



# Urban Matrix, Demand Survey, 2008

## Summary report

Urban Matrix aims to create a knowledge dissemination platform to support European local authorities in addressing sustainable urban development. As part of this work, three demand surveys have been carried out. This is a summary of the results of the third, 2008, survey.



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## URBAN MATRIX SURVEY 2008 – SUMMARY OF RESULTS

This third survey gives a good insight into thinking on key issues across Europe, with responses (62) from 49 cities in 20 European countries. Most of those responding to the survey are employed by public authorities. The countries are:

Austria, Belgium (2), Bulgaria, Czech Republic (2), Denmark, Estonia, Finland (3), France, Germany (3), Greece (2), Italy (3), Netherlands (3), Norway, Northern Ireland, Poland (3), Romania, Spain (6), Sweden (4), Switzerland, UK (8); also the USA. *(Number of cities in each country in brackets, if more than one)*

We asked a number of questions in order to identify why cities were interested in SD and what they needed to aid them in developing policies. Among the issues addressed were:

### WHAT DRIVES INTEREST IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

Level 1 of the survey included an open question about the **key driver(s)** of interest in sustainable urban development. In 2008, drivers referred to by many cities included:

- **Traffic and transport issues** (18 cities): including traffic congestion, pollution and noise, reductions in CO2 emissions, sustainable /eco friendly alternatives to the car – public transport, cycling, walking and the need to popularise these alternatives.
- **Energy issues** (17 cities): including decreasing consumption, energy efficiency and/or renewable energy and specific local concerns.
- **Climate change** (13 cities)
- **Sustainable economic development** - economic/employment issues (17 cities): including employment, support for business/enterprise, competitiveness, land management, tourism and the need for infrastructure investments in post communist cities
- **Urban/city regeneration (including housing renewal)** (13 cities): including city revitalisation, newly built neighbourhoods, urban sprawl; and on housing, housing renewal, social housing needs and the Sustainable Communities and Housing Market Renewal agendas in the UK.
- **Diversity, social cohesion** (14 cities)
- **Planning issues** (9 cities): including land use planning for sustainable urban development and healthy urban planning.
- **Environmental issues.** A smaller number of cities referred to issues connected with ecology and nature in the city, to waste, air quality/pollution and to flooding and coastal protection.

Many of these are persistent issues, also referred to in previous surveys – and it should be noted that many cities referred to several of these issues, to the links between them and the need for an integrated approach.

### WHAT DO CITIES WANT TO KNOW?

Respondents were asked to identify issues on which knowledge is required, by choosing from a list of keywords. Those chosen by 10 or more respondents were:

Public-Private Partnerships (18)  
Citizen participation (17)  
Eco-friendly transport (17)  
Compact cities (17)  
Benchmarking (16)  
Integrated transport systems (16)  
Social Cohesion (14)  
Urban sprawl (14)  
Education/Awareness raising (14)  
Traffic management (13)  
Urban health / healthy cities (11)  
Regeneration (11)  
Competitiveness (10)  
Road pricing/congestion charging (10).

The topic of public-private partnerships is the winter 2008 theme for Urban Matrix.

Other issues of persistent interest, which have already been the subject of workshops and/or for the collection of information for the website, include citizen participation, social cohesion, regeneration and transport and traffic issues. Key words emerging more strongly in this survey include compact cities, benchmarking, education and awareness raising, urban sprawl and urban health/healthy cities.

## **WORKING WITH STAKEHOLDERS**

Respondents were asked '**Which local stakeholders to you think it is most important to work with in developing sustainable urban development policies / action?**' In their replies, many emphasised internal communication and/or work with other public organisations. Fewer respondents emphasised working with the private sector or local residents. This suggests that while local authorities have taken on board much of the wider European rhetoric about partnership there is still some way to go before such working relationships are achieved in practice, particularly with regard to the private sector and citizens.

Respondents were also asked to provide **a short description of the arrangements developed in their city for working with stakeholders.** Of course, responses were very varied and varied depending on national circumstances. For instance most UK respondents referred to the local strategic partnerships which are now a feature of all UK cities and some other cities gave details of city wide forums.

Finally, in this section of the survey, respondents were also asked whether they needed **knowledge and information to support work with stakeholders.** Replies showed that for some public participation is the key issue, while for others maintaining wider stakeholder involvement and managing the partnership process appeared to be the central concerns. This suggests that many cities across Europe are still in a 'learning phase' when it comes to working with other stakeholders and building sustainable partnerships.

## **HOW CAN KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION BE SHARED?**

**Practice knowledge** has been chosen by all but a few respondents in all three surveys as a vital source of knowledge and there is a strong interest in case study material. It is clear from responses to this survey that people use **the internet** regularly as a resource for all sorts of information – but, although it is popular and paper based forms are not, personal interaction is also highly valued.

Responses suggest that people most often look to sources in their own language - official national and regional sites. They also use official EU and international sources and make some use of dedicated websites such as European Urban Knowledge Network or Urban Matrix itself.

Significant numbers of respondents reported finding sufficient information on the web and thought it comprehensive and reliable - but there were also complaints about information which was out of date, unreliable, or lacked the practical detail or critical approach people were looking for. This emphasises the importance of ensuring that the information placed by organisations on the web is up to date and robust, rather than simply PR material. People also complained about having too much information and finding it difficult and time consuming to filter it in order to get to what they really needed. Relatively few of the respondents (17) had used the Urban Matrix website – but there were positive comments from those who had and found it well structured, easy to use, with useful information.

In this survey we also asked questions about involvement in **conferences and workshops**. There appears to be quite frequent participation in some kind of workshop or conference among respondents, more commonly at the local or national than the European or international level. Medium sized events (20-50 participants) were preferred to smaller workshops or larger conferences. There is a clear preference for hearing about case studies and networking is also considered important. This is consistent with other survey responses which show a strong interest in practice knowledge.

Respondents offered a number of suggestions about dissemination which, taken together with other responses, can inform both future planning and evaluation of Urban Matrix. As in 2007, many (about a third) also responded positively to the request for information which could be shared via templates for the web site.

## **CONCLUSION**

Once again there has been a good response to the survey. It has given helpful information about stakeholder working and has shed more light on how those working in this field get access to information and support and how they would like to do so. The additional and up-to-date information it provides will direct the project's work in its final year and contribute to evaluation of the project. Taken together the three surveys will also help Urban Matrix to make recommendations to the European Commission regarding how knowledge is disseminated, the types/forms of knowledge cities need and the manner in which it is presented. More speculatively we might also suggest that the activities we have noted represent an element in cities' 'networking' activities which in turn may be seen as part of a wider Europeanization process in which cities are active participants.