
* Multi-stakeholder cooperation
* Unique key features

## Political Commitment

The City of Rotterdam has a large commitment of local politics, several departments of the City Council are involved in the topic of youth unemployment. Youth and employment have become important topics in the strategy for the city in the upcoming years. One of these examples is a specific policy programme for 2010-2014 called “Economy and the Labour market”. The city has shown a lot of willingness, both nationally and internationally, to participate and exchange knowledge on the topic of youth unemployment. In the City of Antwerp political commitment seems less than in the other two cities. This may have to do with the fact that it still has to create its multi-stakeholder platforms. Collaboration on the topic of youth unemployment is still in the developing phase. Political commitment is also greatly present in the City of Glasgow. This city takes the political commitment even further, since political commitment is not only present on a local level, but on a national level as well.

## Commitment of the young people

All cities have stated that they wish to involve young people in a more active way and involve them from the beginning. The City of Rotterdam already has got a lot of experience in the field of involving youngsters in its projects. However they wish to change this from a more incidental basis, to a more structural basis and already from a decision making level. Also the City of Antwerp wants to involve young people more than it has done up till now. The City of Antwerp has set up some projects and programmes in which they involve youngsters. However, this can be improved more and this should be done from the beginning on. The City of Glasgow already has some experience with involving youngsters in its projects. However, they face some problems with communicating with the young people and reaching them in the right way. The City of Glasgow can therefore learn a lot from the other cities in their network. By improving and adapting its communication strategy, the City of Glasgow can involve the youngsters even more in their projects and programmes.

## Multi-stakeholder cooperation

The goal of all the three cities is to create a multi-stakeholder platform. All three Local Support Groups will eventually transform into this multi-stakeholder platform. The City of Rotterdam already has some experience with multi-stakeholder cooperation, especially in the form of establishing and facilitating these platforms. The involvement of young people however in these platforms can be improved. The City of Rotterdam can learn from the other cities in the network, how to strengthen its platforms even more and it can especially learn more about how to involve the business sector. The City of Antwerp still has to develop its multi-stakeholder platform. There are already some initiatives and the willingness to cooperate is definitely there, however this still has to be realized. The City of Glasgow on the other hand, has already an established multi-stakeholder platform, which is actually the most developed of the three cases. This multi-stakeholder platform is called the Youth Employability Partnership.

## Unique key features

Besides the overlap in problems and challenges, the three cities also face some unique aspects, which they do not all share. For example, the mismatch in supply and demand of jobs and the problem with young people choosing the ‘wrong’ studies is quite a big problem for the cities of Rotterdam and Antwerp. This is less of a problem in the City of Glasgow. In the City of Antwerp a lot is done on the issue of job matching. This is done less in the other two cities and is something they can definitely learn from. Another unique thing of the City of Antwerp, is the problem it faces with its multi-cultural environment. The other two cities both deal with multi-cultural environments as well, but not as much as the City of Antwerp. A unique case of the City of Rotterdam is the problem it has with brain drain, the other two cities do not face this problem in the same way. The City of Glasgow is the city which has the most developed multi-stakeholder co-operations and is the most progressive in terms of programmes on youth unemployment. Because there programmes are already quite developed, the City of Glasgow is the only one who states social media as one of its focus points to communicate with its youngsters. Besides that they also have quite a big budget, provided by the City council to facilitate the programmes and projects it wants to carry out. The City of Glasgow is the only city where official documents mentioned the availability of an extra and reserved budget.

# CONCLUSION

The main aims of the URBACT programme are to foster and integrate urban development. The programme is developed to foster European collaboration and assist European cities and towns in becoming engines of growth and jobs, while at the same time striving to be attractive and cohesive. The main elements of an URBACT project are producing a real impact with transnational exchange and achieving concrete results in each of the partner cities.

In the My Generation at Work network, the cities of Rotterdam, Antwerp, Glasgow, Gdansk and Riga work together to exchange knowledge and cooperate on the topic of youth unemployment. The project aims to promote the employability of young people in a changing labour market. A special focus in this project will be on enterprising skills and attitudes. All this will be done in partnership with businesses, the education sector, young people, employment agencies and the city governments.

Some possible advantages of participating in an URBACT network are: building strong links with city practitioners and policy makers who are facing the same challenges, discuss and share knowledge with peers, benefit from methodological and financial support, develop a concrete and effective urban development project and highlight commitment alongside the European Union to integrated and sustainable development. While getting more into depth of the My Generation at Work network and the cities involved in this network, these are definitely advantages where the cities can benefit from. However, the financial support in effect is not that big as the URBACT official Website might suggest. It is an amount of money, with which lots of nice things can be done, however it is not a very big amount of money and cities should always add own resources to the budget.

The problems and challenges faced by Rotterdam, Antwerp and Glasgow in terms of youth and employment have a lot in common, as there are some differences and some unique problems and challenges in each city. All three cities already have some policies and concrete actions developed to tackle the issue of youth unemployment, however this is more advanced in certain cities than in others.

The City of Rotterdam has quite some problems with brain drain and with mismatches on the labour market. One of its great strengths is the experience it has with the involvement of young people in its projects and the political commitment present in the city. In addition, the City of Antwerp has problems with a strong multi-cultural environment, as well as a mismatch on the labour market. One of its strengths is the focus it has on job matching. The City of Glasgow on the other hand, is already more developed than its partner cities in terms of multi-stakeholder cooperation and has some additional budget ready for the implementation of programmes and projects. One of its main problems is the variety of opportunities it offers to the issue of youth unemployment. There are a lot of fragmented programmes, which makes it hard for young people to find the ones the most useful for them; this makes them feel lost.

All three cities wish to create a Local Support Group which will be a multi-stakeholder platform. All three cities would like to involve young people as well in these platforms. The cities of Rotterdam and Glasgow already have multi-stakeholder platforms which they would like to improve and enrich, while the City of Antwerp still has to develop this platform. The ideas for the Local Action Plans differ more or less in the three cities, in terms that the accent on what each city expects to achieve in the My Generation at Work differ. The City of Rotterdam aims at improving the connection between high potentials and young people with less opportunities on the labour market, so that they can learn from each other. Job creation is also a very important topic for the city. The City of Antwerp puts more focus to facilitate dialogues in the city and overcome prejudices that exist. Besides that, self-employment and enterprising skills are also aspects where the City of Antwerp would like to gain more knowledge on. In the Local Action Plan of the City of Glasgow special attention should be paid to create a Social Media Platform and how to connect better to the young people. Besides that, there should come a more clear overview of the already existing initiatives and projects in the city, so it will become clear to the young people in the city where and to whom to go. This can be improved amongst other by data sharing between organizations.

As already stated there are mainly overlaps between the cities on the issue of youth unemployment. However, each city has its own field of expertise, with which it can help the other partner cities and with which it can be of added value for the other cities. The potential contribution of the City of Rotterdam could be their expertise on the involvement of young people in projects and programmes. The potential contribution of the City of Antwerp could be on the topic of job matching, on which it has a lot of experience and expertise. The City of Glasgow on the other hand, can add something to the programme with its experience in running projects and programmes on the topic of youth unemployment and by its expertise on multi-stakeholder cooperation.

To conclude, joining the My Generation at Work network would definitely be of added value for the City of Rotterdam. It has a lot of expertise in the field of youth and the labour market, where the other partner cities can learn and benefit from. Besides that, all other partner cities have its own sort of expertise on which they can share their knowledge with the city of Rotterdam. The City of Antwerp, for example, can help Rotterdam in terms of job matching and by searching solutions to the mismatch on the labour market. The City of Glasgow on the other hand, can contribute something to the City of Rotterdam by sharing knowledge on how to facilitate multi-stakeholder platforms and on how to keep the businesses sector connected and active in this platforms.

Besides that, one really important aspect is the fact that the situations in all three cities are quite unique in their own countries. More similarities in problems and challenges can be found abroad. Because of this unique situations in problems, it makes sense to exchange knowledge and ideas with cities outside the country.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

New challenges call for new solutions. The problem of youth unemployment in its current form is quite new, and therefore a solution should be found which may not be that obvious at first sight. In this dissertation a theoretical model, based on the SWOT-analysis and the contingency approach, was used to find this solution. As already stated in the conclusion, the participation of Rotterdam in the My Generation at Work network would definitely be of added value for the city. The outcomes of this dissertation not only led to this conclusion but also to several recommendations to the City of Rotterdam. By looking at the key points already mentioned in the comparison chapter, for each key point certain recommendations can be given to the relevant departments of the City of Rotterdam.

## Political commitment

Political commitment in the City of Rotterdam is already quite broad, covering several departments. Besides that, youth unemployment is at the core of the agenda of the city’s policy making. The City of Rotterdam should capture this broad commitment and involvement and maintain this. It is no coincidence that the political commitment is one of the strengths stated in the SWOT-analysis. The city may learn something from the Glasgow experience on involving national politics as well. As can be found in the chapter on the situation of Glasgow, the City of Glasgow also has some national political commitment. The City of Glasgow focused in its policy making for several years on creating national political commitment. They succeeded and they successfully implemented it in its policy on youth unemployment. The City of Rotterdam can therefore learn how to get national politics involved as well, to get more broad-based support.

Besides that, the City of Rotterdam should not expect *too* much from the budget. In the proposal the budget for all the cities is already mentioned. URBACT states on its official website, that the financial aid is one of the main possible advantages. Practice has shown that, however it certainly is an extra amount of money with which some quite nice things can be done, it is not enough to cover all expected effects stated by the cities. An additional budget therefore should be made available from within the City of Rotterdam to facilitate these projects.

## Commitment of the young people

Commitment of the young people is one of the main strengths of the City of Rotterdam, especially when compared to the cities of Antwerp and Glasgow. As it is one of the main strong points of the city, the City of Rotterdam could be an example to the other partner cities on how to involve young people in its programmes and it can share its experiences. Rotterdam stated in its expected effects and its main goals, in the official proposal, that it wishes to enhance the involvement of young people and enrich it. It wants to achieve this by involving youngsters from the beginning on and not only on a decision making level. How to overcome this phenomenon can be discovered and experienced together with the other partner cities, especially with the City of Glasgow. In the analysis of the City of Glasgow is already stated that although the city has a lot of initiatives and programmes on youth unemployment, there is a lack of overview and therefore they fail to reach the young people in a successful way. The City of Rotterdam could take elements from examples being used in the other cities and implement those on its own unique situation.

## Multi-stakeholder cooperation

The most important advice to the City of Rotterdam would be to try to link everything as much as possible to already existing initiatives and programmes, in order to enrich these programmes and to get the most out of it. The city should not put too much attention on creating something new, but rather on enrich and optimize the good elements it already has. Therefore, the City of Rotterdam should stick to the platforms and the projects that already exist, and work further from that point on. From the City of Glasgow, the City of Rotterdam can gain knowledge on how to facilitate and enrich the existing multi-stakeholder platforms and make them more active and living. The City of Glasgow for example has a lot of experience on how to keep the business sector connected and involved. This is one of the specific points the City of Rotterdam can learn from the City of Glasgow. Maybe the city can even lift on the knowledge, the City of Glasgow wants to gain, on how to communicate with the young people in the city. One aspect that is really important in this key group is the fact that, however, a multi-stakeholder is very important, the initiatives and programmes should stay clear. This is one of the key points for the City of Glasgow as well and here the two cities can exchange knowledge on specifically as well.

## Unique key features

In the My Generation at Work network, the City of Rotterdam should pay attention to the expertise of the City of Antwerp in the field of job matching and try to bond with that city on the topic of mismatch on the labour market. Since the two cities both face these problems, they can work together to find solutions. Another topic on which the City of Rotterdam can exchange knowledge on and can cooperate on with the City of Antwerp is the issue of the multi-cultural population. The City of Rotterdam can learn something and exchange knowledge with the City of Antwerp on the issues coming with a multi-cultural population because, as already stated, the City of Rotterdam also has quite a multi-cultural population. By the fact that the City of Antwerp made it one of its core topics and issues to overcome, the two cities can exchange knowledge on this specific topic and share best practices.

Another very important and specific recommendation would be that with the development of the My Generation at Work network, the City of Rotterdam should try to expand the network with partners who can help them with the problem of brain drain. The City of Rotterdam states brain drain of one of its main issues, however it cannot exchange knowledge and experience on this topic with the two other selected cities. Maybe in the future, with new partners this issue can be overcome. This will be one of the biggest challenges in the near future for the City of Rotterdam.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1: Schematic overview of URBACT Prochttp://urbact.eu/uploads/RTEmagicC_element_schema_Urbact_EN.jpg.jpgess (2012, URBACT Offcial Website)

## Appendix 2: Chapter on the process of an URBACT application (2012, Ellen van der Geer)

**PROCESS**

Introduction

Each URBACT project has between 6 to 12 partners (cities or other partners), who discuss, share and work together for a period of two to three years. Each project focuses on a specific urban issue and the issues are linked to sustainable urban development. The partners develop tools and recommendations for other European cities and local partners develop pragmatic Local Action Plans. The main goal is to develop effective and sustainable responses to major urban challenges.

As already stated in the previous chapters, integrated urban development is core to URBACT. Its main goal is to promote a new approach to urban policy. This process is called ‘integrated’ because it does not only look at the economical impact of urban development, but also at the environmental and social impact for example.

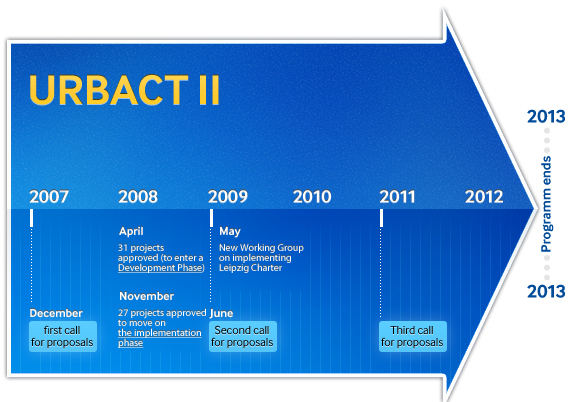
In this chapter the next part of the general part will be discussed, the application process of an URBACT network. This chapter will give the following chapters covering the analyses, more sense. This is because it is necessary to know which players are actually involved in an URBACT project and how the process of a new project looks like.

* *How does an URBACT application process develop?*

Process

The URBACT programme, can be divided up into four specific missions, which all together perfectly summarize the main focus of an URBACT project:

* *Coordinating exchanges to make things happen*URBACT projects cover mostly cities, but it also includes other local authorities, such as research institutions and universities. Proven methodologies are used to coordinate exchanges among these numerous, diverse and geographically distant partners. Via Local Support Groups key players from each city are involved, this ensures realistic outputs of quality. URBACT helps its partners to define a relevant Local Support Group and effective Local Action Plan.
* *Analysing and capitalising on learning*URBACT collects what is learned via the projects and develops integrated responses that includes both the economic, environmental, cultural and social dimensions of urban development. URBACT mobilises the expertise of practitioners from the partner cities, experts working on each project and a Thematic Pole Manager.
* *Disseminating information and outputs*URBACT spreads the information about the project all over Europe. It makes the outputs of their work available to all city policy players throughout Europe. URBACT does not offer universal, ready-to-use recipes to the major urban challenges cities are facing, but rather makes solutions available that have proven effective in certain solutions. To communicate these outcomes, URBACT uses its website and National Dissemination Points. These are operating points that spread the information available in each country’s national language. Besides that, URBACT also organizes conferences open to a broad audience to show their outcomes and it also distributes publications.
* *Funding project operations*

URBACT funds project operations, with maximum budgets ranging from €300.000 to €710.000. URBACT does not finance the implementation of Local Action Plans, which can be funded by the partners or by other programmes (ERDF, European Social Fund, etc..)

(2012, The Official URBACT Web site)

*Figure 4: URBACT II Timeline (2012, URBACT Official Web site)*

Partners

URBACT projects primarily concern cities (elected officials and practitioners), but it may also include local authorities, universities, research institutions and other public authorities. All these partners should come from at least three different Member or Partner States. It is allowed to have partners from the same Partner or Member state, however there is a maximum of two. Among these authorities one will find a number of Operational Programmes Managing Authorities (who represent Regions, Länder, etc.). These Managing Authorities often have a decisive involvement alongside the cities in carrying urban development projects to term.

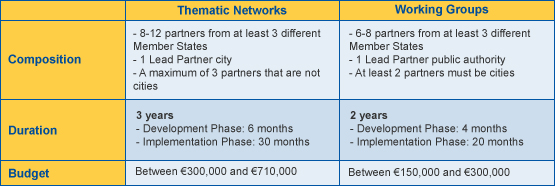
Lead Partner:

Every URBACT project has a Lead Partner. This Lead Partner is responsible for the project’s implementation and its administrative and financial management. In the case of the My Generation at Work network, Rotterdam is the Lead Partner and Glasgow, Antwerp, Riga and Gdansk are the other partner cities.

Lead Expert:

Besides that, every URBACT project also chooses a Lead Expert who accompanies the project for its entire duration. This Lead Expert can be chosen from a database from the URBACT website, where one can find all the available experts sorted on their topic of expertise. The project can also choose to search for an expert themselves, however, this has to be approved by URBACT. Experts are chosen for their high-level knowledge and real experience related to the project’s key issues. They provide the project with support in terms of both content and methodology. Besides that they contribute the thematic discussions on behalf of the project. As projects advance, projects can also call on a limited number of thematic Experts for contributions on specific topics (2012, URBACT Official Web site).

Phases

Between all the existing URBACT projects, two different sorts of project scan be distinguished; Thematic Networks and Working Groups.

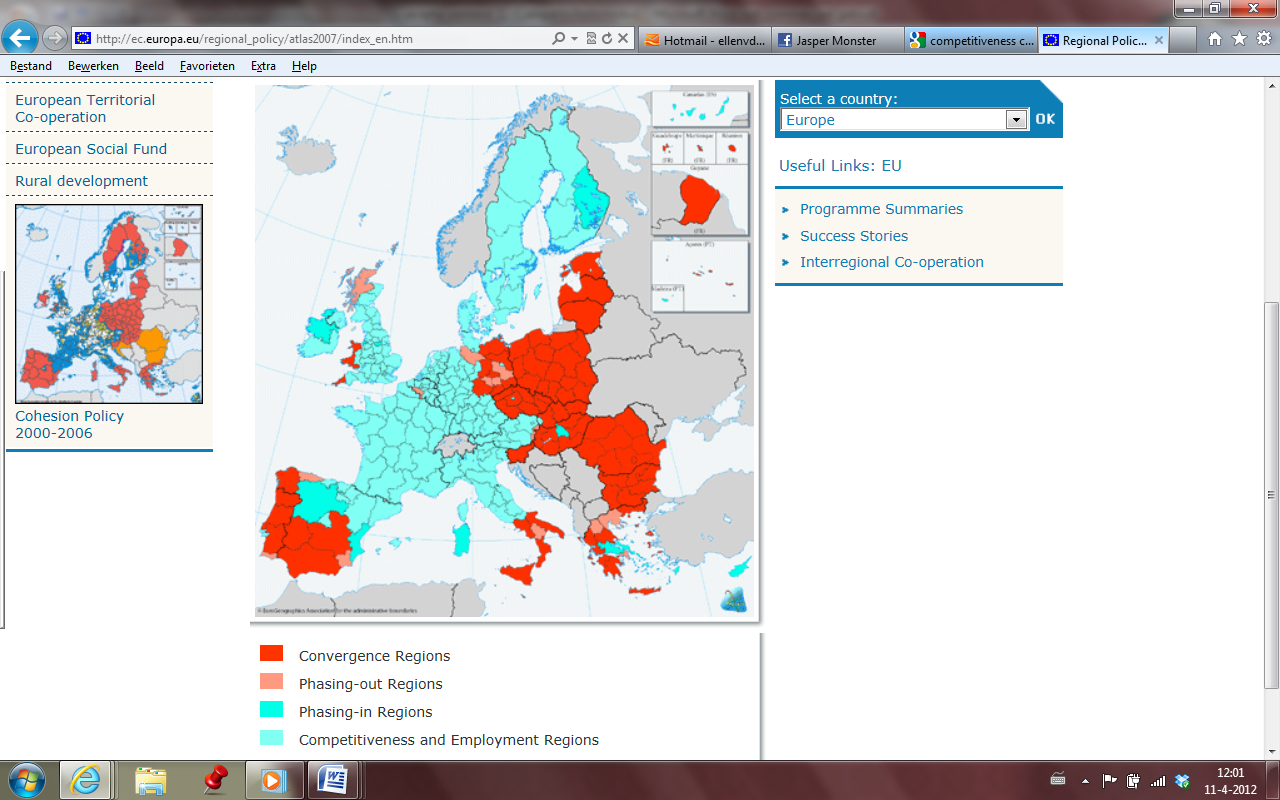
*Figure 5: Different sort of projects (2012, URBACT official Web site)*

URBACT projects can be divided up in several phases: the Development Phase and the Implementation Phase. In this part of the chapter covering the process of an URBACT network, these phases will be elaborated on. Also the Call for Proposals and the Declaration of Interest will be discussed.

Call for proposals

This is the phase wherein everyone can submit their project proposal at URBACT. Each city is only allowed to join two URBACT networks and can only participate as a Lead Partner in one of these networks. In this stage the Lead Partner chooses their Lead Expert and four other Partner cities. Together they start writing the Project proposal. In this proposal three crosscutting issues should be addressed:

* Manage urban development in the context of the economic and financial crisis
* Foster integrated and sustainable approaches to urban development
* Develop efficient partnerships and multi-level governance processes

When defining its focus, applicants must explain how their network will address these three issues.

Declaration of Interest

The proposal will be in the form of a Declaration of Interest involving five cities, including the Lead Partner itself. These cities should be from at least three different Member or Partner states. Also there is a distinction made between Convergence and Competitiveness regions. The initial partnership must be balanced with partnerships from both groups. The balance is set at 50% +1 Convergence or 50%+1 Competitiveness.

*Figure 6: Convergence and Competitiveness Regions (2012, European Commission – Regional Policy)*

The submission of the Declaration of Interest is the first stage of the project. Its purpose is to select and approve projects to enter a six-month Development phase. The declaration of interest mainly covers the period of the Development phase (in terms of work programme and budget), but it also introduces first components related to the Implementation phase. It provides elements on what will be implemented if the project is approved.

The Declaration of Interest should include the five letters of Commitment, the CV of the project coordinator at the Lead Partner and the CV of the proposed Lead Expert. Each Partner city needs to hand in a signed Letter of Commitment. The Managing Authority of that city signs this Letter of Commitment and without these five Letters of Commitment the project proposal is not valid. Declarations of Interest are checked against the criteria by the Secretariat of URBACT and assessed by an independent panel of experts. Approximately six weeks after submitting the proposal it will be announced which projects are approved and therefore can enter the development phase (2012, URBACT Official Web site).

Development Phase

As soon as a project proposal is approved it enters the Development Phase, which can also be distinguished as the second stage. In this Development Phase the partners expand from 5 to 12. The purpose of the Development Phase is to assess the quality and relevance of the project proposal and improve the quality of projects whenever necessary. In this period key aspects of the project are designed and set up. For example, among others the partnership is finalized, a baseline study of the situation in the cities is completed, a detailed work programme is developed and a Local Support Group is set up. At the end of this phase, a panel of independent experts evaluates the projects and they are examined by URBACT’s Monitoring Committee, which determines whether funding will be continued in the Implementation phase. Therefore, all this has to be done in such a way that the project will be approved to enter the implementation phase, which has a duration of 27 months. Projects that do not demonstrate the ability to produce effective and high quality results are stopped.

Implementation Phase

During the Implementation phase partners exchange and work together in workshops, seminars, site visits, etc. Locally, partners meet and get contributions from their Local Support Group to produce Local Action Plans and develop useful recommendations for other cities. Every URBACT project enables its partners to benefit from the experience of all the involved cities in order to develop a Local Action Plan that provides an effective solution to real local issues.

Every Partner city creates its own Local Support Group. This Local Support Group includes key stakeholders which are relevant for that particular city. The Local Support Group helps the project coordinators with developing a Local Action Plan. This Local Action Plan is the final output of an URBACT project.

At the end of this phase, project conclusions are disseminated in the form of good practices.

* Local Action Plan (LAP): a LAP consists of the actions required to realize a certain strategy. The LAP should provide for each partner concrete solutions to problems and challenges identified by the partners at the start of the URBACT project. There is no rigid definition of what a LAP has to be, and project partners and LSG members are encouraged to be creative in determining the best format for their city. A LAP can come in the form of an Neighbourhood action plan, as well as in the form of an Regional thematic action plan or even a national action plan. LAP’s improve the impact of transnational exchange and learning on local policies. Besides that they give concrete form to the outputs from networking activities carried out by partners and it can be an instrument of further change. Each Partner develops its own LAP as an output of its participation in the Programme. It will be co-produced by the partner and the LSG, which is made up of relevant local stakeholders. The composition, territorial level addressed and format will differ according to the type of partner. A LAP may be put in place early enough so that its implementation can be monitored during the project, or it may be put in place afterwards. Regardless of when it will be implemented, the LSG and project partner are encouraged to decide when it will be implemented and why. And to foresee some sort of peer review of each LAP by all members of the project network during the project life-cycle.
* Local Support Group (LSG): this group is set up by each partner and works to maximize the impact of the transnational exchange of practice between cities. The Local Support Group mobilizes stakeholders, defines the needs of the partner and co-produces the Local Action Plan. Each Partner is responsible for its own LSG and brings together appropriate stakeholders. There are no certain requirements for this LSG, the membership of each LSG will be tailored to suit the specific circumstances. A LSG can consist for example of officials, employment agencies, universities, private companies. Basically every stakeholder possible which has a connection with the topic of the project. Objectives, activities and composition depend upon the project, nature of the exchange activities and the nature of local needs and experience.

(2012, URBACT Official Web site)