

*General Assembly 2009,
Alt Empordà, September the 30th- October the 2nd*



Consell Comarcal
de l'Alt Empordà

GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2009
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**NEW TOWNS ASSESSMENT AND
PERSPECTIVES:
ENTP RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Promote the role New Towns play at the national and regional levels

In the UK, the Netherlands and France, New Towns alleviate the congestion of main metropolises and fulfill a function of housing and provision in services. Some of them are still part of the national designated areas for growth, e.g. Val Maubuée, Sénart (France), Almere (the Netherlands) and Milton-Keynes (the United Kingdom).

These national and regional functions have to be emphasized at different levels:

- When new targets are set for New Towns at the national and regional levels, this should go along with positive press campaigns and declarations (e.g. the declarations on the “Grand Paris” can lead to an improved image for French New Towns)
- Financial support needs to accompany these measures to enable New Towns to fulfill the requested targets. These means should not only concentrate on housing, but also on the provision of public services and regeneration of ageing facilities.

2. Define a long-term development vision

The success of a development project mostly relies on its coherence and relevance regarding a more global ambition. New Towns should therefore provide a comprehensive driving vision guiding their future development.

It should be ensured that:

- Clear objectives and implementation strategies are defined, while remaining flexible enough to adapt to changes in needs and demands
- Crucial questions regarding identity are answered: should the New Town be like any other city or keep its specificity? Should it exist as a distinct entity or be integrated into a wider urban network?
- Main stakeholders contributing to the development of the town (i.e. politicians, investors, businesses, citizens) share the vision. Thus, everyone will be able understand it and contribute to its materialization.

3. Tackle most urgent needs

New Towns are facing common challenges that require rapid action: ageing infrastructures and housing stock, social exclusion and deprivation, improvement of

their image... Furthermore, current discussions about sustainability and environment have led to new constraints (e.g. energy efficient buildings, clean transport...).

Based on an accurate assessment of their situation, New Towns should be able to:

- Prioritize actions depending on the most urgent needs
- Play a pro-active and pioneer role in new constraints to enable positive impact in terms of image (e.g. Milton Keynes and its programme to stimulate greater use of public transport)
- Mobilize specific attention and financial support from the public sector but also from the private sector.

4. Curb the dependence on a fragile economy

New Towns have created jobs by attracting businesses and creating business parks. However, in a globalized world, this newly-founded economy is fragile: large businesses delocalize easily, economic cycles deeply affect local territories...

Therefore, New Towns need to:

- Invest in SMEs to provide a solid economic development framework
- Conciliate excellence fields and diversification of their economies
- Improve the labor skills of population to better adapt to labor market's needs.

5. Match public services to local needs

The provision of public services is still a challenge for New Towns. When the population has doubled or tripled, basic services had to adapt really quickly to face new demands. As a consequence, they are often not as well provisioned as in large cities.

The further development of New Towns will depend on:

- A better provision of services and amenities (e.g. number of equipments, location, overall quality), especially as regards New Towns experiencing strong growth
- The maintenance and adaptation of those services to current and forthcoming needs (e.g. ageing population)
- The rational increase in "soft investments" likely to improve New Towns' image (e.g. culture and leisure).

6. Adapt the housing offer

As the whole housing stock was created at the same period, housing units are simultaneously ageing, which calls for rapid action.

New Towns need to:

- Renew their social housing stock and public buildings, but also work with private owners (especially co-properties) to refurbish the housing stock
- Build new housing estates in a more flexible process depending on the real adapted figures; indeed, targets are often too high
- Solve recurrent problems such as those of empty flats bought only for investments (e.g. Basildon) or low quality buildings
- Adapt to changes according to their local situation: while some New Towns still have disposable land to expand and cater for more people, others should work on densification of the existing urban tissue

7. Strengthen the image and attractiveness

Enhancing the image and identity is another crucial challenge for New Towns, not only to attract further inhabitants, but also to benefit from a better economic position.

Some of them have successfully managed to do so through:

- Cultural investments echoed at national level and often co-financed by national, regional and public funds (e.g. Hergé museum in Louvain-la-Neuve, opening of a department from the Louvre in Cergy-Pontoise)
- The presence of well-known universities and research clusters (e.g. Cité Descartes in Val Maubuée, construction engineering school in Basildon)
- The organization of sport and cultural initiatives likely to promote social cohesion and a healthier way of life (e.g. Mountain Bike Tournament and indoor skiing in Zoetermeer).