

Foreword



Jan Olbrycht

Member of European Parliament and
President of the URBAN Intergroup

The record of access to finance of the cities in the European Union is rather intricate. As a former Mayor and later President of the region in Poland, and counting 17th year at the European Parliament, I have been involved in this story for more than 30 years. Progress has been made in Europe in the last decades in improving subnational access to finance, and it continues to get better. Yet it requires devoted effort of many actors at all levels of policymaking. With the understanding of the transformative role of urbanisation growing globally in recent years, the issue of cities' access to finance is becoming prominent in our partner countries in the Global South, too. Therefore, the European Parliament thought it worthwhile to investigate the

state of affairs beyond Europe, and we have requested the European Commission and UN-Habitat to conduct this study on *Increasing financial capacities of cities from developing countries to deliver productive and sustainable urban development*, informing us of how the partnership with the European Union can foster progress in this issue in the other parts of the world.

The journey of this initiative, looking at actual cases and deliberations of practices, lessons, and new ideas, in which many important institutions and prominent thought leaders joined us, is now ready to share its first results in this publication. To me, **it has been fascinating to learn of the importance of flexibility and individual approaches**

in different contexts, but also that of pragmatism - which are crucial in responding to the surge of urbanization in low-income countries, and how in this urgency we sometimes may need to stimulate the development of urban governance and institutions with investing in urgent development of urban infrastructure without waiting for a better enabling environment. However, along with some focal areas that have been determined, many more questions remain to be answered. We hope that the work continues, and that the story of success of the cities in Europe will empower countries and cities of our partner countries in Africa and elsewhere in their quest to finance better urban development.