

**The NSPA position on the European Commission's Smart Cities and Communities Initiative  
of the Horizon 2020-programme**

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The NSPA network, Northern Sparsely Populated Areas, represents the interests of four northernmost counties of Sweden (Norrbotten, Västerbotten, Jämtland, Västernorrland), seven northernmost and eastern regions of Finland (Central Ostrobothnia, Kainuu, Lapland, North Karelia, Northern Ostrobothnia, North Savo and South Savo) and North Norway (Finnmark, Troms and Nordland). The NSPA represent about 10% of the total EU land area.

**The European Commission's Smart Cities and Communities Initiative**

According to the EU 2020 targets for climate change, the EU is committed to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions 20 % below 1990 levels by 2020, with a further reduction of 80-95 % by 2050. Renewables should cover 20 % of final energy consumption in 2020. The primary energy consumption in Europe should not be higher than 1474 Mtoe (million tons of oil equivalent) and final energy consumption not higher than 1078 Mtoe per year.<sup>1</sup>

The Smart Cities and Communities Initiative aims at implementing integrated solutions which increase energy efficiency and use of renewable energies, enforces smart urban planning and the use of clean and sustainable transport as well as smart ICT solutions. The solutions implemented by Smart Cities and Communities facilitate job creation, growth and quality of life, at the same time significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The underpinning principle of the Smart Cities and Communities Initiative is replication potential: the European Commission supports cities and communities which hold the best potential to implement solutions which can be taken up by other similar cities and communities across Europe, with regard to characteristics such as climatic and geographic conditions and proximity to transport networks. Until now, the European Commission's policy has been to focus on large cities - the forerunner FP7-project TRANSFORMAgenda for Low Carbon Cities includes Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Hamburg, Lyon, Vienna and Genova<sup>2</sup>. It is foreseen that this policy will continue in the Horizon 2020-programme.

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<sup>1</sup> White Paper 'Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area – Towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system' COM(2011) 144 final.

<sup>2</sup> <http://urbantransform.eu/partners/>

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**The need to include smaller towns and sparsely populated regions in the Smart Cities and Communities Initiative**

The NSPA supports the Smart Cities and Communities Initiative, fully acknowledging the important role cities and communities play in helping the EU to reach its climate change targets and for cities to act as motors of innovation, smart technologies and growth. *The NSPA stresses the importance for the Smart Cities and Communities Initiative to support, in the up-coming programming period 2014-2020 and in the first Horizon 2020 work programme currently on its way, not only big cities, but also smaller cities and towns, as well as sparsely populated regions.* The largest cities host only a portion of Europe's population.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, out of the more than 5,000 Covenant of Mayors signatories, over 4,000 are towns with a population less than 50,000 people.<sup>4</sup>

In this light, the NSPA would like to stress that when aiming at highest possible replication potential and ambitious climate targets and considering that *as cities and towns in sparsely populated regions act as drivers for sustainable regional growth, it is of crucial importance that also small cities and towns as well as sparsely populated regions will be able to participate in the Smart Cities and Communities Initiative in 2014-2020.*

The NSPA region is characterized by a high use of renewable energies and high level of energy efficiency in urban built environment, as well as by being a world leader in the development of decentralized energy solutions. Due to long distances within the region and towards larger markets, the NSPA is also in the forefront in implementing leading ICT solutions, applicable for roll-out in bigger scale in more urban areas. As a result of high level R&D activities, the NSPA regions create and test solutions and technologies that have a high potential for large scale replication in Europe and beyond.

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<sup>3</sup> [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics\\_explained/index.php/Statistics\\_on\\_European\\_cities](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Statistics_on_European_cities)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.covenantofmayors.eu>

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Some examples of the NSPA excellence, showcasing the region's potential to contribute to the Smart Cities and Communities Initiative, include:

- The city of Oulu (Finland), one of world's seven Intelligent Communities of the Year 2012<sup>5</sup>, a Covenant of Mayors signatory with ambitious energy and climate targets;
- The city of Piteå (Sweden), leading in development of future vehicle fuels and the site for what will be the largest land based wind farm in Europe, a Covenant of Mayors signatory that stipulates the municipal fossil CO<sub>2</sub>-emissions to be reduced with 90% by 2020;
- The city of Östersund (Sweden), a Covenant of Mayors signatory, with an ambitious goal of an overall CO<sub>2</sub> reduction target of 60% by 2020 (compared to 1990). Östersund is one of the three cities along the Green Highway, a 450 kilometers fossil-fuel-free corridor between the Bothnian Sea and the Norwegian Sea;
- The city of Bodø (Norway), which has a distinguished green profile, exemplified with the ambition of making all public service cars electric (for health services, daycare and public maintenance).

A definition which allows participation in the Smart Cities and Communities Initiative only for "significant urban centres" ignores the huge added value smaller towns and communities, as well as sparsely populated regions could contribute to the initiative, with a danger to miss an opportunity for the vast replication potential of tested, integrated and smart solutions. It is of vital interest to address also the interdependence between cities, communities and rural areas in the surrounding region, when considering sustainable city development.

The NSPA region is committed to coordinating collaboration with other European sparsely populated regions in order to develop a European "demonstration and pilot environment" for innovative applications with direct relevance to sparsely populated smart regions both in Europe and internationally. To this end, the NSPA aims to exploit the regional and national programmes and structural funds, as well as strategies such as the Smart specialisation, to achieve synergies with calls for proposals in Horizon 2020.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.intelligentcommunity.org/index.php?src=news&refno=682&wpos=0,5000,11276>

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*In Brussels, 16<sup>th</sup> of September 2013, on behalf of the NSPA Regions*



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