

Leipzig Charter

Unleashing the transformative power of cities for the common good

A Preamble

The original Leipzig Charter has inspired urban policymakers in Europe and beyond. The message to promote integrated urban development is as valid as in 2007. The political framework is however different. Today, global and local are more intertwined than ever before. Global challenges, such as the climate crisis, resource scarcity, migration flows, demographic change, digitalisation and rapidly changing economies, have a direct impact on towns and cities throughout Europe and may lead to conflict and inequalities in our societies.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sustainable Development Goals, the New Urban Agenda and the Paris Agreement emphasise that a systemic change in the way we live is needed. Europe has a strong responsibility to make the world a better place and the Leipzig Charter provides an urban policy framework for a sustainable future. Many cities already take a leading role in the transformation towards green, just and productive societies. This requires leadership and good urban governance. The Leipzig Charter provides the main principles leading to such a sustainable future.

We, the Ministers responsible for urban matters, agree that the transformative power of cities needs the full support from all governmental levels and from all key actors, both governmental and non-governmental. Cities require an effective multi-level policy framework to benefit from the opportunities offered by the new economy based on digitalisation, renewable energy and sustainable mobility. They also need our support to prevent risks leading to new forms of social, economic and environmental inequalities. No city should be left behind in making Europe the first carbon-free continent in the world. We acknowledge that this ambition should be based upon the pursuit of the common good to safeguard the liveability of all European towns and cities, and their functional areas.

We agree that the 2020 Leipzig Charter provides a valuable framework to realise the urban transformation through integrated urban development. We acknowledge that the Urban Agenda for the EU is a pivotal tool to implement the Leipzig Charter principles and to provide an urban-friendly EU policy framework. We also acknowledge the objectives of the Territorial Agenda, based on a shared understanding of the key principles, such as an integrated, multi-level, and place-based approach.

B The transformative power of European Cities

Europe is characterised by a variety of small, medium-sized and large cities. As part of a polycentric urban system, they form functional areas with varying potentials and challenges. European cities are more than places of densely arranged built structures. They are unique, historically grown, and partly of outstanding cultural value. They shape Europe's urban heritage and the identity of its citizens.

Cultural and political traditions have constituted the basis for cities as places of democratic rights and values. Cities are places of pluralism, creativity and solidarity. They are the laboratories for new forms of problem-solving and the test fields for the society of tomorrow.

High-quality, open and safe public spaces function as vibrant urban marketplaces, allowing citizens to interact, to exchange and to integrate. Consequently, good urban planning and design have to be reinforced to achieve compact, socially and economically mixed cities with well-developed infrastructures and high-quality services. A holistic understanding of *Baukultur* as every human activity shaping the built environment and being committed to fostering social cohesion, environmental sustainability and the health and well-being of all, is essential.

/ Three dimensions of European cities

We, the Ministers, acknowledge three dimensions of the transformative power of cities: the **green** city, the **just** city and the **productive city**. Combined, these three dimensions contribute to building resilient cities allowing them to deal with upcoming social, economic, and ecological challenges.

Digitalisation affects all three dimensions and can enhance sustainable urban development as a comprehensive cross-cutting dimension. Digital technologies allow cities to contribute to the overall energy-efficiency goals and climate-neutral mobility. Environmentally and socially viable network systems, carried by sustainable business models, drive the local economy. New forms of digital production and e-commerce reshape the inner-urban functionality of city centres. Digital forms of communication contribute to health care and education. Digitalisation enables new forms of democratic participation and co-creation.

— The green city

The transformative power of cities can contribute to containing global warming, to regenerating endangered ecosystems and to promoting the use of renewable resources. The transformation requires investments in comprehensive ecological systems and a fundamental change in citizens' behaviour.

Carbon-neutral buildings and the use of climate-neutral energy supplies will contribute to dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This requires climate friendly retrofitting of the existing housing stock and infrastructures and the use of nature-based solutions allowing high

quality green and blue infrastructure to combat heat islands and rainfall extremes. Climate adaptation is a core element of the urban transformation.

Urban transport and mobility systems should be efficient, low-carbon and multi-modal. To reduce transport and mobility needs, compact, dense and polycentric settlement structures are needed. All active and low-carbon forms of mobility should be promoted, and public transport should be accessible and attractive for all.

Urban nature and urban ecosystems are a precondition for biodiversity and should be protected. Sustainable use of land can contribute to combatting urban sprawl and reducing land take.

— **The just city**

To promote the integration of all social and ethnic groups and generations, socially balanced and mixed urban neighbourhoods should be stable and safe. A high quality of life entails that all citizens have access to social services, health care, culture and mobility, irrespective of their gender, age and socioeconomic position. A just city allows all citizens to fully participate in society. Housing should meet the needs of heterogeneous groups in society, including an ageing population, starters and young families.

All citizens should be allowed to raise their education and skill levels. This includes affordable and accessible high-quality pre-school and school education, qualification and training for young people, as well as lifelong learning opportunities, in particular in the field of digitalisation.

Urban areas with a high percentage of migrants need support to promote integration into society by offering language courses, education and skills.

— **The productive city**

European cities need a strong economic base to add value to products and services, to offer jobs to their citizens, and to invest in sustainable urban development. The nature of such a base is changing. More and more cities prepare for a service-oriented, carbon-free, new economy, built on the knowledge society and cultural industries. In this new economy too, cities need to be attractive, innovative and competitive business locations, as development opportunities strongly depend on a diversified economy, skilled workforce, and social, technical and logistical infrastructures. Urban planning will integrate traditional and new industries, and new and old commerce and services.

New businesses, offering small-scale manufacturing, urban agriculture products, based on circularity and renewable resources, can re-integrate production in cities and urban areas, creating mixed-used neighbourhoods. The opportunities for place-based, regional and circular

production and retail chains deserve to be promoted. The number and the variety of shops in many European city centres has changed as a result of ecommerce.

Digitalisation in logistics can help to safeguard the vitality of neighbourhoods. The transformation of inner-urban spaces into attractive multifunctional areas provides new opportunities for urban development when urban spaces are used for living, working and recreating, when manufacturing, service provision, creative and knowledge-based activities go in pair with hospitality and leisure.

C Principles of good urban governance

The key working principles from the 2007 Leipzig Charter are still valid but need to be reformulated in view of today's global challenges. We, the Ministers, acknowledge that the transformation of cities and regions to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals will only be successful if both governmental and non-governmental actors at all levels and sectors agree on the following principles.

— **Integrated approach**

Integrated urban development is an approach based on the coordination of all areas of urban policy: spatial, sectoral and temporal. It relies on the simultaneous and fair consideration of the concerns and interests relevant to urban development. The involvement of economic actors, stakeholders and the general public is essential. Implementing concepts of an integrated approach can pool and balance different, partly conflicting, interests and mutual effects of different interventions. The need to balance the three city dimensions – green, just and productive – shows that a thematic and organisational integrated approach is indispensable.

— **Multi-level governance**

Every governmental level – local, regional, national and European – has its specific responsibility for the future of our cities, based on principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. An effective multi-level governance framework relies on the cooperation between sectoral policy areas. Complex challenges must be tackled jointly across 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 a key condition for good urban governance.

— **Place-based approach**

Urban policy and urban funding instrument should be based on a sound analysis of the specific local situation, opportunities, and needs of inhabitants and other stakeholders. Today, urban dwellers interact at different spatial scales at the same time: in neighbourhoods, in the city as a whole and at the city-regional level in functional areas. Solutions for future urban development need to take into account three spatial levels, namely:

The neighbourhood

Urban challenges culminate at neighbourhood level. Targeted actions can lead to cost-savings and offer opportunities for testing innovative urban projects. Some neighbourhoods are arrival areas for migrants, some face social tensions and high shares of poverty. Other neighbourhoods are characterised by high socio-economic dynamics, mobility and a shortage of affordable housing. Neighbourhoods with a multitude of complex challenges need specific policy attention and targeted funding.

The administrative city

At the level of the city within its administrative boundaries, citizens meet and participate in joint activities. The city level requires guidelines for defining strategic-political decisions for overarching objectives and the coordination of responsible departments. These guidelines are important to achieve strategic coordination of different small-scale developments within neighbourhoods and polycentric urban sub-centres. They must steer comprehensive infrastructure planning.

Functional areas

Citizens act across administrative boundaries; they live and work in functional areas. Towns and cities within these areas need to cooperate and coordinate their policies with regard to housing, business location, mobility, and services and energy supply. Urban and rural settlements need each other and benefit from each other. Particular consideration must be given to small and medium-sized cities, as they play an important role in ensuring services and equal living conditions to citizens in the surrounding rural areas.

— Participation and co-creation

Multi-level governance cannot be seen without the participation of key stakeholders, both governmental and non-governmental. Integrated urban development policy means simultaneous and fair consideration of the concerns and interests which are relevant to urban development. Public participation in urban development processes should involve all urban actors, also to strengthen and foster the understanding of democracy. New forms of participation, including co-creation and co-design in cooperation with inhabitants, civil society networks, community organisations and private enterprises, should be encouraged to experiment with managing conflicting interests, shared responsibilities, reshaping and maintaining urban spaces.

— Urban policy for the common good

The transformative power of cities can only succeed when aimed at the common good. To safeguard the sustainability of communities, including the weakest and the most vulnerable groups in society, services and infrastructures have to be inclusive, affordable and accessible. Therefore, capabilities and capacities of all urban stakeholders should be empowered.

Public authorities should act for public welfare and provide goods and services for the common good. This regards services such as health care, education, water and energy supply, waste management, public transport, digital networks, information systems, and the management of public spaces and green infrastructures.

D Empowering cities to transform

/ D.1 Strengthening Urban Governance to assure public interest objectives

City administrations are closest to the citizens and in touch with their daily life and needs. Cities are responsible for the delivery of public services that enable citizens to assume their fundamental rights and to participate in society. Cities are also responsible for balancing different, sometimes conflictive aspects and interests. This gives municipalities a crucial role in guaranteeing and representing the overall public interest.

To shape their own future, to dynamically respond to rapidly changing conditions, and to provide a high quality of life, cities need to be able to act. Therefore, they need support to find local solutions to global challenges. Cities need to be empowered to act. This means they need:

- ...a **multi-level governance system** offering legal framework conditions at all administrative and political levels;
- ...**adequate resources** generated through municipal taxes and fees, and allocations from the national and regional level;
- ...**appropriately skilled employees**, who are well-trained and qualified, in order to keep up with future challenges as well as technological and social trends.

We, the ministers responsible for urban matters, stress that an active public urban governance aiming for the common good is necessary to transform all cities into ecologically resilient, affordable, accessible, prosperous and liveable urban systems. Politicians and administrations at all levels are therefore invited to acknowledge the financial and legal framework conditions, given the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, to support the following objectives of transformative urban development:

... active urban spatial and settlement policy

Sustainable, transparent and fair land use and settlement policy is a key instrument for local authorities to promote urban development for the common good. Therefore, we need:

- Compact settlement structures with short distances between housing, working, leisure and supply, in order to minimise traffic and mobility needs within and between cities and to improve air quality.

- Reduced transformation of land into transport and settlement areas in order to reduce soil sealing to enable land use in favour of green infrastructures, to increase urban biodiversity and to allow a climate-neutral and environmentally sound urban development.
- Land-settlement instruments to support sufficiently new and affordable housing to ensure vibrant and socially mixed neighbourhoods and to avoid speculative land policy.
- Land policies to strengthen the local and regional economy to allow for a low-emission economy in inner urban areas. Mixed-use urban spaces should promote new production forms and new economic activities in the green, creative service-based economy.
- Public spaces that are safe, well designed, and accessible.

Space is limited in many cities, which often leads to conflicting interests. Cities should use public land use policies to mediate between contradicting requirements, based on integrated urban planning and management and sustainable public procurement.

... that local authorities are able to shape the urban digital transformation

Today, digitalisation of the city and processing of massive, rapidly growing data and information flows are key elements of integrated urban development, which is closely linked to innovative and smart technologies. Cities should however be able to manage digital transformation in pursuit of the common good. The following framework conditions will allow cities to do so:

- Integrated smart city strategies, including technical impact assessments, have to be defined to use digital technologies for the public good;
- Cities should have access to data relevant to their public tasks and should be able to manage the protection, security, analysis and interpretation of these data;
- Cities should be able to ensure the resilience and inclusiveness of networked infrastructures and public services. A comprehensive and powerful public data infrastructure should secure access to information for all citizens and prevent private data monopolies.
- Social and spatial segregation, and a deepening of the digital divide should be tackled;
- Digital participation and digital skills should be promoted, and digital technologies to promote co-creation, co-decision and transparency should be promoted.

... active public urban governance for services and infrastructure

For cities, access and steerability of infrastructure and public services is a precondition to contribute to the objectives of the just city. Therefore...

- All citizens need to have access to high-quality goods and services for the common good;
- Cities need to foster social integration and solidarity and to assure environmental justice;
- All cities and all areas, including towns and cities in shrinking and remote areas, should have equal access to social services, mobility and energy infrastructure.

/ D.2 Ensuring Adequate Policies and Funding for Cities

City administrations should not be left alone with these tasks. All stakeholders have to take their responsibility to capacitate cities. Inter-municipal cooperation and multi-level governance frameworks are indispensable, based on principles of subsidiarity and proportionality.

_ **Powerful national urban policy framework and funding**

The Leipzig Charter of 2007 and the New Urban Agenda stated that national urban policies should be strengthened to empower cities. National urban policies can enable the exchange of experiences and knowledge between municipalities and other stakeholders, acting as a platform for dialogue.

National and regional funding programmes are an important instrument in this regard – not only for providing resources, but also to offer incentives to strengthen integrated urban development. National and regional regulation should support the implementation of integrated approaches. Regulations should be flexible and open for innovation, and cities should be able to experiment.

_ **Urban-proof EU regulation and funding instruments**

The Urban Agenda for the EU, launched in 2016 under the Pact of Amsterdam, started a pivotal multi-level governance process to enhance the position of cities in legislation and policymaking. The three overall objectives of better regulation, better funding and better knowledge were to contribute to less bureaucracy at EU-level, more efficient funding instruments and better knowledge (exchange). Urban impact assessments were proposed to develop an urban-friendly policy framework at the European level in full compliance with the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. The Urban Agenda for the EU is a major operational tool to support European cities and functional areas of all sizes to implement the principles and objectives of the Leipzig Charter.

Funding and financial instruments provided by European institutions play a crucial role for urban policy in European cities and consequently need to have a strong urban dimension. The European Structural and Investment Funds are a key instrument to implement integrated and place-based approaches for local and regional urban projects. These funding instruments should remain accessible for cities of all sizes and for functional areas to stimulate innovative approaches in urban development, to promote socioeconomic and territorial cohesion, and to support polycentric settlement structures. EU-funded urban development projects bring the EU closer to the citizens by enhancing equal chances and living conditions for all European citizens.

The vertical and horizontal exchange of knowledge and expertise among all multi-level governance stakeholders should be continued and strengthened. They allow learning from good practices, innovative approaches and key working principles and instruments. The Urban Agenda for the EU offers an exchange platform for European, national, regional and local urban stakeholders. However, the exchange between European programmes such as URBACT, the Urban Innovative Actions, the Urban Development Network, the European Structural and Investment Funds, and the Urban Agenda for the EU would be more effective when better coordinated.