

FOUNDATION FOR THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT

President's Progress report – **Update on 31 March 2017**

I. OBJECTIVES AND STRUCTURE

The Foundation for the Urban Environment (FFUE) is a permanent “charitable institution of public interest” authorized by **Royal Decree of August 8th 1999** (Belgian Official Journal October 1st 1999)
http://www.ffue.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/FFUE_StatutsComplets-2013.pdf

Its **objective** is to promote the urban environment through conferences and debates, publications and newsletters, occasional briefings and « think tank » activities (as opposed to commercial consultancy).

The FFUE focuses on the interface and synergy between:

- 1. Land use and planning, including cultural heritage conservation and improvement.**
- 2. Transport and mobility**
- 3. Environment, at global and local level (global climate/energy/resources policies, local clean soil, water & air, recycling etc.).**

Its **board** is composed of the President P. Laconte and members C. Lasserre, C. van den Hove, E. Gessler and B. Laconte. Its founding scientific advisors have been Nobel Prize Prof. Ilya Prigogine (who passed away in 2003), Prof. H. Bourdeau (ULB) and A. Berger (UCL). This group has been extended in 2016.

II. ON-GOING GENERAL ACTIVITIES

Since 1999 the FFUE sponsors regular lunch debates around its three objectives focusing on “City and Society” at the Brussels Cercle Royal Gaulois artistique et littéraire (some 150 lunch debates and 250 guest speakers in total). Minutes are available on www.ffue.org.

Since 2015 the FFUE has an agreement with the University Foundation (FU-US) on regular lunch debates focusing on “World of Cities”. Minutes are available on <http://www.ffue.org/2016/04/a-world-of-cities-2016i-bilan-de-quatre-debats/> (year 2016) and <http://www.ffue.org/2015/04/a-world-of-cities-brussels-02102015/> (year 2015).

From 2003, it has organised yearly conferences and events related to the application of its objectives to Belgian issues in Urban development, mobility and environment. These activities are reflected in most of its 11 book publications (see report of 16 December 2016). For articles in peer-review journals and conference contributions, see report of 16 Dec. 2016

III. ON-GOING ACTIVITIES PER OBJECTIVE

1. Land use and planning, including cultural heritage conservation and improvement.

The contribution to the 17th International Planning History Society Conference (Delft, July 2016) “The Founding and Development of Louvain-la-Neuve, the only new town in Belgium” has been published in the peer-reviewed proceedings of the Conference, Vol. 5 pp. 213-221 (http://www.ffue.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/IPHS_160718-Book-Historical-perspectives-article-Laconte.pdf). These proceedings are disseminated free of charge through the BK Books website (<http://books.bk.tudelft.nl/>). Paper copies are available on a Print on Demand system through Amazon.

From 2016, The FFUE President has been associated with the St-Louis University Executive Master Immobilier – EMI - programme, in addition to its annual teaching at the Lille I University.

The contribution to the ICOMOS Italia Conference CIVVIH Florence "Communication for a qualified cultural tourism in historical cities" - 2-4 March 2016, Teresa Colletta & Olimpia Niglio, Eds has been published in September 2016 <http://www.ffue.org/2016/09/communicating-industrial-heritage-networks-and-individual-cases-milano-2016/>. The contribution to the CIVVIH Cesky-Krumlov 2016 Conference "Quality of public space in heritage cities" is to be published in the Conference Proceedings, in three languages, to come out in late 2017.

Following the lunch debate of December 2015 with Paul Dujardin, CEO of BOZAR http://www.ffue.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/FU_Dujardin_122015-fr.pdf regular contacts are taking place with this institution in view of future synergies in the field of urban planning and society. On 10-11 May 2017 a joint Forum on Land and mobility will take place at BOZAR. FFUE is partner of the Forum and in charge of one of the streams <http://www.ffue.org/2017/03/new-use-new-move-new-move-new-use-land-use-mobility-11052017-bozar-bruxelles/>.

2. Transport and mobility.

The FFUE president contributed to the EU Sintropher project ("mobility and land use") see <http://www.ffue.org/2014/02/supporting-growth-through-regional-connectivity>. The results of the project are being published in six volumes by the UCL Bartlett School (2017)

The books "Accéder à Bruxelles", "Bereikbaar Brussel" (2015) - <http://www.ffue.org/2014/04/acceder-a-bruxelles/> - and "Le rail, clé de la mobilité urbaine à Bruxelles" (2016) - <http://www.ffue.org/2014/11/le-rail-cle-de-la-mobilite-a-bruxelles/> and their recommendations are presently used in the planning projects impact studies:

The Regional Development Plan (PRDd) and new Regional mobility plan (PRM), including the new metro projects and "park & ride" investments were presented to public hearings. It has already led to a FFUE consultation report to the Brussels **Regional Committee on mobility(CRM) and to the Mobility Directorate of the Brussels Government (Bruxelles-Mobilité)**. The FFUE aims at participating in the debate about PRDd and PRM, which are both related to land-use, mobility/parking and environment.

This advocacy activity is to be developed, possibly under a specific acronym (such as FFUE MOBILITY), with targeted public subsidies. The economic and environmental impact of transport projects is rarely considered. Bridging this gap is one of the main recommendations from the book. Unlike in London, there are no effective policy tools in Belgium that operate at local level to encourage a higher concentration of development around transport nodes, i.e. a contribution of the developer to the transport investment. New employment in Brussels is expected to take place in a restricted number of "zones-levier/hefboomzones" (supposedly to capture the economies of agglomeration). Meanwhile new residential development is ever more dispersed instead of concentrated. The consequence is to generate a requirement for long-distance commuting, much of it along routes which do not lend themselves to public transport.

A notable best practice has been the short-lived Stevaert Flemish Region Decree of 2001, which has been published (in French) by the FFUE (<http://www.ffue.org/2013/05/la-gare-et-la-ville-grands-axes-et-reseau-express-regional-enjeux-et-perspectives-2/>).

The FFUE intends to update this 2003 publication in support of the new land use and mobility policies developed in Flanders under the influence of the Flanders Bouwmeester in view of reducing urban spread.

3. Environment, at global and local level (global climate/energy/resources policies, local clean soil, water & air, recycling etc.).

Two publications cover global/local environmental issues: *Climate Change, Energy Shortage, Biodiversity Loss* (Vienna: Club of Rome-EU 2011) and *Sustainable Cities: Assessing the performance and of Urban Environments* (London/New York: I.B. Tauris, 2016). Both stress the need the need to focus on energy policy to address the global warming issues, energy use being the most realistic indicator of Greenhouse gas emissions. A workshop about the conclusions of the book is to be held in Copenhagen ("EEAcademy Seminar") at the invitation of the European Environment Agency in 2017.

FFUE intends to further develop the issues of the book with the help of its advisers and outside contacts

The contribution of the FFUE to the EU “Milesecure” Project (on energy, including its future availability) goes along the same line: see <http://www.ffue.org/2015/03/the-human-factor-in-energy-transition-security-towards-2050-brussels-15122015/> .

IV. PRESENT DEVELOPMENTS.

- NEWSLETTERS & SOCIAL MEDIA.

The FFUE presently circulates regular newsletters to ca 3.000 addresses (http://www.ffue.org/newsletters/newsletterFFUE_FU-US-27032017.html) & also use social media to its subscribers. This communication activity will be increased, e.g. through newsletters by subject (information about FFUE activities, recommendation of publications & lectures by others, possibly through reciprocity agreements).

- LECTURES & INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES.

Collaboration has started with EURAC Research, Bolzano for a conference on Smart and Sustainable Cities (22-24 March 2017), of which P. Laconte was keynote speaker See <http://www.ffue.org/2016/12/smart-and-sustainable-planning-for-cities-and-regions-sspcr-2017/>.(selcted papers to be published by SPRINGER.

FFUE will participate in the organisation of the stream of “Healthy Cities” of the 2017 AESOP (Association of European Schools of Planning) Congress hosted by the University of Lisbon.

First contacts took place with IDDRI (Institut du developement durable et des relations internationales), the French Government think tank on sustainability.

- COLLABORATIONS.

The FFUE restricts its MEMBERSHIP to its 5 board members fixed by its statutes. It relies on the members of its board and its scientific advisers and on outside contributors.

In 2016 the FFUE has been welcoming the following scientific advisers: Prof. E. De Keuleneer, Managing Director of the University Foundation, Spatial Planner and Arch/Town-planner B. Clerbaux (Former SG of the European Council of Spatial Planners), M. van der Stichele, formerly DG, Ministry of Brussels-Capital, and A. Michielsens, honorary Chairman of the Board of Solvay, C. du Monceau, 1st Alderman of Ottignies-LLN, Prof. P. Lombaerde (UA), Prof. M. Hubert (U. St-Louis), A. Camu (Flora) and H. Demets (Computer Software Consultancy Bvba). This informal advisory group could be expanded in line with the FFUE further orientations.

Inviting international personalities as part of an international advisory board is planned to start in 2017. Individuals and institutions potentially interested in specific FFUE objectives and their implementation are being approached to help setting up new projects in line with its objectives.

- FINANCING.

The initial Foundation’s capital has been a grant by its founder, put in a blocked bank account in line with the requirements for the obtaining of permanent “charitable institution of public interest” status, confirmed by the authorization Royal Decree of August 8th 1999 (Belgian Official Journal October 1st 1999). Neither the President nor the board members get any remuneration. All amounts resulting from contracts with public authorities for its publications and from other activities are added to his initial grant. Development related expenses are exclusively covered by the founder in addition to the initial grant. The FFUE is eligible to receive outside support for setting up new projects in line with its objectives.