



# Imprint

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## Project management

Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development  
Division RS 5  
"Digital Cities, Risk Prevention and Transportation"  
Eva Schweitzer  
eva.schweitzer@bbr.bund.de

## Management in the Federal Ministry

Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community (BMI)  
Division SW I 1 "Urban Development Policy"  
Tilman Buchholz  
tilman.buchholz@bmi.bund.de

## Research contractor and Authors

German Association for Housing, Urban and Spatial Development (DV), Berlin  
Heike Mages  
Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus-Senftenberg (BTU), Cottbus  
Silke Weidner

## Edited by

German Association for Housing, Urban and Spatial Development (DV), Berlin  
Heike Mages  
EINSATEAM, Berlin  
Franziska Eidner

## State

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EINSATEAM, Berlin  
Judith Keller

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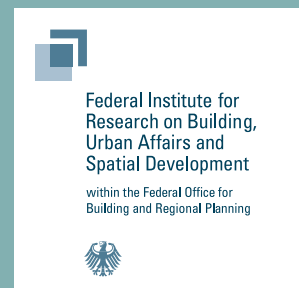
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# Introduction: New paths in urban development

**A**s part of the German EU Council Presidency in the second half of 2020, the EU Ministers responsible for urban matters adopted a new guiding document for a sustainable, integrated urban development policy in Europe on 30 November 2020: “The New Leipzig Charter: The transformative power of cities for the common good”. It is complemented by the paper “Implementing the New Leipzig Charter through multi-level governance: Next steps for the Urban Agenda for the EU”. The Implementation Document offers proposals on how the Charter can continue the “Urban Agenda for the EU”, launched under the Dutch EU Presidency in 2016 with its newly introduced, multi-level governance between cities, Member States and the EU Commission.

## **A milestone for European cities and urban development policy**

The New Leipzig Charter and its Implementation Document mark a milestone – for municipalities, which thus, receive important support in their everyday efforts towards transformative urban development for the common good, but also for strengthening the role and the participation of cities in European urban development policy. The European Member States have not only adopted the New Leipzig Charter at the Informal Meeting of Ministers, but in their function as Council of the EU they have also explicitly committed themselves with the formal “Council conclusions” to the focus and calls of the document.

## **Completion by the Territorial Agenda 2030**

Just one day after the New Leipzig Charter, its “spatial twin document” was adopted, which focuses not on cities, but on regions: the “Territorial Agenda 2030”. Under the heading “A Future for All Places”, it stresses the commitment to balanced, inclusive and sustainable territorial development in Europe and the reduction of disparities. Particular emphasis has been placed on implementation. This will be initiated with thematic pilot actions under the auspices of different Member States.

## **Implementation is key**

Since its adoption, the New Leipzig Charter has been presented at various events in Germany and Europe. For the future, however, it will be crucial to what extent cities in Europe will apply its principles in practice, just as for the Territorial Agenda 2030. The New Leipzig Charter is not a handbook that recommends concrete measures to municipalities. The document cannot and does not aim to go into this level of detail, considering how different the 27 signatory Member States, their policies, their cities and their administrative structures are. Instead, the New Leipzig Charter sets an important, EU-wide recognised framework on which cities can align their future visions, strategies and concepts independently. In Germany, the implementation of the New Leipzig Charter is mainly driven by the National Urban Development Policy, a joint initiative of the federal, state and local governments, as well as by the urban dimension in EU Structural Funds. At the European level, the continuation of the Urban Agenda for the EU as well as funding programmes for sustainable urban development, such as URBACT, contribute through knowledge and method transfer as well as communication to putting an urban development policy for the common good into practice. It should additionally not be left unsaid that many municipalities are already setting good examples, and implementing transformative urban development policies for the common good in favour of just, productive and green cities in the spirit of the Charter.

» The New Leipzig Charter is a strategic reference document. Therefore, it is of a voluntary, non-binding nature. And this is also its great strength. Principles such as the urban policy for the common good, mixed-use development and the concept of compact and dense cities are clearly named. The Charter sets standards to which municipalities can refer. Due to the great diversity in Europe its specific manifestation will be different in each Member State and in each city.«

Tilman Buchholz,  
Federal Ministry of the Interior,  
Building and Community

### **Just, productive and green cities are resilient cities**

The New Leipzig Charter has already been put to the test in practice: When the COVID-19 pandemic hit Europe in the spring of 2020, and old certainties seemed to lose their validity, the document was almost finished. The question arose: should the Charter be rewritten in the face of COVID-19? However, it soon became clear that with the integrated approach, participation and co-creation, the urban policy for the common good, multi-level governance and the place-based approach, the New Leipzig Charter already identifies principles that help cities to become resilient and flexible. Empowered cities, as the new Charter calls them, are capable of dealing with such crisis.

### **Co-productive development process**

The fact that the New Leipzig Charter was adopted unanimously is thanks to its development process. The document was not written in secret but developed jointly over two years in a broad dialogue process at both, the German and European level. This consultation involved municipalities, federal states, ministries, umbrella associations, urban development experts, business, science, Member States, the EU Commission and EU institutions, as well as Europe-wide city associations.

### **Process and results**

This publication presents comprehensively the development process and its final results: What was the starting point for the New Leipzig Charter? Why had a renewal of the “Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities” from 2007 become necessary? Which European and global developments in urban development contributed to its revision? Who was involved, and which points were discussed intensively? This brochure provides insight into all of these questions. In addition, it lists all of the central documents that were compiled in the course of the development process of the New Leipzig Charter.



# Strategic guiding document: On the New Leipzig Charter

“The New Leipzig Charter: The Transformative Power of Cities for the Common Good” is a strategic guiding document for sustainable and integrated urban development in Europe. It prioritises an urban policy for the common good, while making it clear that cities need support to implement such policies: All levels, from regions to federal states, Member States to the EU, must play their part in ensuring the transformative power of cities to act and in strengthening their resilience in times of crisis.

## The just, green and productive city

The New Leipzig Charter refers to the three known dimensions of sustainability, and advocates socially equitable (“just”), ecologically stable (“green”) and economically prosperous (“productive”) cities. It systematically identifies the thematic fields of action for each of these three dimensions, and makes it clear that they need to be closely linked in order to create synergies and to ensure a holistic sustainable development. The beating heart of a sustainable and resilient city are high-quality public areas and open spaces, in combination with compact, multi-functional urban planning and a high-quality architectural environment (“Baukultur”). Digitalisation is named as a cross-sectoral trend that affects all three dimensions. It offers plenty of opportunities for the transformation of cities, for example through smart mobility, energy efficiency or public services. At the same time, it also poses risks to the protection of privacy and can trigger a further spatial and social divide.

## Five principles of good urban governance

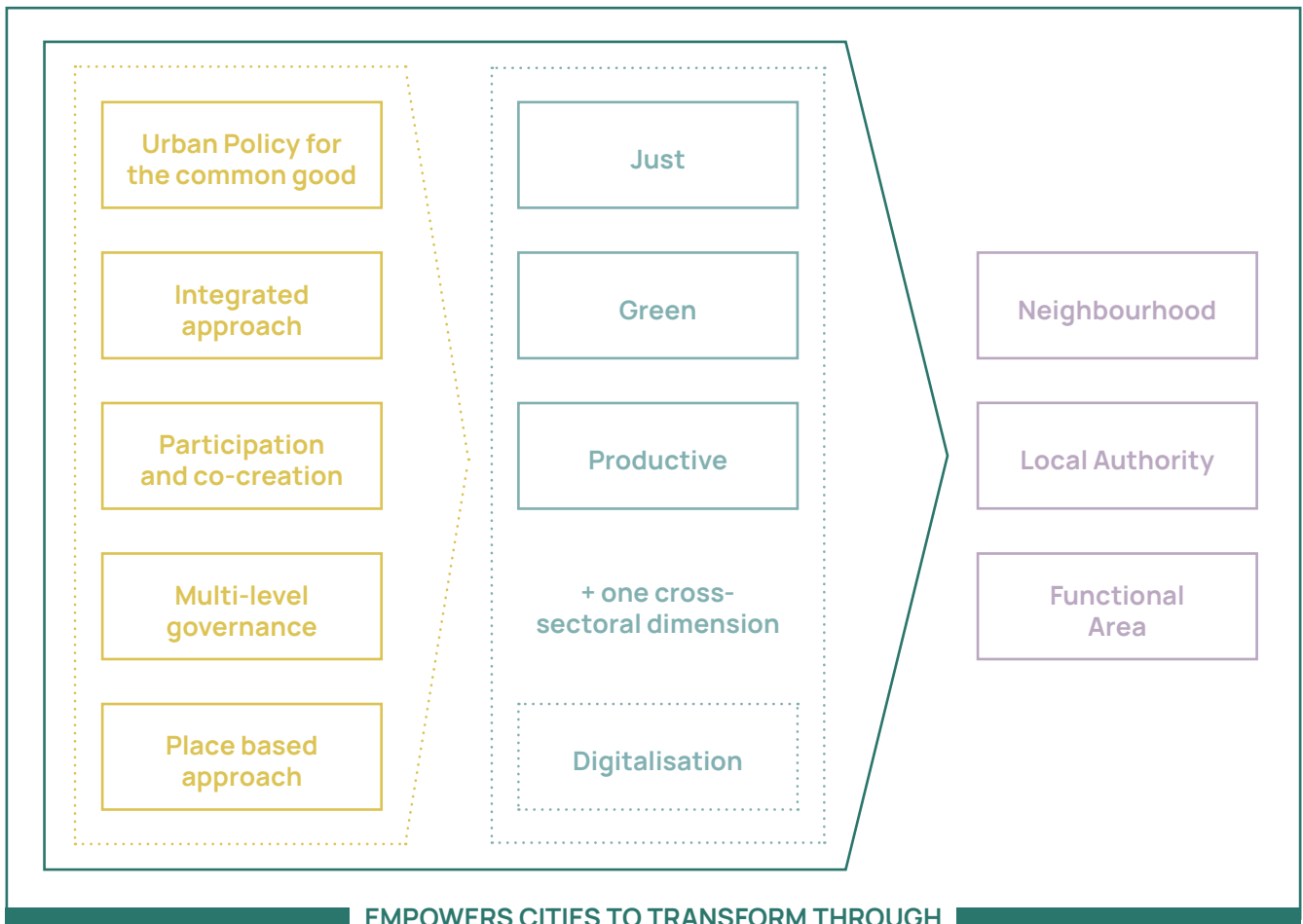
The document also sets out what local authorities in Europe need in order to deal with the climate crisis, scarcity of resources, migration, demographic change, growing social inequalities, digitalisation, rapid changes in the economy or pandemics. The Charter lists five key principles: An urban policy for the common good, an integrated approach and operational mode, participation and co-creation, multi-level governance and a place-based

approach. As fields of action, it focuses on neighbourhoods, as well as on local authorities and functional areas. A clear focus on the common good needs to be put at the heart of urban policy. This does not only include a sufficient supply of public services and affordable housing; in fact, cities that follow this approach consistently increase their resilience to crisis events. Thus, the New Leipzig Charter makes a statement on urban development policy regarding the handling of the dramatic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Empowering cities to transform

The main objective of the New Leipzig Charter is to strengthen cities throughout Europe, and to make them capable of unlocking their transformative power so that they will be able to implement these principles. In order to do so, they need suitable legal framework conditions, sufficient financial resources, adequately skilled employees as well as the ability to steer and shape infrastructures, public services and public welfare. This is particularly relevant in terms of strategic land policy and the active shaping of digital transformation. In conjunction with a national framework and funding, and through coherent EU regulation and funding instruments, promoting the urban dimension at EU level, cities can succeed in becoming more sustainable and resilient.

# The new Leipzig Charter at a glance



**For strong urban governance to assure the common good cities need:**

- Legal framework conditions
- Investment capacities
- Adequately skilled employees
- Steerability and shaping of infrastructure, public services/welfare

**For strong urban governance to assure the common good cities need:**

- Active and strategic land policy and land use planning
- Active shaping of digital transformation

**Adequate Policies and funding for cities:**

- Powerful national urban policy framework and funding
- Coherent EU regulation and funding instruments



# On the Implementation Document: Future of the Urban Agenda for the EU

The document “Implementing the New Leipzig Charter through multi-level governance – Next steps for the Urban Agenda for the EU” is an addition to the New Leipzig Charter. While the Charter focuses on the strategic principles of urban development policy, the Implementation Document, as the name suggests, focuses on the implementation of these principles within the framework of existing European cooperations, initiatives and programmes. The operationalisation of the New Leipzig Charter should therefore be linked to the multi-level and multi-stakeholder working methods of the Urban Agenda for the EU launched in 2016. This strengthens the New Leipzig Charter, anchoring it even more deeply in the European discourse. At the same time, the Implementation Document also consolidates the Urban Agenda for the EU, and forms a basis for its further development.

## **Addition to the strategic Charter**

During the preparation of the German EU Council Presidency in the field of urban matters, a call for a supplementary “implementation-oriented” document was already made. In 2019, the “Bucharest Declaration”, adopted at a Ministerial Meeting during Romania’s EU Council Presidency, formulated the specific mandate for the German Council Presidency to produce such a document. At the beginning of 2020, the

project team began working on this under the direction of the German Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community. The document “Implementing the New Leipzig Charter through multi-level governance – Next steps for the Urban Agenda for the EU” was developed along several processing stages. The four key elements are the expansion and continuation of EU-wide, multi-level and multi-stakeholder cooperation in the field of urban development, better regulation and funding opportunities for cities, the reinforcement of knowledge transfer and communication, and the governance of the Urban Agenda for the EU through efficient decision-making and support structures.

## **Orientation towards the objectives of the Pact of Amsterdam**

Along with these key elements, the responsible Ministers explain the adjustments needed for the Urban Agenda for the EU to become even more impactful. The Implementation Document follows and develops further the three core objectives of the Pact of Amsterdam for the Urban Agenda for the EU – Better Regulation, Better Funding, Better Knowledge. Moreover, the connection to the “European Urban Initiative” of the European Commission is important. Support for the Urban Agenda for the EU shall be financed through this initiative during the 2021-2027 funding period.



## Project team and structures

The preparation of the New Leipzig Charter and the Implementation Document was funded by the Federal Research Programme “Experimental Housing and Urban Development” (ExWoSt)<sup>3</sup>. It was commissioned by the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community (BMI, Department of Urban Development Policy) and the Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development (BBSR, Department of Digital City, Risk Prevention and Transport). The project ran from January 2018 to October 2021.

The goal was to renew the Leipzig Charter of 2007 as part of a comprehensive dialogue process with urban development experts from Germany and all over Europe, and prepare an adoption in the second half of 2020 under the German EU Council Presidency. In addition, the status quo of integrated urban development policy in Europe was examined in a scientific background study. With the implementation of the project, a consortium was commissioned, consisting of the German Association for Housing, Urban and Spatial Development based in Berlin and Brussels (overall coordination and German dialogue meetings), the European Urban Knowledge Network based in The Hague (European dialogue meetings) and the Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus-Senftenberg (scientific support and background study).



Photo: DV

### Project team

**Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community (BMI),  
Department for Urban Development Policy:**

Dr. Oliver Weigel, Tilman Buchholz, Dominique Breier

**Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and  
Spatial Development (BBSR), Division for Digital Cities,  
Risk Prevention and Transportation:**

Eva Schweitzer

**German Association for Housing, Urban and Spatial Development (DV):**  
Christian Huttenloher, Jonas Scholze, Heike Mages

**European Urban Knowledge Network (EUKN):**  
Martin Grisel, Lea Scheurer

**Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus-Senftenberg (BTU):**  
Prof. Dr. Silke Weidner, Jens Gerhardt

### Ensuring better links to the Urban Agenda for the EU

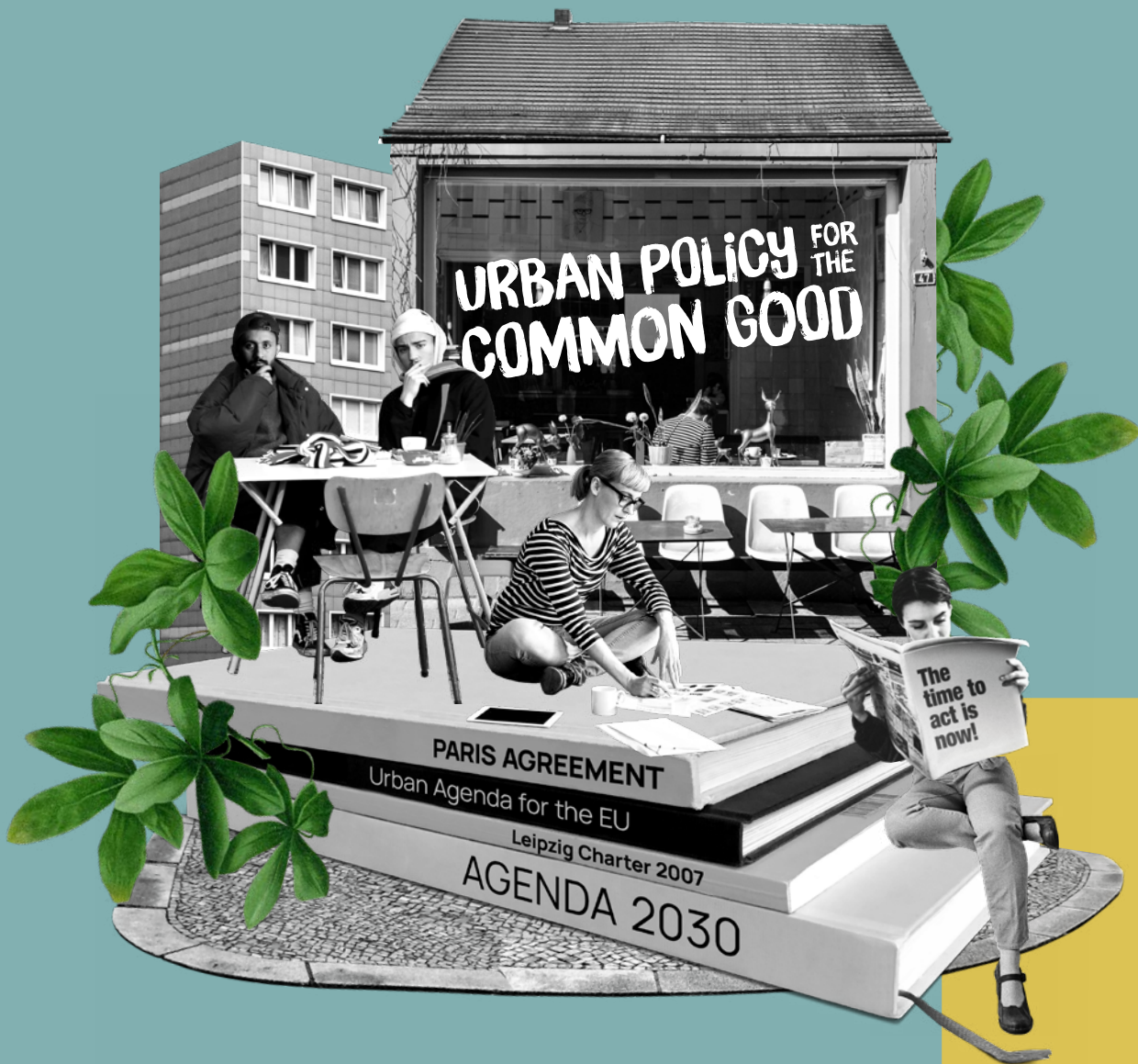
The Ministers call for better linking the Urban Agenda for the EU to EU legislative procedures and policy priorities at the European level, such as the European “Green Deal”<sup>1</sup>. They underline that, in the future, the duration, composition and results of the Thematic Partnerships<sup>2</sup> should be more targeted, balanced and transparent. They also make suggestions on how to better achieve the goal of “better knowledge”. Finally, the Implementation Document states that the governance of the Urban Agenda for the EU shall be improved. The document proposes the establishment of a “Secretariat for Urban Matters” and “National Contact Points”.

The document concludes with calls on various actors regarding the further development of the Urban Agenda for the EU within the framework of the New Leipzig Charter. This should help to further flesh out the process under the Portuguese and Slovenian EU Presidencies in 2021 towards a new working programme for the Urban Agenda for the EU, which is expected to be adopted at the Informal Meeting of Ministers under the Slovenian EU Council Presidency in November 2021.

<sup>1</sup> See: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en).

<sup>2</sup> Further information on the Thematic Partnerships of the Urban Agenda for the EU can be found under the section: “How it all began: Background and initial situation.”

<sup>3</sup> See ExWoSt project “Opportunities and strategies of the German EU Council Presidency 2020”: <https://www.bbsr.bund.de/BBSR/DE/forschung/programme/exwost/Studien/2018/eu-ratspraesidentschaft/01-start.html?docId=1949756&notFirst=true>



# How it all began: Background and initial situation

» Cities should shape the digital transformation sustainably and based on an urban policy for the common good. In doing so, due to the sovereign use of their data, they will be able to raise the potential for sustainable urban development, for the future-proof design of public services and for the provision of basic services. And, through the inclusive development of the digital transformation, the risks for spatial and social divide can be minimised.«

Eva Schweitzer,  
Federal Institute for Research on Building,  
Urban Affairs and Spatial Development

The name says it all: The New Leipzig Charter is the “new edition” of the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities. What is the link between the two documents, and why was a revision necessary? The “old” Leipzig Charter was adopted on the occasion of the German EU Council Presidency in 2007 by the Ministers responsible for urban matters in all Member States of the European Union. They advocated the strengthening of an integrated urban development policy throughout Europe. They emphasised that deprived neighbourhoods need special attention, because they fulfill important functions in the overall urban context.

### The Leipzig Charter of 2007 as a basis

With these two key messages, which are still valid to this day, the 2007 Charter established the National Urban Development Policy in Germany, and provided an important impetus for urban development policy in Europe. About ten years later, however, various challenges had changed: The ever-increasing degree of urbanisation and the associated adoption of various strategic guidelines and frameworks at the global and European level had placed greater emphasis on urban concerns worldwide. In addition, the Pact of Amsterdam, along with the Urban Agenda for the EU in the year 2016, succeeded in giving cities more say at the EU level by establishing a new form of cooperation between municipalities, Member States and the EU Commission, the continuation of which had to

be shaped. A comprehensive evaluation submitted in 2017, “Ten Years after the Leipzig Charter. The enduring relevance of urban development in Europe” took these developments into account. A reference that examined the effects of the Leipzig Charter in the EU Member States and beyond. Against this backdrop, it became very clear in 2017 that the Leipzig Charter of 2007 had to be renewed under the German EU Council Presidency in 2020.

### New challenges

Society, the climate and the economy have undergone dynamic, profound changes in recent years: the economic and financial crisis of 2008 and 2009 has increased the income and wealth disparities between citizens in the EU Member States. One consequence has been the increased call for affordable housing and fair land policies in major cities. At the same time, growing and shrinking regions are drifting further apart.

Progressive climate change requires decisive action from politicians, businesses and societies. Since 2019, young people around the world have been taking to the streets as part of the “Fridays for Future” movement. In addition, extra- and intra-European migration confronts municipalities with permanent integration-related tasks. In addition, there are megatrends, such as demographic, economic and technological structural change. The rise of digitalisation entails profound transformation processes that affect all urban areas: from the labour market to participation, mobility, retail and administration. Last but not least, since 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has shown how quickly and how profoundly crises can change our lives and our priorities, and how crucial it is for local authorities to be able to react resiliently and flexibly to such unpredictable situations.

### **Focus on urban development policy globally and across the EU**

In addition, the debate on the importance of sustainable urban development policy has intensified over the past decade – both globally and at the EU level. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations (“SDGs”) from 2015 and the “Paris Agreement on Climate Protection” (2016) provide an important framework for this. The “New Urban Agenda”, adopted at the Habitat III Conference in Quito in 2016, focused on the urban dimension of policies at the transnational level. In addition, the “Pact of Amsterdam”, adopted under the Dutch EU Council Presidency in 2016, has launched an initiative with the Urban Agenda for the EU that aims to strengthen the right to have a say of local authorities and to involve them more in European decision-making processes.

### **A new, multi-level, cooperative approach for Europe**

The three overarching objectives of the Pact of Amsterdam are a more city-friendly design of European legislation and EU funding opportunities, as well as an expansion of knowledge sharing (“Better Regulation, Better Funding, Better Knowledge”). To achieve this, 14 Thematic Partnerships were established that form the methodological core of the Urban Agenda for the EU. Each Partnership dealt with a different topic of both urban and European relevance, such as urban mobility, digitalisation, the inclusion of migrants and refugees, as well as climate adaptation.<sup>4</sup> Around 15 to 20 representatives from cities, Member and Partner States, the European Commission, EU institutions, European umbrella organisations and knowledge networks worked together in each Partnership. Twelve of the topics had already been defined by the Pact of Amsterdam. In autumn 2018, the areas of culture and cultural heritage, as well as security in public spaces, were added. Each of the Partnerships developed an Action Plan with solutions for the aforementioned areas Better Regulation, Better Funding and Better Knowledge. The Partnerships of the Urban Agenda for the EU embody a novel, experimental approach to multi-level cooperation between cities, Member States and the EU Commission. They mark a milestone in urban development policy in Europe. Closely linked to this was the expectation of EU Member States to continue this path throughout Germany’s EU Council Presidency in 2020 and to develop it further through a renewed Leipzig Charter.

<sup>4</sup> For all Partnerships, including their Action Plans, see: <https://futurium.ec.europa.eu/en/urban-agenda>.

»The New Leipzig Charter is not an action plan – nor can it be one, because all cities have different starting positions and interests. Rather, it is a document that provides an important framework for political discussions in municipalities, and promotes the setting of goals for the common good.«

Dr. Timo Munzinger,  
Association of German Cities

» In 2016, the Pact of Amsterdam launched the Urban Agenda for the EU. Its multi-level cooperation method proved to be a major step forward in strengthening the role of cities and the urban dimension in European policy and regulations. The New Leipzig Charter continues this approach, establishing the Urban Agenda as a key implementation tool for sustainable urban development in the EU.«

Karen van Dantzig,  
Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations,  
The Netherlands

» The aspect of governance has been debated many times. The Urban Agenda for the EU is intended to be an instrument to test multi-level governance of the European Commission, Member States and municipalities. Also the Territorial Agenda is about coordinating the cooperation of cities and their functional urban areas. It is essential that multi-level governance and a strong role of cities are also associated with the New Leipzig Charter.«

Marine Gaudron,  
Council of European Municipalities  
and Regions



# In dialogue: Preparation of the New Leipzig Charter





The direct motives behind the renewal of the Leipzig Charter of 2007 were: the preparation of the German EU Presidency in 2020 in the field of urban development, changed challenges for Europe's cities, as well as the release of new key documents, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Climate Agreement, the New Urban Agenda and the Urban Agenda for the EU. In addition, new premises occurred during the preparation of the document: In terms of content, the tried-and-tested integrated approach of the Leipzig Charter of 2007 should be pursued, but its strong spatial focus on deprived neighbourhoods should be put to the test. In addition to the aforementioned framework documents, further global, European and national developments in the field of urban development should be taken into account in the revision of the Charter of 2007, since they were, in a sense, the foundation on which the New Leipzig Charter was based, and which also states that it should simultaneously be developed further and shaped in the future. An accompanying background study by the BTU Cottbus-Senftenberg was therefore conducted to examine relevant scientific and political documents and publications, and to identify innovative trends, as well as new urban challenges of significance to the new charter.

»The integrated approach was central to the Leipzig Charter of 2007. It was supported by guidance for federal, state and local governments. Its importance remains valid. In Germany today, we are a good deal farther ahead in regards to integrated urban development concepts than we were then. That is what we need to follow up on. The prominent role of integrated urban development in the New Leipzig Charter gives the actors from some other Member States the opportunity to resolutely take the path of integrated urban development.«

Prof. Dr. Silke Weidner,  
Brandenburg University of Technology  
Cottbus-Senftenberg

In addition, the aim was to ensure a broadly coordinated and consensually supported final document through the extensive participation of German and European urban development experts from academia, institutions, associations, Member States, regions, municipalities and civil society. Particular attention was to be paid to the continuation and stabilisation of multi-level governance between cities, Member States and the EU Commission, which initiated the Urban Agenda for the EU with its 14 Partnerships.

# German dialogue process

Coordinated by the German Association for Housing, Urban and Spatial Development, five German, sometimes two-day-long expert meetings took place in Berlin between June 2018 and May 2020, with a relatively fixed group of about 45 participants, the composition of which varied slightly depending on the focus of the events. Among others, smaller and large municipalities, state and federal ministries, municipal and regional associations, planning offices, universities, the scientific community, as well as further associations

and chambers, were all represented. In addition to input presentations on individual focal points of the respective meetings, interactive exchange and discussion in small groups played an important role. As early as the second session, the respective working states of the New Leipzig Charter were presented and discussed, adapted and further developed together with the participants: From the first rough breakdown, which was based on the findings of the parallel background study (January 2019), through various, sub-topic thematic blocks (May 2019), all the way to the first floating text draft in English (October 2019). The results of the discussions of the individual sessions were incorporated into the draft of the new Charter, as was the study “Local Governments’ Capacity to Act: A European Comparison”, commissioned by the University of Potsdam in the second half of the dialogue process. Furthermore, from the moment the first draft was presented, written comments on the document were also taken into account.

Kick-off session, 28 June 2018.



Photo: BTU / Silke Weidner

» For the further development of the Leipzig Charter of 2007, it is crucial that all spatial actors, meaning local, national and international politicians, as well as businesses, civil society and science jointly take over responsibility for integrated urban development in order to foster the transformation of cities. In addition, the new document must subsequently be implemented nationally and internationally. As such, we need a continuous working process for adapting it.«

Prof. Dr. Klaus J. Beckmann,  
Expert Advisory Board,  
"National Urban Development Policy"

» We increasingly need multi-functional infrastructures in cities, including appropriate operating and management concepts. Furthermore, we should take into account the perspective of young people.«

Prof. Angela Million,  
Institute of Urban and Regional Planning  
at the Technische Universität Berlin

» Small and medium-sized towns and municipalities face challenges partly different from major cities. However, the New Leipzig Charter is designed in a way that makes it a valid guiding document for cities of all sizes. Insofar, the common general goal is important: The preservation and the improvement of livability in all European towns and municipalities!«

Bernd Düsterdiek,  
German Association of Towns  
and Municipalities

» The sustainable city has to be 'green', 'productive' and 'just' – in fact all at once, that is what the integrated approach is about. And we do not talk about 'CO<sub>2</sub> reduction' anymore, but about CO<sub>2</sub> neutrality! That is what is stated in all EU documents and this will be the guiding benchmark. To some extent, we should be more courageous, in order to at least reflect the status quo of current target settings.«

Stefan Kuhn,  
ICLEI – Local Governments  
for Sustainability

» We need a new, functional mix of uses in inner cities, in order to especially create vibrant urban centers. In addition, the question arises as to whether current infrastructures will still be needed in 50 years. Especially in small and medium-sized towns and cities, a massive vacancy problem is foreseeable. Forced uniformity across Europe makes no sense, however. The city systems in the Member States are and will remain diverse.«

Michael Reink,  
German Retail Federation HDE

» Please reflect on digital transformation in the New Leipzig Charter as one of the major challenges. Cities must stay in the driving seat of this transformation, which is a means to meet policy goals for a green and fair transition. Data management and ownership are huge topics, as well as the transformational impact on public services and citizens' participation. We have only seen the tip of the iceberg so far.«

Dorthe Nielsen,  
EUROCITIES



Second national session, 16 January 2019:  
Small groups are discussing the Thematic Partnerships  
of the Urban Agenda.



Photo: DV / Heike Mages

### Focus areas, cross-sectoral topics, principles

Across the thematic focal points of the individual meetings (see timeline p. 20), three major lines of discussion permeated the overall national dialogue. On the one hand, there was the question of focus areas, cross-sectoral topics and principles: Which issues (such as justice and participation, digitalisation, climate protection, land policy, mobility<sup>5</sup>) should be included prominently, and at which points throughout the new document? Which of these should be treated as cross-sectoral topics? On which basic principles of urban development should the new document be based? How could the claim to highlight different topics be simultaneously combined with a holistic view? Ultimately, these discussions were resolved in favour of an integrated approach. The decision was taken to assign all topics relevant to urban development to the three dimensions of European cities: the “just”, the “green” and the “productive” city. In this way, the three dimensions of sustainable development are presented in relation to the social, environmental and economic aspects. The terminology “just”, “green” and “productive” is based on the wording currently used in other EU guiding documents, such as the Green Deal, the Territorial Agenda of the EU 2030, etc.

### Spatial dimension

Spatial aspects were also discussed to a great extent. In the end, the participants (including the European meetings) clearly argued that the “deprived neighbourhood”, one of the two main themes of the 2007 Charter, should certainly continue to play a role. However, it was decided to replace the term “deprived” with “neighbourhoods with a multitude of complex challenges”. This expression is better suited to show that the neighbourhood level has to cope with particularly dynamic and demanding tasks. Furthermore, it became clear that, in addition to neighbourhoods, greater importance had to be attached to the overall regional or metropolitan context and functional areas, like their surroundings, for example. In everyday life, people constantly move back and forth between different spatial levels (keywords: work, leisure time, shopping), creating diverse, intertwining relationships. At the same time, functional areas form the link to the Territorial Agenda 2030, which, as the guiding document of European spatial planning, focuses on reducing disparities between the regions of Europe.

<sup>5</sup> These were the topics originally proposed by the expert advisory board “National Urban Development Policy” for the New Leipzig Charter, as of 2 May 2017.

» Mediating different interests is a permanent task of a good urban governance. Involving citizens, taking their concerns and misgivings seriously, incorporating residents' creativity and ideas into the planning process – all these aspects build the foundation for a successful living environment. Participation and co-creation is a basic principle of the New Leipzig Charter, which must continue to be developed and rethought constantly.«

Jonas Scholze,  
German Association for Housing,  
Urban and Spatial Development

### Empowered cities

The practical relevance of the future document and the associated question of the capacity of municipalities to act also played a major role. How did the New Leipzig Charter have to be designed in order to become part of the practice of urban development in local authorities? And above all, which local, regional, national and EU frameworks were necessary for cities to be in a position to implement the principles that had been set out? For this purpose, a separate chapter on empowering cities to transform was introduced. In this chapter, digitalisation and land policy are treated as cross-sectoral issues. The basis for this discussion was, among other things, the study on the local governments' capacity to act conducted by the University of Potsdam (see chapter "Study: Local Governments' Capacity to Act").

### European Urban Development Policy

Last but not least, the European dimension of the document played a major role, although the continuation of the Urban Agenda for the EU through the New Leipzig Charter was mainly discussed during the European dialogue meetings in Brussels. The knowledge that the New Leipzig Charter would be signed by all European Ministers of urban matters helped to keep the focus not too narrowly on specifically German lines of discourse, and to consistently keep a European "universality" in mind for all Member States.

Third national session, 23/24 May 2019:  
Discussion in the plenary.



Photo: DV / Heike Mages



» It is often asserted that peoples' everyday life mainly happens in the neighbourhood, whereas the regional level is only an abstract construct of planning. That is not true. Functional urban areas play a major role in terms of the living environment. Most people make use of their functional urban area in its entirety: shopping, working, living and leisure take place in different places, municipal boundaries are barely realised.«

Prof. Dr. Rainer Danielzyk,  
ARL – Academy of Spatial Development  
of the Leibniz Association

» Global challenges and many other tasks cannot be solved solely at the local level. The close alliance of all governance levels is necessary, and, not least, the support of local authorities by regions and states. The New Leipzig Charter establishes the Member States' commitment to doing so at the European level. The actual implementation is of course left up to national players.«

Martin Rist,  
Ministry of Regional Development and Housing,  
Federal State Baden-Württemberg

» It is important to consider deprived neighbourhoods in the context of the entire municipality, because there are a lot of interactions between these districts and its surroundings. The integrated approach has proven to be valuable in the past and remains the precondition for facing the challenges characterised – in many cases – by a multi-dimensional disadvantage. It is better to stress the potentials of different neighbourhoods, rather than their shortcomings.«

Dr. Gabriele Schmidt,  
SRL – Association for Urban,  
Regional and Rural Planning e.V.

# The development process: an overview

## German Dialogue

28 June 2018, Berlin

### Kick-off session

Scientific impetus on revising the Leipzig Charter:

- Findings of the expert advisory board “National Urban Development Policy”
- “A Manifesto of Generation Y for a New Leipzig Charter”
- Substantive focus and principles
- Spatial dimension

16 January 2019, Berlin

### Leipzig Charter and Urban Agenda for the EU

- Introduction and working status: The Thematic Partnerships of the Urban Agenda for the EU
- Focus on the different topics of the Thematic Partnerships

23/24 May 2019, Berlin

### The spatial component of the Leipzig Charter I Strengthening the municipal capacity for action

- Update of the neighbourhood approach in the Leipzig Charter
- Anchoring the regional and metropolitan component in the Leipzig Charter
- Empowerment of cities to transform, viewed from a German and European perspective

# 2018

# 2019

## European Dialogue

1 October 2018, Brussels

### International Kick-off Meeting

- Introduction to the goals of the German EU Council Presidency 2020 in the field of urban development
- Presentation of the “Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities” from 2007
  - Milestones in European urban development policy and derivatives for the German EU Presidency
- Possible topics, principles, spatial dimension of the new Charter

5 April 2019, Brussels

### The Leipzig Charter and its embeddedness in key European policy developments

- Current results from policy research on European urban development (JPI Urban Europe/ Joint Research Centre)
- Connection between the Leipzig Charter and the Urban Agenda for the EU

3/4 July 2019, Brussels

### Learning from cities and bringing life to the New Leipzig Charter

- Spatial discussion (neighbourhood approach; approach of the “functional area”)
- Discussion of the term “common good”
- Presentation of the results of the former URBACT City Labs and a good urban example (mobility planning in Gdynia, Poland)

10/11 October 2019, Berlin

### **Discussion of the first draft of the New Leipzig Charter**

- Creation of key messages
- Key points of the European discussion
- Presentation of the in-depth study “Local Governments’ Capacity to Act: A European Comparison”
- Discussion of the sections “The European city” and “Empowering cities to transform”

28 May 2020, Online

### **Conclusion of dialogue and presentation of the current version**

- Introducing the text version
- Explanation of the creation process
- General feedback and discussion on the need for adaptation due to the COVID-19 pandemic

# 2020

27/28 November 2019, Brussels

### **Towards a final draft of the New Leipzig Charter**

- Discussion of the current first draft of the New Leipzig Charter
- Presentation of the study “Local Governments’ Capacity to Act: A European Comparison”
- The future of the Urban Agenda for the EU in conjunction with the Leipzig Charter

3 April 2020, Online

### **Leipzig Charter and COVID-19 | Implementation Document**

- Discussion of the current draft text of the New Leipzig Charter
  - Possible effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the New Leipzig Charter
- Discussion on the function and role of the Implementation Document

26 May 2020 Online

### **Implementation Document**

- Discussion of the current draft text of the Implementation Document

Extensive discussions on all topics and the respective status of the document were a main component of each meeting and are not listed separately.

# European dialogue process

The German dialogue was mirrored and supplemented by six meetings in Brussels at the EU level, which always alternated with the events held in Berlin between October 2018 and May 2020, and were coordinated by the European Urban Knowledge Network (EUKN). An average of 70 people attended the European meetings. Among others, individual Member States, the European Commission and its Joint Research Centre (JRC), the European Committee of the Regions, the European Investment Bank, associations such as the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) and EUROCITIES, as well as funding programmes such as URBACT, were represented.

## Reflection of national meetings

The major issues of the national meetings, such as topics and cross-sectoral issues, principles and the

future role of deprived neighbourhoods, were taken up and discussed at the EU level. The empowerment of cities to transform was a particularly important issue in this context, as local autonomy and the capacity to act differ considerably depending on the administrative system in the various Member States.

## Agreement on terms

As an overarching, central idea to the entire document, the participants of the dialogue process in Germany and Europe were able to agree on the notion of “urban policy for the common good”, which is also expressed in the title of the New Leipzig Charter, “The transformative power of cities for the common good”. In the beginning, however, there were some difficulties reaching a shared understanding of the (translated) term, while the notion of “Gemeinwohlorientierung” is firmly established in German. At the meetings in Brussels, for example, “common good” was initially understood to be more in the sense of “commons”. However, the wording “urban policy for the common good” and additional explanations in the text led to a shared understanding of the term.

## Focus: Continuation of the Urban Agenda for the EU

The overall focus of the meetings in Brussels was the continuation of the Urban Agenda for the EU: To what extent could the New Leipzig Charter respond the multi-level cooperation achieved by the Pact of Amsterdam between the EU Commission, Member States and cities, and create a framework for its future implementation? What were the successes of the 14 Thematic Partnerships? What were the weaknesses and what conclusions could be drawn for the future? The greatest challenge in this context was identifying and bringing together the different aspirations and political paths of the individual Member States and institutions. Just as in the German process, the results of the meetings in Brussels were used to develop further the New Leipzig Charter. Written comments and text proposals, received in large numbers after each meeting, were also taken into account.



Fourth European session,  
28 November 2019: Plenary.

» There have been paradigm shifts on the thinking on future cities throughout the past decades, and the depth of urban policy is wider than before – it is a deeper quest to understand cities. We have come very far since 2007. The New Leipzig Charter needs to reflect the innovations in urban thinking. I have positive impressions of this draft – there is a strong spirit of collaboration.«

Kieran McCarthy,  
European Committee of the Regions

» The Urban Agenda for the EU has fostered the role of European cities with the establishment of a new multi-level governance model between municipalities, Member States and European Commission. This approach is a success story and has to be evolved with the support of the European Commission. The New Leipzig Charter sets the coherent strategic framework and the base for just, green and productive cities.«

Thomas de Béthune,  
Directorate-General Regional and Urban  
Policy, European Commission

» The principle of the common good is not just a German guiding theme. It is a key concept in moral philosophy and a building block of democracy as well. The very definition of the common good, both, in the global world and in the EU, is challenging but will be pivotal for our future. We support its role in the New Leipzig Charter.«

Elisa Vilares,  
Directorate-General for Territory, Portugal

## Results of the dialogue process

The alternating events in Berlin and Brussels were mutually beneficial and reflected a real process. Each event helped to readjust the approach, every piece of feedback from participants was discussed and then either considered or justifiably rejected. Each German discourse was examined in view of its resonance with the EU debate and, vice versa, every English formulation was scrutinised for potential misunderstandings. The commissioning bodies, the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community and the Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development, as well as the project team consisting of the German Association for Housing, Urban and Spatial Development, the European Urban Knowledge Network (EUKN) and Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus-Senftenberg, acted as an interface. They formed a fixed group of eleven people who took part in all national and European meetings and carried the prepared outcomes of the discussions further to the next meeting. As a result, this procedure led to a broadly concerted document, which was co-created and supported by all participants from Germany and the other European Member States.

## Complement by the Implementation Document

The New Leipzig Charter is designed to be a strategic guideline for urban development policy in Europe for Member States. However, in the 2019 Brussels discussions on the continuation of the Urban Agenda for the EU, it became increasingly clear that there was a need to additionally adopt a second document focusing exclusively on the implementation of the New Leipzig Charter and the consolidation of the Urban Agenda for the EU. Consequently, at the end of the European dialogue process in early 2020, stakeholders discussed the draft document on the implementation of the New Leipzig Charter in the context of a multi-level approach: Next steps for the EU Urban Agenda. This paper, an addition to the New Leipzig Charter, was adopted at the same time as the Charter by the Ministers responsible for urban matters.

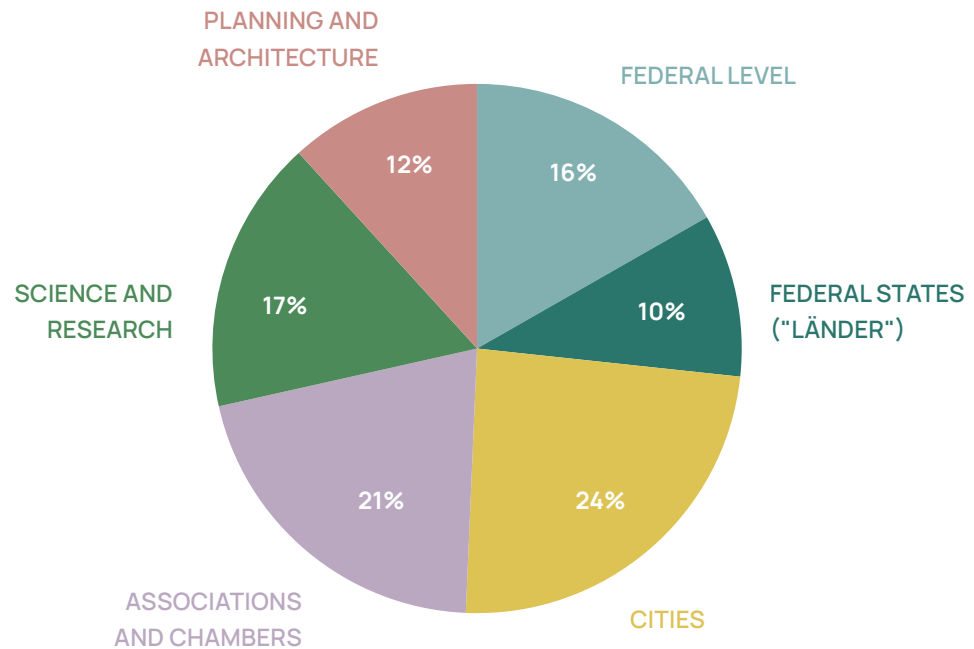
## Taking into account the COVID-19 pandemic

In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic brought both the economic and social life in Europe to a halt. In one fell swoop, the whole process was challenged: Did the New Leipzig Charter, which had advanced substantially at that time, need to be rewritten from scratch? Should concepts such as density and compact cities now be set aside? The participants in the dialogue process, who followed the last German and the last two European meetings online, supported the inclusion of pandemics as challenges in the Charter, but did not consider it necessary to apply fundamental changes. On the contrary, with its focus on just, green and productive cities, its principles of urban policy for the common good, integrated approach, participation and co-creation, multi-level governance and place-based approach, as well as its aim for strong cities capable to act and its call for support frameworks at municipal, regional, national and EU levels, the New Leipzig Charter already had all the “ingredients” needed for cities to be able to react to crises in a flexible, resilient way. As a result, the text was amended by adding a short section on urban resilience and the capacity of cities to handle crises.



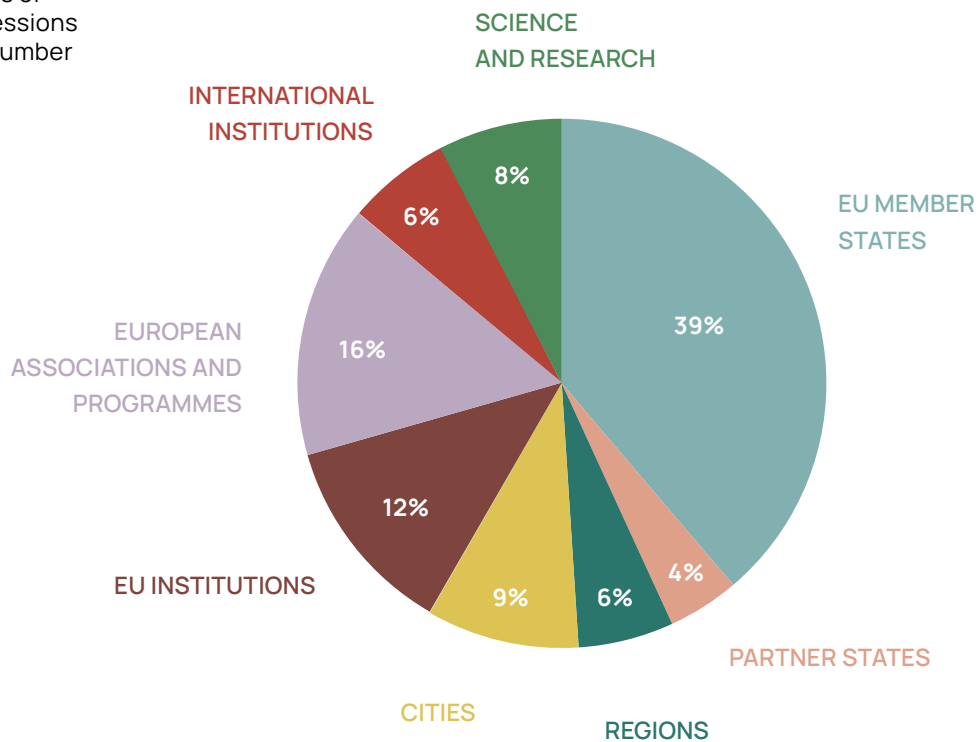
## Composition of the participants in the German sessions

The percentages of the German sessions refer to a total number of 221 persons.



## Composition of the participants in the European sessions

The percentages of the European sessions refer to a total number of 343 persons.



» The New Leipzig Charter is a high-level agreement on principles in order to enable better, secure, safe living conditions for all citizens in Europe. The Partnerships of the Urban Agenda for the EU are the instruments to reach this goal. The meetings of the Directors General for Urban Matters are adequate structures to channel cities' voices at EU and national level. If we leave the cities alone, only greater and strong ones will reach the important policy makers. Therefore, support and cooperation are crucial and should be clearly set in the Implementation Document.«

Aša Rogelj,  
Ministry of the Environment and Spatial  
Planning, Slovenia

» Mobility planning has to be interdisciplinary. We also agreed on this in the Thematic Partnership on Urban Mobility, which was led by Karlsruhe. Elements that could be relevant to the New Leipzig Charter are access to public transport in the sense of providing basic services to the public, and Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans.«

Prof. Dr. Anke Karmann-Woessner,  
City of Karlsruhe



# Accompanying processes

## Feedback from political bodies

Various other processes rounded off the dialogues in Berlin and Brussels. The draft versions of the New Leipzig Charter (and later the drafts of the Implementation Document) were regularly presented to the Urban Development Group (UDG) since September 2019. This group represents the working or expert levels of the ministries responsible for urban matters in all Member States. At the meetings of the Directors-General for Urban Matters (DGUM) and the Urban Agenda Technical Preparatory Group (UATPG), representatives of the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community regularly presented the current drafts of the Charter. The UATPG was established to support the implementation of the Urban Agenda for the EU. It consists of representatives from the Trio Presidency, as well as from the European Commission, the European Committee of the Regions, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions and EUROCITIES. In addition, bilateral talks were held at the senior level of the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community (Minister, State Secretary) with a number of Member States. This paved the way for the adoption of the New Leipzig Charter by the Ministers responsible for urban matters at the end of 2020 at an early stage, and ensured that a guiding document was created with which all EU Member States could identify.

»In the informal, intergovernmental cooperation on urban development, we often refer to “friends of the Leipzig Charter and of the Pact of Amsterdam”. It quickly became clear during the European dialogue process that the New Leipzig Charter needed an “implementation dimension”. The result is impressive: with the Implementation Document, the Ministers agreed on important cornerstones for the further development of the Urban Agenda for the EU.«

Lea Scheurer,  
European Urban Knowledge  
Network EUKN



Second URBACT City Lab  
on sustainability in Brussels, July 2019

Photo: URBACT

### Practical reference by URBACT

The European funding programme URBACT, which supports cities in the transnational exchange of knowledge and in capacity building in the field of sustainable, integrated urban development, also accompanied the Leipzig Charter process closely. URBACT hosted four events between September 2018 and January 2020, called City Labs, which were roughly based on the principles of the New Leipzig Charter. By doing this, the programme brought the practical urban perspective of municipalities from all over Europe into the process. The themes of each event were: citizen participation (Lisbon, September 2018), sustainability (Brussels, July 2019), integration and social inclusion (Warsaw, October 2019) and place-based approach (Porto, January 2020). The events were aimed at the working level; a varied panel of local representatives discussed and presented examples of what urban development can look like under today's conditions. They discussed issues that can arise during implementation, and the type of political support cities need to meet these challenges in the future.<sup>6</sup>

### Presentation at professional events and in expert committees

In addition, the Leipzig Charter process was presented at numerous other expert panels and conferences on sustainable urban development in Germany and Europe, where feedback from participants was gathered. For example, at the EUROCITIES Mobility Forum in Karlsruhe, in March 2019; at the working group created by EUROCITIES in July 2019, in Brussels; at the Federal Congress on National Urban Development Policy and at the conference of the Network of European Metropolitan Regions, METREX, both held in September 2019, in Stuttgart; at the CITIES Forum in January 2020, in Porto; at a EURO-CITIES conference on the Urban Agenda for the EU in September 2020; at an ICLEI conference in September 2020; at the “Cities Fit For Future” conference series in September 2020; at the Directors-General Meeting for Architecture in October 2020; at a JRC conference in November 2020; at various meetings of the working group and the Board of Trustees for National Urban Development Policy; at seminars organised by the TU Berlin; as well as at meetings of key community associations and other networks in the urban development sector.

<sup>6</sup> For more information on URBACT City Labs, see <https://urbact.eu/leipzig-charter>

» There is no city without surroundings. It is not just about the empowerment of cities, but about functional relations. We must not take a sectoral approach. Issues such as affordable housing, climate protection and mobility must also be considered at the level of the functional areas. In this respect, the New Leipzig Charter overlaps with many areas of the Territorial Agenda 2030 for the EU.«

Thomas Kiwitt,  
Stuttgart Regional Association

» Now, it is also up to us as municipalities to make the Charter usable. Not only with the common good as an anchor term, but also with the terms 'green city, just city, productive city': I can go to local parliaments with these dimensions. For example, when I negotiate the redistribution of public space and fair access to the city for all transport users, the New Leipzig Charter allows me to bring forward fresh arguments.«

Frauke Burgdorff,  
City of Aachen

» With its four 'City Labs' on the topics of participation, sustainability, integration and place-based approaches, URBACT has brought positive experiences from different European cities into the process of renewing the Leipzig Charter. The transfer of knowledge between municipalities is a crucial building block for effective cities that are oriented towards the common good. The principles of the New Leipzig Charter also form the basis for the new URBACT programme for the period from 2021 to 2027.«

Emmanuel Moulin,  
URBACT Programme





# Background study: European urban development trends

The broad background study “Summary on European Urban Development Trends and Strategies – Background Study for the renewal of the Leipzig Charter 2020” provided an important basis for discussion during the updating process of the New Leipzig Charter. As part of the study, Prof. Dr. Silke Weidner, Chair of the Department of Urban Management at Brandenburg Technical University Cottbus-Senftenberg, and city planner Jens Gerhardt (MEng) of |u|m|s| STADTSTRATEGIEN Leipzig, evaluated numerous scientific, urban and spatial documents that have been produced since the adoption of the Leipzig Charter in 2007. Based on this, they identified current trends and strategies for action in European urban development.

## **Integrated approaches not a universal reality yet**

According to the study, the integrated approach as an action strategy continues to be relevant. However, it is not a well-established working principle in European urban development, yet. The emergence of the place-based approach can be seen as a decisive impulse for the integrated approach. It describes that the geographical location must be given more consideration as a reference point for horizontally- and vertically-integrated work within urban development. The analysis of the documents additionally shows that the view on the involvement of civil society in urban development has changed. Compared to the period before 2007, for example, there is more openness to co-creation as the most active form of participation in urban planning processes.

## **Reassessment of the function of neighbourhoods**

The dialogue process for the preparation of the New Leipzig Charter has shown that urban spaces are of more significance today than they were ten years ago. This is also reflected in the findings of the study, which contains the recommendation to grant neighbourhoods and functional areas more attention. This corresponds to what people experience in their daily lives today, for example, when commuting to work. The study also identifies the increased migratory flows of recent years as a push to reassess neighbourhoods, as they are often the districts that have thus far been described as “deprived” that assume the function of being a point of arrival for the city in which they are located. With the climate crisis and demographic changes in Europe, neighbourhoods have also gained new strategic functions as climate districts and intergenerational districts. Last but not least, the COVID-19 pandemic has allowed us to deduce further new requirements for neighbourhood development.


## **Consistent action required**

According to the study, European cities today face greater challenges and new tasks when compared to 2007. If we wish to maintain our quality of life in Europe at the current level, we need to consistently address the climate crisis with the help of sustainable urban development. There is a similarly high amount of pressure for action in the areas of natural

resources, demographic change, the drifting apart of society, dealing with migration and transforming our means of transport. The structural change, emerging from the return of production to cities as well as the digital transformation and the energy transition are associated with many opportunities and risks. Using the questions of landownership and data sovereignty as an example, the study also shows that European cities lack expertise and structures in some areas in order to pursue actions oriented towards the common good.

Overall, the study provides a positive outlook: many of the strategies, instruments and measures that have been researched, recognise the transformative power of cities and use it for positive change in European and global problem areas. This includes measures for the reduction of greenhouse gases, to which cities are currently the greatest contributors.

An executive summary (in English) and the complete document (in German only) is available at [www.bbsr.bund.de/BBSR/EN](http://www.bbsr.bund.de/BBSR/EN) (“publications”).



# Study: Local Governments' Capacity to Act

The New Leipzig Charter states that municipalities must be capable to act in order to fulfill their tasks in promoting the common good. The effectiveness and quality of public services depends very much on the ability of cities to act and shape. However, this varies heavily across Europe. That is why the project team commissioned another external study. The study “Local Governments’ Capacity to Act: A European Comparison. Autonomy, Responsibilites and Reforms” by Prof. Dr. Sabine Kuhlmann, Benoît Paul Dumas and Moritz Heuberger (Chair for Political Science, Public Administration and Organisation at the University of Potsdam) compares the role of local governments in various European countries.

## Examined representative administration models

The study is based on relevant data on local autonomy and performance, as well as on in-depth analyses of local development in France, Italy, Sweden, Hungary and the UK. These countries represent typical European municipal systems and administrative models. The study identifies steering principles and institutional adjustments that can improve local governments’ capacity to perform their public service functions and to promote the common good. In concrete terms, this involves ten key elements, including the financial leeway, multi-functional task profiles, political legitimacy, the local public welfare function, and territorial viability.

## Role of municipalities upgraded almost everywhere

The study shows that the role of municipalities in most European countries has been upgraded since the 1980s. This can be observed in functional and financial indicators, as well as in the increased capacity for performance and organisation of sub-national, local authorities. Examples of this European trend include France, Italy and Sweden. However, there are some cases in which reforms by central governments have weakened local authorities or even undermined them functionally and financially, which have been accompanied by drastic recentralisation trends. This can be seen in the UK and Hungary, for example. However, these countries are the exception to an overall “local government-friendly” development trend in Europe, which is also reflected in an increased level of local autonomy. This is a good starting point for further strengthening local self-government and self-administration in Europe.

According to the study, municipalities need a minimum level of local financial autonomy and a self-sufficient revenue base to effectively provide public services. In addition, municipalities should be able to decide independently on a wide range of tasks. To achieve this, they require a robust organisational structure for management and coordination.

Download in English and German is available at [www.bbsr.bund.de/BBSR/EN](http://www.bbsr.bund.de/BBSR/EN) (“publications”).

# Appendix

**The New Leipzig Charter:**

**The transformative power of cities  
for the common good**

**Implementing the New Leipzig Charter  
through multi-level governance:  
Next steps for the Urban Agenda for the EU**

**Council conclusions  
on urban and territorial development**



# The New Leipzig Charter: The transformative power of cities for the common good

adopted at the Informal Meeting of Ministers  
on Urban Matters on 30 November 2020

## A Preamble

The Leipzig Charter of 2007 has inspired urban policy in Europe and beyond. Its core message to promote integrated and sustainable urban development is as valid today as in 2007. Nowadays though, urgent global challenges such as climate change, the loss of biodiversity, resource scarcity, migration movements, demographic change, pandemics and rapidly changing economies have a direct and local impact on towns and cities throughout Europe. They may also intensify disparities in our societies. In addition, digital technologies are drastically transforming society, creating potential political, social, ecological and economic benefits. However, these technologies also trigger profound new challenges such as the digital divide, lack of privacy, security issues and market dependencies. In response to these challenges the Leipzig Charter of 2007 has to be refocussed.

The need for sustainable transformation is underlined by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Sustainable Development Goal 11 which is

dedicated to making cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, the New Urban Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the European Commission's Green Deal. The Green Deal aims to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent in the world and Europe as a whole has a strong responsibility as well as the collective ability to achieve this goal. The New Leipzig Charter provides a policy framework to envision and realise these European and global agreements at the urban scale.

**We, the Ministers responsible for urban matters, agree upon** the New Leipzig Charter that emphasises the pursuit of the common good using the transformative power of cities. This includes general welfare, reliable public services of general interest as well as reducing and preventing new forms of social, economic, environmental and territorial inequalities. Our common goal is to safeguard and enhance the quality of life in all European towns and cities and their functional areas. No one should be left behind.

**We point out** that many cities are already taking over responsibility and leading the transformation



towards just, green and productive societies. This requires good leadership, solid urban governance and resources. Cities need the full support of all governmental levels and all key actors, both governmental and non-governmental.

**We reaffirm** support for transformation through integrated urban development, with a place-based, multi-level and participatory approach.

**We highlight** the important support from the European Union for integrated urban development including Cohesion Policy and other EU policies, as well as research programmes and initiatives with an urban dimension.

**We acknowledge** that the Urban Agenda for the EU, established by the Pact of Amsterdam, has made an important contribution to a widely appreciated multi-level and multi-stakeholder approach to urban development.

**We emphasise** our support for the objectives of the Territorial Agenda 2030. Along with the New Leipzig Charter this advocates the place-based approach as an overarching principle for all places and policy sectors. The New Leipzig Charter provides guidance on applying the approach in cities and their functional areas. We therefore support strengthened cooperation between and across spatial levels.

## B The transformative power of European Cities

Europe has a wide variety of small, medium-sized and large cities. As part of a polycentric urban system, these are functional areas with varying potentials and challenges. European cities are more than places of densely arranged built structures, they also enable cultural, social, ecologic and economic interaction. Most cities are unique, historically grown centres of outstanding cultural value shaping Europe's urban heritage and the identity of its citizens. Thus, culture

is at the core of any sustainable urban development, including the preservation and development of the built and other cultural heritage.

Cities are places of pluralism, creativity and solidarity. Cultural and political traditions have been foundations for the development of cities reflecting democratic rights and values. Cities are also laboratories for new forms of problem-solving and test beds for social innovation.

High-quality, open and safe public spaces function as vibrant urban places, allowing people to interact, exchange and integrate into society. Good urban planning and design should be reinforced to enable compact, socially and economically mixed cities with well-developed infrastructure and a healthy environment and opportunities for identification contributing to the well-being of all. This requires a holistic understanding of high-quality Baukultur as the basis of integrated planning and design processes for every man-made shaping of the built environment in European cities. It also encompasses the management and conversion of existing buildings as well as the design and construction of contemporary buildings, infrastructure and public spaces.

Cities and urban systems need flexibility as well as the ability to respond to external disruptive events and chronic stress. The robustness of cities to cope with changing framework conditions should be supported by an ability to learn from past events and from each other, flexible urban governance for the common good as well as balanced implementation of just, green and productive cities. Predictive and preventive policies, plans and projects should include diverse scenarios to anticipate environmental and climatic challenges and economic risks as well as social transformation and health concerns.

### B.1 Three spatial levels of European cities

Today, citizens often interact at different spatial scales in their everyday life. Therefore, measures that focus

on local developments should be designed at the appropriate spatial scale. In addition to formal local policies, specific and informal measures need to be enforced at other levels including neighbourhoods as well as wider functional, regional and metropolitan scales. This requires harmonised coordination of measures implemented at all spatial levels to ensure coherence and to avoid inefficiency.

- Urban challenges are often more pronounced at the **neighbourhood level**. Some neighbourhoods can reflect social tensions, poverty or environmental stress. Other neighbourhoods are arrival areas for migrants or subject to gentrification, social mobility and a shortage of affordable housing. Specific neighbourhood policies should therefore encourage local commitment for community building and inclusiveness. Neighbourhoods with a multitude of complex socioeconomic challenges need tailor-made policy programmes and funding to stabilise in the long term. In addition, neighbourhoods should be regarded as potential laboratories for innovative approaches covering all fields of urban development.
- **Local authorities** in their individual national context are responsible for local urban development. Decision-makers in local authorities set strategic guidelines and specific operations for the whole city area. They act as a formal link between small scale neighbourhoods and wider functional areas, with a decisive role in stabilising surrounding and wider rural areas. Particular consideration must be given to comparable living conditions for citizens in small and medium-sized towns and cities in shrinking areas.
- Sustainable and resilient urban development takes place within a regional or metropolitan context and relies on a complex network of functional interdependencies and partnerships. This is exemplified by the **functional area** as stated in the Territorial Agenda 2030. In parts this covers a metropolitan area or a combination of other territorial entities. In order to adapt urban policies to people's daily lives, towns and cities need to cooperate and coordinate their policies and instruments with their surrounding suburban and rural areas on policies for housing, commercial

areas, mobility, services, green and blue infrastructure, material flows, local and regional food systems and energy supply, among others.

## B.2 Three dimensions of European cities

Urban transformation is based on the integration of the social, ecological and economic dimensions of sustainable development.

**We, the Ministers, acknowledge** that these dimensions are reflected by the transformative power of cities through just, green and productive dimensions. Combined and in a balanced and integrated manner, these dimensions contribute to developing resilient cities that can deal with social, economic and ecological challenges, providing and aiming to guarantee a high quality of life for everyone.

### The just city

The transformative power of cities provides equal opportunities and environmental justice for all, regardless of gender, socioeconomic status, age and origin – leaving no one behind. A just city provides opportunities for everyone to integrate in society.

All social groups, including the most vulnerable, should have equal access to services of general interest, including education, social services, health care and culture. Adequate, accessible, safe and affordable housing and energy supply should meet the needs of different groups in society, including an ageing and more diverse population, persons with disabilities, young people and families. Socially balanced, mixed and safe urban neighbourhoods promote the integration of all social and ethnic groups and generations. Urban areas with a high percentage of migrants need a comprehensive integration and anti-segregation policy for this. All citizens should be empowered to acquire new skills and education. This requires affordable and accessible high-quality pre-school and school education, qualification and training for young people, as well as lifelong learning opportunities, in particular for digitalisation and technology.

### The green city

The transformative power of cities contributes to combatting global warming and to high environmental quality for air, water, soil and land use. The development of high quality urban environments for all includes adequate access to green and recreational spaces. Climate-neutral energy supply, renewable resources, the implementation of energy efficiency measures, as well as climate-resilient and carbon-neutral buildings will contribute to significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions and helping European cities adapt to the impacts of climate change. Some European frontrunner cities can already provide a blueprint for a net-zero carbon city today. The transformation requires investments in innovative and efficient technologies as well as fundamental changes to production and consumption, allowing for the establishment of a circular economy which redefines and ensures a sustainable use of resources, while significantly reducing waste and carbon emissions.

Cities are called on to protect and regenerate endangered ecosystems and their species and, to use nature-based solutions where high quality green and blue infrastructure can accommodate extreme weather conditions. Well-designed, managed and connected green and blue areas are a precondition for healthy living environments, adapting to climate change and preserving and developing biodiversity in cities.

Urban transport and mobility systems should be efficient, carbon-neutral, safe and multi-modal. Active and low-carbon forms of mobility and logistics should be promoted including a modal shift to public transport, walking and biking. Public transport should be accessible, affordable, clean, safe and attractive for all. To reduce transport and mobility needs, a polycentric settlement structure should be as compact and dense as possible while supporting multiple uses including housing, retail, production and transport.

### The productive city

The transformative power of cities is based on a diversified economy which provides jobs while ensuring a

sound financial base for sustainable urban development. Cities as attractive, innovative and competitive business locations need a skilled workforce, social, technical and logistical infrastructure as well as affordable and accessible space. Ensuring these preconditions, including a favourable innovative environment as well as opportunities for local and regional production should be integral to urban planning.

In addition to traditional industries, many other economic sectors are shifting more and more towards a digital, service-oriented and low-carbon economy built on a knowledge-based society and cultural industries. Small-scale businesses, low-emission-manufacturing and urban agriculture can be stimulated to re-integrate production into cities and urban areas, enabling and promoting new forms of mixed-use neighbourhoods. The retail sector in European cities is changing as a result of an increasing digitalisation in commerce. Staple goods and especially food, however, should be accessible locally to offer a good quality of life and to counterbalance the adverse effects of demographic change. Transforming central urban areas into attractive multifunctional spaces provides new opportunities for urban development through mixed use for living, working and recreation, where manufacturing, retail and services are found alongside housing, hospitality and leisure.

**Digitalisation** is a major transformative, cross-sectoral trend affecting all dimensions of sustainable urban development. In many ways it offers an opportunity for urban transformation. Digital solutions can deliver innovative and high-quality services to the public and businesses. These include smart urban mobility, energy efficiency, sustainable housing, public services, retail, supply of daily goods and civic-led governance. At the same time digitalisation can trigger a further spatial and social divide with risks to the protection of privacy. Digitalisation needs to be shaped in an environmentally sustainable, inclusive and fair manner. In a broader picture, European digital sovereignty is key to the future competitiveness of the EU. Cities, with their power to scale up digital solutions and to adapt them to local conditions can significantly contribute to this goal.

## C Key principles of good urban governance

The key working principles in the 2007 Leipzig Charter are still valid. However, they need to be updated in view of today's global challenges and implemented by all those involved in urban development.

**We, the Ministers, acknowledge** that a balanced, integrated transformation of cities and regions to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and objectives of the European Union's Green Deal, will only be successful if both governmental and non-governmental actors from all levels and sectors work together, agreeing on strategic principles. These principles also shape basic elements that further develop and implement the Urban Agenda for the EU as well as the urban and territorial dimensions of EU Cohesion Policy. We emphasise our support for the Territorial Agenda 2030 which is based on a shared understanding of the key principles for good governance.

### Urban policy for the common good

Public authorities should act in the interest of public welfare, providing services and infrastructure for the common good. These should be inclusive, affordable, safe and accessible for all, including the weakest and most vulnerable groups in society, particularly those who live in towns and cities in shrinking and remote areas. This should cover health care, social services, education, cultural services, housing, water and energy supply, waste management, public transport, digital networks and information systems. Furthermore, the quality of public spaces including green and blue infrastructure as well as the preservation and revitalisation of "Baukultur" are important. Therefore, the skills and capacities of all urban stakeholders should be strengthened with strategies and tools for their empowerment. Good urban governance can balance public and private interests with market mechanisms.

### Integrated approach

All areas of urban policy have to be coordinated in a spatial, sectoral and temporal manner. The integrated approach relies on simultaneous and fair consideration

of all concerns and interests relevant to urban development. Therefore, it should pool and balance different, partly conflicting, interests as well as the mutual effects of different interventions. Cities need to establish integrated and sustainable urban development strategies and assure their implementation for the city as a whole, from its functional areas to its neighbourhoods.

### Participation and co-creation

The integrated approach requires the involvement of the general public as well as social, economic and other stakeholders in order to consider their concerns and knowledge. Public participation in urban development processes should engage all urban actors, which also strengthens local democracy. Wherever possible, citizens should have a say in processes that impact their daily lives. New forms of participation should be encouraged and improved, including co-creation and co-design in cooperation with inhabitants, civil society networks, community organisations and private enterprises. Experimenting with new forms of participation can help cities manage conflicting interests, share responsibilities and find innovative solutions while also reshaping and maintaining urban spaces and forming new alliances to create integrated city spaces. Public participation is central to the successful delivery of a high quality built environment.

### Multi-level governance

Every governmental level – local, regional, metropolitan, national, European and global – has a specific responsibility for the future of our cities based on the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. Complex challenges should be jointly tackled by all levels of urban and spatial policy. This requires the cooperation of all societal actors, including civil society and the private sector. As recommended by the Pact of Amsterdam and the New Urban Agenda, vertical and horizontal multi-level and multi-stakeholder cooperation, both bottom-up and top-down, is key to good urban governance.

### Place-based approach

Places should be regarded as reference points for an integrated horizontal and vertical approach. Urban strategies and urban funding instruments should be

based on sound analysis of the specific local situation, especially potential benefits and risks, stakeholders and restrictions, while following place-based development. This will enable endogenous urban transformation and reduce local socioeconomic inequalities. Appropriate formal and informal instruments should cover all spatial levels, from neighbourhoods to local authorities and wider functional areas including the metropolitan level.

## D Empowering cities to transform

Local authorities are closest to citizens and in touch with their daily life and needs. Cities are responsible for allocating public services that enable citizens to exercise their fundamental rights and to participate in society. Cities are also responsible for balancing differing, sometimes conflicting aspects and interests. This gives local authorities a crucial role in guaranteeing and representing the overall public interest.

**We, the Ministers, stress** the importance of cities being capable of unlocking their transformative power, of dynamically responding to rapidly changing conditions, and of providing a high quality of life. Support from the European, national and regional levels is needed to ensure cities can find local solutions to global challenges.

### D.1 Strengthening Urban Governance to ensure the Common Good

Cities need:

- **Legal framework conditions** at all administrative and political levels based on the partnership principle and embedded in a multi-level governance system;
- **Investment capacities** generated through their own income, allocations from national and regional levels,

as well as specific EU-, national and regional funding programmes;

- **Adequately skilled employees** who are continuously trained and qualified in order to keep up with future challenges as well as wider technological and societal trends. Local authorities should also be able to integrate various sectoral policies and plans as well as promote and moderate complex, participatory and bottom-up processes;
- **The steerability and shaping of infrastructure, public services and public welfare.** This includes services for health, social care, education, culture, water and energy supply, waste management, public transport, digital networks, information systems and public spaces as well as green and blue infrastructure. In addition, the provision of safe, healthy, affordable, well-designed and adequate housing is essential for all urban policies.

**We, the Ministers, stress** that solid urban governance aiming for the common good is necessary to transform all cities into just, green and productive urban systems. Politicians and administrations at all levels are therefore encouraged to provide financial and legal framework conditions under the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality and in respect of budgetary regulations, that support the following fields of action:

#### D.1.1 Active and strategic land policy and land use planning

Space is limited in many cities, which often leads to conflicting interests. Local authorities need to apply sustainable, transparent and equitable land use planning and land policies, including local authority land ownership and control. In order to ensure resilient and long-term development, local authorities need to take into account strategic and future developments and risks. Key elements to achieve this are:

- **Polycentric settlement structures with appropriate compactness and density in urban and rural areas** with optimal connections within cities to minimise distances between housing, work, leisure, educa-



tion, local shops and services. This should minimise traffic and mobility needs within and between cities, combatting urban sprawl and reducing traffic areas;

- **Fostering the cooperation beyond administrative and national borders and coordination of spatial planning in functional urban areas, taking into account urban-rural linkages**, in order to prevent as well as contain urban sprawl;
- **Reducing land take**, prioritising the renewal and complex regeneration of urban areas, including brownfield redevelopment, to limit soil sealing;
- **Land use should balance urban density by favouring green and blue infrastructure**, to increase urban biodiversity and enable climate-neutral, resilient and environmentally sound urban development as well as improved air quality;
- **Design and management of safe and accessible public spaces** providing healthy living environments for all citizens;
- **Sufficient areas for adequate, safe, well designed and affordable housing** to ensure vibrant and socially mixed neighbourhoods, avoiding speculative land policy;
- **Mixed-use urban spaces** to promote new forms of production and economic activity in a green, creative, service-based economy.

#### D.1.2 Actively shaping digital transformation

Today, the digitalisation of processes and their management in cities including massive, rapidly growing data flows is key to integrated urban development. Digitalisation is never an end in itself. Local authorities, as part of the public sector, should drive solution-driven technology based on public needs. To ensure no one is left behind, digital transformation and the collaboration needed to implement this should be based on common human values – such as inclusiveness, human-centeredness and transparency as well as in accordance with international law, including human rights law. Cities should be able to shape the digital transformation by:

- Developing and implementing integrated and inclusive smart city strategies for the common good, including impact assessments with awareness of long-term effects.
- Improving decision making and digital public services. Data should be used for the common good, with ethical and socially responsible access, use, sharing and management. At the same time, this data usage should be carefully weighed against privacy issues.
- Implementing comprehensive, powerful and resilient public data infrastructure and governance. Cities should have access to data relevant to public tasks.
- Promoting lifelong learning tools to empower citizens and public administrations, fostering digital skills and ensuring digital cohesion.
- Digital solutions can – particularly in times of crisis – safeguard and boost local authorities' capacity to act.

## D.2 Ensuring Adequate Policies and Funding for Cities

Local authorities need an enabling framework including all levels of government and relevant stakeholders to achieve these goals. EU, national and regional regulations should support the implementation of integrated urban policies for the common good and catalyse urban transformation, respecting the subsidiarity principle and in line with the competences of each level.

### D.2.1 Powerful national urban policy framework and funding

The Leipzig Charter of 2007 and the New Urban Agenda state that national and regional urban policies should be strengthened to empower cities and contribute to consistent implementation of sustainable urban development at local level.

**We, the Ministers, agree** to foster – within our responsibilities and capacities and in respect of budgetary regulations - the continuation and establishment of national or regional urban policies in order to:

- **enable exchanges** of experiences and knowledge between cities and other stakeholders at regional, national, transnational and EU levels to strengthen the capacity to implement integrated and sustainable urban development strategies;
- **act as platforms** for dialogue between urban and all other partners to ensure multi-level governance through different means, including multi-level partnerships;
- **support the development or reallocation of national or regional funding programmes** for significant urban challenges and facilitate co-financing by European Funds as important instruments to enable integrated and sustainable urban development strategies and projects.
- **provide incentives for innovation** and experimental projects that address current and future challenges in sustainable urban development.

#### D.2.2 Coherent EU regulation and funding instruments

**The Urban Agenda for the EU**, launched in 2016 by the Pact of Amsterdam, started a pivotal multi-level governance process to enhance the position of cities in legislation and policymaking. We highly value the work of the multi-level Partnerships with the objectives of Better Regulation, Better Funding and Better Knowledge. Their work has contributed to increased coherence in the EU regulatory framework on urban topics and to improving EU policy development with an urban dimension. This includes refining and adjusting funding instruments as well as enhancing the common knowledge base on urban issues in Europe. The Urban Agenda for the EU is a major process to support European institutions, Member States, regional and local authorities and functional areas of all sizes to implement the strategic principles of the Leipzig Charter.

**We, the Ministers, therefore agree** to continue, reinforce and improve the Urban Agenda for the EU as a process built on the partnership principle and in full compliance with the principles of subsidiarity and

proportionality in a multi-level governance approach. In addition, we call upon European institutions to take into account, where relevant, the implications and consequences of EU regulations and directives related to urban areas in their Impact Assessments and to actively engage local and regional stakeholders in consultations on new and existing EU legislation.

**Funding, financial instruments and EU-programmes concerning urban issues** provided by European institutions play a valuable role for urban policy in European cities and consequently need to maintain a strong urban dimension. Among other EU-programmes, advisory support and financial instruments, Cohesion Policy is key to implementing integrated and sustainable urban development strategies and place-based approaches for local and regional urban projects. These programmes should stimulate, with the help of the European Urban Initiative, integrated, innovative and participatory approaches in sustainable urban development, promote socio-economic and territorial cohesion, support polycentric settlement structures and bring the EU closer to citizens.

**The vertical and horizontal exchange of knowledge and expertise** among all multi-level governance stakeholders should be continued and strengthened. EU-funded urban development, research and development cooperation programmes, networks and initiatives can contribute to this idea. This enables learning from good practices and innovative approaches as well as key working principles and instruments. The Urban Agenda for the EU offers an exchange platform for European, national, regional and local urban stakeholders.

**We, the Ministers, encourage** the European institutions, Member and partner States as well as regional and local authorities to foster the coherent coordination of methods and objectives between European programmes and initiatives such as the Urban Agenda for the EU, URBACT, the European Urban Initiative including its Innovative Actions and Cohesion Policy programmes.

## E Closing Appeal

**We, the Ministers, are convinced** that the New Leipzig Charter provides a strong framework for good and sustainable urban governance. It emphasises the transformative power of cities for the common good through key principles, key dimensions and specific fields of action.

**We call upon** EU institutions, Member and partner States, as well as local and regional authorities and urban stakeholders at all governance levels for their commitment and contribution to put the agreed framework into practice through European, national, regional and local initiatives and programmes.

**We therefore endorse** the document “Implementing the New Leipzig Charter through multi-level governance: Next steps for the Urban Agenda for the EU” which operationalises and links on equal footing the strategic principles of the New Leipzig Charter with continuation of the Urban Agenda for the EU.

# Implementing the New Leipzig Charter through multi-level governance: Next steps for the Urban Agenda for the EU

adopted at the Informal Meeting of Ministers on Urban Matters on 30 November 2020

## The Continued Need for Multi-Level Urban Governance in Europe

The New Leipzig Charter with its set of strategic principles of good urban governance provides a framework guiding post-2020 urban policy coordination in Europe. This framework reaffirms the objectives and achievements of the Pact of Amsterdam, thus linking the Urban Agenda for the EU's working method to the New Leipzig Charter's strategic principles.

**We, the Ministers responsible for urban matters, emphasise** that the Urban Agenda for the EU as a valuable implementation instrument towards more coherent and urban-friendly policies will be continued and developed further to strengthen its impact and efficiency.

## 1 Consolidating, Delivering and Advancing the Urban Agenda for the EU

**We, the Ministers, highlight** that the Urban Agenda for the EU has clearly fostered multi-level and multi-stakeholder governance in Europe and has had a positive effect on the cooperation between local and regional authorities, Member States, the European Commission and other EU institutions, and further urban stakeholders. The key achievement of the Urban Agenda for the EU is the opportunity given to local and regional authorities to discuss urban priority themes

with European institutions, national ministries and other partners – jointly identifying possibilities in which to enhance the complementarity and coherence of EU policies affecting urban areas and to strengthen their urban dimension. This is in line with the key role of cities in multi-level policymaking.

The European Commission's assessment of the first years of implementing the Urban Agenda for the EU has also demonstrated many positive results. At the same time, it has indicated the need for improvements to reach the initiative's objectives more profoundly.

**We underline** the importance of the Urban Agenda for the EU as a means to foster the implementation of the United Nations New Urban Agenda and to pursue the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals' urban dimensions.

**We agree** that we need to make the Urban Agenda for the EU more impactful and efficient in the future and to harness the achievements of the process to date. Hereby, the three key pillars laid out in the Pact of Amsterdam – Better Regulation, Better Funding and Better Knowledge (Base and Exchange) – continue to be instrumental.

The assessment of the Urban Agenda for the EU pointed out that resource constraints are an important issue to be addressed. Accordingly, sufficient funding and

effective implementation structures based on multi-level governance are pivotal for a more impactful delivery of the Urban Agenda for the EU.

**We welcome** the European Urban Initiative under Cohesion Policy as an instrument to support the Urban Agenda for the EU and the inter-governmental cooperation on urban matters, and to strengthen integrated and participatory approaches and their sustainability as well as to foster coherence between EU policies, programmes and initiatives in the area of sustainable urban development. The strengthened urban dimension of Cohesion Policy needs to be based on and should contribute to the principles of the New Leipzig Charter, and promote the concept of functional areas where relevant, thus fostering a harmonious and balanced development for Europe, whilst taking into account the specific situation in Member States and regions.

**At the same time, we emphasise** that all stakeholders and governmental levels involved should actively explore all possibilities to allocate resources to the Urban Agenda for the EU, taking into account the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality.

## 2 Maintaining and Reinforcing Multi-Level and Multi-Stakeholder Cooperation

The multi-level and multi-stakeholder approach as well as the unique opportunity, particularly for local and regional authorities, to enter into a dialogue between all relevant levels have been identified as important strengths and achievements of the Urban Agenda for the EU. The same goes for the Thematic Partnership approach and the flexible, 'experimental' nature of the Partnerships. Yet, the lack of clear and transparent processes, requirements and specific objectives, as well as an uneven level of engagement among stakeholders are issues to be addressed.

**We, the Ministers, reaffirm** that multi-level and multi-stakeholder Thematic Partnerships remain the key delivery mode of the Urban Agenda for the EU, among the wider set of actions aimed at improving the urban

dimension of EU policies, as established by the Pact of Amsterdam. Other forms of cooperation in line with the multi-level and multi-stakeholder principles that contribute to sustainable urban development should be considered and further explored.

**We therefore agree** on a more flexible setup of Thematic Partnerships in terms of duration, composition, and outputs within a more targeted, balanced and transparent framework in the future. This implies that concrete goals will determine the Partnerships' cooperation. Additionally, the involvement of cities of all sizes is key to reflect the diversity of European urban areas and the different needs they may have. The selection of partners will follow dedicated calls for Partnerships based on ex-ante assessments, aiming to safeguard a suitable level of partners' thematic and procedural expertise. Adequate resources will ensure Partnerships can achieve their objectives and operate within low-threshold administrative procedures. In order to ensure a higher sector-specific impact, close cooperation with representatives of the relevant European Commission Directorates-General and national ministries should be operational from the start of each Partnership.

**We point out** that it is pivotal to build on the valuable body of work produced by the 14 Thematic Partnerships since 2016 and to continue supporting action implementation. The thematic clustering of Partnerships' actions in order to create synergies can potentially be a very strong tool for the further development of the Urban Agenda for the EU's thematic orientation. Procedurally, too, lessons can be learned from the pilot phase of the Urban Agenda for the EU: stronger transfer of experiences to relevant stakeholders as well as stronger cooperation between Partnerships need to be promoted.

New themes for Thematic Partnerships or comparable multi-level instruments should be in line with and provide input to EU policy priorities and initiatives, especially when these have a clear urban dimension. This applies in particular to the European Green Deal, the European Pillar of Social Rights, the European Digital Strategy, the Recovery Plan for Europe and



in connection with global priorities highlighted in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda.

### 3 Achieving Better Regulation, Better Funding and Policy Coherence

**We, the Ministers, acknowledge** that the Partnerships of the Urban Agenda for the EU have provided useful insights into bottlenecks and challenges related to the implementation of EU policies and legislation. At the same time, the Urban Agenda for the EU assessment has found relatively few actions focused on Better Regulation or Better Funding. Consequently, these streams require a more targeted approach. Their future delivery needs to be intimately linked to the EU policymaking and funding cycles and existing institutions and processes.

**We emphasise** that continuous legal and procedural expertise is key and needs to be available to the Partnerships to ensure effective and timely actions. This expertise is indispensable in order to establish close links to the Better Regulation Agenda, including the Fit for Future Platform.

**We therefore recommend** that the Better Regulation strand of the Urban Agenda for the EU will be linked to the Annual Work Programme and considered, where appropriate, as regards the Rules of Procedure of the Fit for Future Platform. In addition, the future Urban Agenda for the EU and its delivery modes need to continuously have access to legal support, among other services, in order to foster legislative actions and recommendations that directly benefit EU cities and regions.

**We commit** to duly consider, as appropriate, the actions and recommendations emerging from the Urban Agenda for the EU.

### 4 Ensuring Better Knowledge and Stronger Communication

The Urban Agenda for the EU assessment yielded a need for improved internal communication among key actors. For the purpose of more transparency, ownership, and a better flow of information particularly on the implementation of actions, the horizontal and vertical dialogue for urban policy should be strengthened.

**We, the Ministers, highlight** that both elements of the Better Knowledge stream – knowledge base and knowledge exchange – should be pursued with a differentiated and targeted approach. Hereby, the Partnerships should be able to capitalise on existing support structures and to involve relevant partners. With regard to knowledge base, these are in particular the knowledge policy units within the Commission's Directorates-General, the Commission's Joint Research Centre, Eurostat, ESPON, JPI Urban Europe, Horizon Europe, EUKN, and other knowledge programmes and networks. Knowledge exchange as well as capacity and knowledge building should be supported by the Cohesion Policy programmes and initiatives, in particular by the European Urban Initiative and the URBACT programme. In general, the manifold research and innovation activities supporting science-policy cooperation offer a big potential and should be considered in the future Urban Agenda for the EU process. Engaging stakeholders from third countries and within frameworks established by inter-governmental organisations with regard to international cooperation in urban development can additionally be beneficial to dissemination and capitalisation.

**We acknowledge** the need for a stronger strategic alignment between the Territorial Agenda 2030, the urban dimension of Cohesion Policy, national urban policy frameworks, and the Urban Agenda for the EU. At the local and regional level, a wider circle of cities and stakeholders should benefit from the outcomes of the Urban Agenda for the EU.

**We therefore regard** National Contact Points as pivotal to support the relevant capitalisation, communication and dissemination activities. Hereby, the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality need to be safeguarded and the duplication of structures should be avoided.

## 5 Governing the Urban Agenda for the EU with Efficient Decision-Making and Support Structures

**We, the Ministers, confirm** that significant progress has been made in strengthening the urban dimension and the creation of a common framework for urban policy initiatives through the Urban Agenda for the EU. The assessment of the Urban Agenda for the EU clearly demonstrates that its achievements are related to the strengthened cooperation between local and regional authorities, Member States and the European Commission and in close partnership with other relevant European institutions and stakeholders. However, the assessment also indicates that the Urban Agenda for the EU lacks an effective governance mechanism and that the outreach to stakeholders as well as the implementation of the actions require more attention.

**We acknowledge** the key role of Member States in addressing these shortcomings to deliver a more impactful Urban Agenda for the EU in the future.

In the spirit of the Riga Declaration of Ministers towards the Urban Agenda for the EU, **we recognise** the intergovernmental cooperation structures for urban matters as the appropriate platform where all relevant stakeholders can jointly discuss and govern the Urban Agenda for the EU in the future.

The Directors-General for Urban Matters (DGUM) represent the central coordinating and decision-making body of the Urban Agenda for the EU, advised and supported by the Urban Development Group (UDG), as outlined in the Pact of Amsterdam. The DGUM and the UDG will continue to benefit from the preparatory work by the Urban Agenda Technical Preparatory Group (UATPG).

For the future delivery of the Urban Agenda for the EU, the Partnerships will require communication, expertise, management and administrative support, as well as guidance regarding cross-cutting issues and stronger cooperation among each other. Member States and the European Commission will jointly conduct ex-ante assessments, prepare the relevant calls for Partnerships, monitor progress, and capitalise on the experience and results in a transparent manner. At the same time, there is a need to support inter-governmental cooperation on urban matters in line with the Presidency Trio's priorities, thus promoting strategic analysis and synthesis, coherence and continuity within and between Trio programmes, providing support to the DGUM and UDG, and ultimately strengthening urban policies in Member States.

**We therefore agree** that a dedicated and permanent Secretariat for Urban Matters can deliver these tasks in the most coordinated and efficient way, and will therefore work towards the establishment of an adequate structure under the European Urban Initiative. We believe that this will result in an overall stronger cooperation and a greater impact at the urban scale across Europe.

## Conclusions

**We, the Ministers responsible for urban matters, commit** to implement the principles of the New Leipzig Charter and to sustain the continued multi-level governance and partnership approach within the Urban Agenda for the EU. We call upon all our partners to work with us to this end within the scope of their competences and within their responsibilities and capacities. In particular, we:

### CALL ON the Commission:

**a)** to continue playing an active role in the further development and implementation of the Urban Agenda for the EU in line with the strategic principles set out in the New Leipzig Charter and in close cooperation with the Directors-General for Urban Matters, the Urban Development Group and all other stakeholders;

**b)** to continue facilitating the implementation of the Urban Agenda for the EU through the provision of support of the European Urban Initiative, in close cooperation with the Member States and by ensuring the engagement of the relevant Directorates-General in the process;

**c)** to ensure the continuity, coherence and coordination of the Urban Agenda for the EU by supporting, where relevant, the implementation of the set of actions and recommendations emerging from current and future Thematic Partnerships or other multi-level and multi-stakeholder delivery modes established under the Urban Agenda for the EU;

**d)** to continue its efforts of further strengthening its coordination and streamlining of policies affecting urban areas in order to enhance the complementarity of policies and to strengthen their urban dimension, in particular in the areas of Better Regulation, Better Funding and Better Knowledge;

**e)** to align its actions on strengthening the urban dimension of EU policies with the Urban Agenda for the EU, in particular regarding its political priori-

ties, work programme, legislative work, and planned consultations;

**f)** to take into account, where relevant, the results and recommendations of Thematic Partnerships or other multi-level and multi-stakeholder delivery modes established under the Urban Agenda for the EU, after guidance by the Directors-General for Urban Matters, for a possible discussion in relevant Expert Groups when dealing with new and existing EU legislation;

**g)** to continue to explore improved assessments of urban and territorial dimensions, where relevant, as part of impact assessments;

**h)** to report back regularly in the context of the European Urban Initiative on the implementation and results of the Urban Agenda for the EU;

**i)** to ensure the continued contribution of the Urban Agenda for the EU to the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular their urban dimensions.

### CALL ON the Member States:

**a)** to take appropriate steps for and engage relevant bodies at all levels of government in the further development and implementation of the Urban Agenda for the EU in line with the strategic principles set out in the New Leipzig Charter and in line with the respective competences and the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality;

**b)** to support, where relevant, the implementation of the actions and recommendations emerging from the Urban Agenda for the EU to date, as well as by future Thematic Partnerships or other multi-level and multi-stakeholder delivery modes established under the Urban Agenda for the EU;

**c)** to take into account, where relevant, the results and recommendations of Thematic Partnerships or other multi-level and multi-stakeholder delivery modes established under the Urban Agenda for the

EU, after guidance by the Directors-General for Urban Matters, for a possible discussion in relevant Council Working Parties when dealing with new and existing EU legislation;

**d)** to contribute to improving the linkages between national urban policy frameworks and the Urban Agenda for the EU through National Contact Points in order to support the relevant capitalisation, communication and dissemination activities;

**e)** to ensure the continued contribution of the Urban Agenda for the EU to the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular their urban dimensions;

**f)** to promote the mobilisation of high-level support for the Urban Agenda for the EU, in order to drive progress on urban matters in the EU, to communicate methods and results of the Urban Agenda for the EU to a broader audience, and to inspire a strategic and political cross-sectoral agenda for cities and regions.

### ENCOURAGE the local and regional authorities:

**a)** to take an active role in the development and implementation of the Urban Agenda for the EU in line with the strategic principles set out in the New Leipzig Charter and in line with their respective competences and the principle of subsidiarity;

**b)** to capitalise on their knowledge which is essential to the Urban Agenda for the EU, as well as that of European networks representing urban interests such as the Council of European Municipalities and Regions and EUROCITIES in contributing with expertise to the ongoing assessment of the implications at the local level of the EU's legislative and financial framework;

**c)** to continue and reinforce city-to-city collaboration at the European level, including for example through the URBACT programme, to support knowledge sharing, capacity building and implementation, also in relation to the Urban Agenda for the EU's work;

**d)** to cooperate with other local and regional authorities of all sizes, the private sector, local communities, knowledge institutions and civil society in advancing the objectives of the Urban Agenda for the EU.

### INVITE the European Parliament:

**a)** to take into account, where relevant, the results and recommendations of Thematic Partnerships or other multi-level and multi-stakeholder delivery modes established under the Urban Agenda for the EU, after guidance by the Directors-General for Urban Matters, for a possible discussion in relevant Committees when dealing with new and existing EU legislation;

**b)** to establish a continuous link between the Urban Intergroup and the Urban Agenda for the EU process.

### INVITE the European Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee:

**a)** to provide input and support, within their competences, to the further development and implementation of the Urban Agenda for the EU in line with the strategic principles set out in the New Leipzig Charter;

**b)** to contribute to the objectives of Better Regulation, Better Funding and Better Knowledge by way of supporting the Thematic Partnerships or other multi-level and multi-stakeholder delivery modes established under the Urban Agenda for the EU with legal and procedural expertise, and by way of dissemination activities aiming to involve a broader range of stakeholders in the process.

### INVITE the European Investment Bank:

**a)** to contribute to the work of Thematic Partnerships or other multi-level and multi-stakeholder delivery modes established under the Urban Agenda for the EU,

especially with regard to Better Funding and Better Knowledge, with its financial expertise;

**b)** to reflect, where relevant, the strategic principles of the New Leipzig Charter and the objectives of the Urban Agenda for the EU in its lending, grant-loan blending and advisory services approach in the urban context, taking into account the need to support sustainable urban and regional development strategies;

**c)** to develop financial instruments and financing approaches in support of the strategic principles of the New Leipzig Charter, working together with other international financial institutions and promotional banks;

**d)** to work with urban stakeholders to design and implement circular and innovative business models required to achieve climate-neutral, socially sustainable and productive cities.

# Council conclusions on urban and territorial development

as approved by the Council on 14 December 2020

## THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

- 1. Acknowledges** the contribution of the Leipzig Charter on sustainable European Cities of 25 May 2007 in establishing a coherent framework for integrated and sustainable urban development in Europe, fostering national, regional and local development policies;
- 2. Acknowledges** the contribution of the Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020 of 19 May 2011 and its predecessor, the Territorial Agenda of the European Union of 25 May 2007 in strengthening territorial cohesion as stated as an objective of the European Union, fostering a balanced and sustainable development of the European territory and the integration of a territorial dimension within policies at all governance levels;
- 3. Acknowledges** the contribution of the Riga Declaration of 10 June 2015 as a roadmap towards the establishment of the Urban Agenda for the EU;
- 4. Acknowledges** the contribution of the Pact of Amsterdam of 30 May 2016 in establishing the Urban Agenda for the EU, fostering multi-level governance and multi-stakeholder cooperation in urban development, addressing better regulation, better funding and better knowledge at the European scale;
- 5. Recalls** its Conclusions of 24 June 2016 on the Urban Agenda for the EU, in which the Council called on the Commission and the Member States to play an active role in the implementation and facilitation of the Urban Agenda for the EU, engaging relevant key partners, including representatives of urban and regional authorities;
- 6. Recalls** the European Parliament resolution of 3 July 2018 on the role of the city in the institutional framework of the Union, in which the European Parliament underlined the significance of the Leipzig Charter, the Urban Agenda for the EU and the key role of cities in preparing, designing, financing and implementing key Union policies;
- 7. Refers** to the Bucharest Declaration of 14 June 2019, in which the Ministers responsible for urban matters agreed to support the implementation and continuation of the Urban Agenda for the EU in line with a New Leipzig Charter in order to foster a coherent policy framework for urban development, taking into account the subsidiarity principle and the need for a better alignment of the Territorial Agenda of the EU with the Urban Agenda for the EU;
- 8. Welcomes** the report to the Council on the Urban Agenda for the EU by the European Commission of November 2017 and its assessment study of the Urban Agenda for the EU of November 2019;
- 9. Welcomes** the opinions of the European Committee of the Regions on the New Leipzig Charter and, on Equivalent standards of living of 14 October 2020 as well as on the renewed Territorial Agenda of 8 October 2019;
- 10. Welcomes** the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on the Territorial Agenda of the EU, the Leipzig Charter and the Urban Agenda for the EU of 18 September 2020;
- 11. Underlines** the importance of pursuing the common good using the transformative power of cities. This includes general welfare, reliable public services of general interest as well as reducing and preventing new forms of social, economic, environmental and territorial inequalities, especially between urban and rural areas;
- 12. Underlines** the relevance of interlinking urban, rural and other territorial dimensions following the place-based approach as an overarching principle for all places and policies and, in line with the principle of subsidiarity and responsibilities;



**13. Highlights** the role of Cohesion Policy to implement integrated and sustainable urban development strategies and projects as well as integrated territorial development to achieve convergence and territorial cohesion between places and across spatial levels;

**14. Welcomes** the New Leipzig Charter with its key principles of good urban governance serving as a comprehensive strategic framework for integrated, resilient and sustainable urban development aiming to strengthen the transformative power of cities for the common good;

**15. Welcomes** the Document “Implementing the New Leipzig Charter through multi-level governance: Next steps for the Urban Agenda for the EU” as a further development of the Urban Agenda for the EU, advancing multi-level governance and multi-stakeholder cooperation in urban development, pursuing the objectives of the New Leipzig Charter;

**16. Welcomes** the Territorial Agenda 2030 as an action-oriented policy framework to promote territorial cohesion in Europe and provide strategic orientation to strengthen the territorial dimension within all policies and at all levels of government, including across borders, aiming at a sustainable future for all territories and people;

## URBAN DIMENSION

**17. Calls** on the Commission:

**a)** to continue playing – within its responsibilities and capacities – an active role in the further development and implementation of the Urban Agenda for the EU in line with the strategic principles set out in the New Leipzig Charter;

**b)** to continue facilitating – within its responsibilities and capacities – the implementation of the Urban Agenda for the EU through the provision of support by the European Urban Initiative, in close cooperation with the Member States and by ensuring the engagement of the relevant Directorates-General in the process;

**c)** to ensure – within its responsibilities and capacities – the continuity, coherence and coordination of the Urban Agenda for the EU by supporting, where

relevant, the implementation of the set of actions and recommendations emerging from current and future Thematic Partnerships or other multi-level and multi-stakeholder delivery modes established under the Urban Agenda for the EU;

**d)** to align – within its responsibilities and capacities – its actions on strengthening the urban dimension of EU policies with the Urban Agenda for the EU, in particular regarding its political priorities, work programme and legislative work;

**e)** to report back regularly in the context of the European Urban Initiative on the implementation and results of the Urban Agenda;

**18. Calls on the Member States:**

**a)** to foster – within their responsibilities and capacities – the establishment and continuation of national or regional urban policies following the guidelines of the New Leipzig Charter aiming for the common good and strengthening integrated, resilient and sustainable urban development;

**b)** to take the appropriate steps – within their responsibilities and capacities – to implement and develop further the Urban Agenda for the EU in line with the strategic principles set out in the New Leipzig Charter;

**c)** to ensure – within their responsibilities and capacities – that cities are capable to act in order to respond to current and future challenges;

**d)** to support, where relevant, the implementation of the actions and recommendations emerging from current and future Thematic Partnerships or other multi-level and multi-stakeholder delivery modes established under the Urban Agenda for the EU;

**19. Encourages** local and regional authorities:

**a)** to take the appropriate steps to put into practice the objectives and implement the principles of the New Leipzig Charter in line with their respective competences and the principle of subsidiarity;

**b)** to take the appropriate steps to implement and develop further the Urban Agenda for the EU in line with the strategic principles set out in the New Leipzig Charter and, in line with their respective competences and the principle of subsidiarity;

**c)** to cooperate with other local and regional authorities of all sizes, the private sector, local communities, knowledge institutions, social partners and civil

society in advancing the objectives of the Urban Agenda for the EU;

**20. Invites** the European Parliament:

**a)** to take into account, where relevant, the results and recommendations of Thematic Partnerships or other multi-level and multi-stakeholder delivery modes established under the Urban Agenda for the EU when discussing relevant new and existing EU legislation;

**b)** to establish a continuous link between the Urban Intergroup and the Urban Agenda for the EU process;

**21. Invites** the European Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee:

**a)** to provide input and support, within their competences, to the further development and implementation of the Urban Agenda for the EU in line with the strategic principles set out in the New Leipzig Charter, contributing to the objectives of the Urban Agenda for the EU;

**22. Invites** the European Investment Bank:

**a)** to contribute to the work of Thematic Partnerships or other multi-level and multi-stakeholder delivery modes established under the Urban Agenda for the EU;

**b)** to reflect, as appropriate, the strategic principles of the New Leipzig Charter and the objectives of the Urban Agenda for the EU in its lending, grant-loan blending and advisory services approach in the urban context, taking into account the need to support sustainable urban and regional development strategies;

## TERRITORIAL DIMENSION

**23. Calls** on the Commission:

**a)** to contribute to the priorities of the Territorial Agenda 2030 ('Territorial Agenda') and further strengthen its efforts to promote territorial cohesion in Europe, the territorial dimension in EU policies, and to coordinate the relevant sector policies;

**b)** to further promote integrated territorial development and the uptake of relevant tools and instruments through Cohesion Policy and other relevant EU policies;

**c)** to facilitate and promote – within its responsibilities and capacities – the implementation of the Territorial Agenda and its pilot actions;

**24. Calls** on the Member States:

**a)** to promote and strengthen cooperation on the priorities of the Territorial Agenda at the European level and work towards territorial cohesion by engaging relevant stakeholders in all sector policies and at all levels of government;

**b)** to take into account the priorities of the Territorial Agenda in regional strategic, spatial and territorial planning processes and documents;

**c)** to put the priorities of the Territorial Agenda into action and come forward with proposals for pilot actions to perpetuate the implementation process, as appropriate;

**25. Encourages** local and regional authorities:

**a)** to engage relevant stakeholders and apply the Territorial Agenda by considering its priorities in their spatial planning and overarching development strategies and policies as well as to come forward with proposals for new pilot actions;

**26. Incites** the European Parliament:

**a)** to consider the priorities of the Territorial Agenda in EU legislative processes;

**27. Invites** the European Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee:

**a)** to contribute to the implementation of the Territorial Agenda by encouraging their members and local and regional authorities in Europe to apply and promote its priorities, strengthening territorial tools like ITI or CLLD and integrated territorial development through its consultative work;

**28. Invites the European Investment Bank:**

**a)** to contribute to the pilot actions, as appropriate, in particular to support the development of better funding approaches in the territorial context.

**b)** to reflect, as appropriate, the priorities of the Territorial Agenda in its lending, grant-loan blending and advisory services approach, taking into account the need to support sustainable territorial development.



The adoption of the New Leipzig Charter was preceded by a broad process. Between 2018 and 2020, the document was jointly developed and reconciled on German and European level. Involved stakeholders were municipalities, federal states, ministries, umbrella associations, urban development experts, business, science, Member States, the EU Commission and EU institutions, as well as Europe-wide city associations.

This publication presents comprehensively the development process and its final results.

