

3rd European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning (CEMAT) (Bari, Italy: 21-23 October 1976) on "Urbanisation and regional planning"

Resolution No. 2 on Urban renewal and urban development

The ministers,

1. Having taken note with great interest of the conference report, theme B "Urban renewal and urban development";
2. Noting that the rising cost of urban land leads to the replacement of the existing urban fabric by increased commercial activities and more intensive land use, forcing residents to leave central urban areas and to settle in new suburbs on the outskirts, and believing that this tendency can be altered by a careful and selective urban renewal policy based on the rehabilitation of the existing housing stock;
3. Taking due note of the principles behind the campaign for European Architectural Heritage Year in 1975, in which it was emphasised that retention of the existing architectural fabric helps preserve a community identity;
4. Wishing to underline that rehabilitation avoids the destruction of the physical environment which has often been found damaging to community life, and may result in the preservation of the familiar and humane environment;
5. Stressing that the economic advantages in using such a type of renewal policy would be considerable through direct saving by the recovery and improvement of existing buildings and through indirect saving, owing to a more balanced urban growth;
6. Emphasising that in view of the decrease in the rate of population growth, (a feature noticeable in nearly all of the industrialised countries of Western Europe), the existing network of urban structures should be made more viable rather than new development centres created, and that this inevitably means an increased emphasis on rehabilitation of the physical housing stock, instead of its destruction;

Therefore consider:

A. That urban renewal policies should become a fundamental part of comprehensive policies for urban planning:

Urban renewal should not be considered as an isolated sectoral activity, but as a major element in urban planning to promote the well-being of the community, and as an important element in policies to control urbanisation within regional planning.

B. That urban renewal is a policy for all towns and existing buildings:

Urban renewal policies should be developed not only for large towns but also for medium and small towns.

Equally, urban renewal measures should not be confined only to buildings and areas of historic interest, but must include, wherever possible, existing housing so as to ensure that the overall values and social capital of built-up areas are not neglected.

C. That urban renewal policies should be more orientated towards rehabilitation:

Present and future urban renewal policies should concentrate on the improvement and rehabilitation of the existing housing stock and should focus particularly on the social aspect of such policies.

Thus intervention in the urban fabric should have the fundamental aim of rehabilitating old districts while respecting the specific social structures and characteristics of neighbourhoods.

D. That urban renewal policies should be devised and implemented on the basis of existing social structures:

Urban renewal must not have the effect that rehabilitated buildings and districts go to high-income groups or to tertiary enterprises to the detriment of those living and working in the area, who in most cases run the risk of being forced to leave their original and familiar surroundings. If however a population shift is unavoidable, for instance as a result of existing overcrowding or excessive density, the interests and preferences of the households and enterprises moving out must be carefully respected.

E. That an essential precondition of urban renewal activities is the formulation of an overall plan based on accurate knowledge of the urban structure:

Detailed surveys should be undertaken with a view to listing not only the physical conditions, but also the needs of the inhabitants of an area. These should be the deciding factor in both the type and the timing of renewal programmes.

F. That financial and fiscal policies should be adequate in order to enable urban renewal policies to be more effectively implemented:

Public authorities should accord adequate financial support and fiscal incentives to urban renewal schemes, particularly those based on the rehabilitation and improvement of existing buildings and areas. Such credits should be as high a proportion of the total costs as those credits allotted to new buildings.

G. That the implementation of revised concepts of urban renewal requires appropriate administrative and legislative means and structures:

Together with increased financial support by central and local authorities, administrative and legal structures should enable revised concepts of urban renewal policies to be implemented. These structures should be adequate to control all aspects of the renewal process, to avoid both social segregation and speculation in property.

H. That a European campaign on urban renewal should be organised:

The ministers propose that 1980 be designated as "European Year on Urban Renewal".