

1 2 **Implementing the New Leipzig Charter** 3 **Through Multi-Level Governance:** 4 **Next Steps for the Urban Agenda for the EU**

5 6 **I. The Continued Need for Multi-Level Urban Governance in Europe**

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

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

16 17 **1. Consolidating, Delivering and Advancing the Urban Agenda for the EU**

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19 **We, the Ministers, highlight** that the Urban Agenda for the EU has clearly fostered multi-level and multi-
20 stakeholder governance in Europe and has had a positive effect on the cooperation between local and
21 regional authorities, Member States, the European Commission and other EU institutions, and further
22 urban stakeholders. The key achievement of the Urban Agenda for the EU is the opportunity given to
23 local and regional authorities to discuss urban priority themes with European institutions, national
24 ministries and other partners – jointly identifying possibilities in which to enhance the complementarity
25 and coherence of EU policies affecting urban areas and to strengthen their urban dimension. This is in line
26 with the key role of cities in multi-level policymaking.

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

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

35
36 **We agree** that we need to make the Urban Agenda for the EU more impactful and efficient in the future
37 and to harness the achievements of the process to date. Hereby, the three key pillars laid out in the Pact

38 of Amsterdam – Better Regulation, Better Funding and Better Knowledge (Base and Exchange) –
39 continue to be instrumental.

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41 Resource constraints have been mentioned as an important issue to address in the Urban Agenda for the
42 EU's assessment. Accordingly, sufficient funding and effective implementation structures based on multi-
43 level governance are pivotal for a more impactful delivery of the Urban Agenda for the EU.

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

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

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58 ***2. Maintaining and Reinforcing Multi-Level and Multi-Stakeholder Cooperation***

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

66
67 **We, the Ministers, reaffirm** that multi-level and multi-stakeholder Thematic Partnerships remain the key
68 delivery mode of the Urban Agenda for the EU, among the wider set of actions aimed at improving the
69 urban dimension of EU policies, as established by the Pact of Amsterdam. Other forms of cooperation in
70 line with the multi-level and multi-stakeholder principles that contribute to sustainable urban
71 development should be considered.

72
73 **We therefore agree on** a more flexible setup of Thematic Partnerships in terms of duration, composition,
74 and outputs within a more targeted, balanced and transparent framework in the future. This implies that
75 concrete goals will determine the Partnerships' cooperation. Additionally, the involvement of cities of all
76 sizes is key to reflect the diversity of European urban areas and the different needs they may have. The
77 selection of partners will follow dedicated calls for Partnerships based on ex-ante assessments, aiming to
78 safeguard a suitable level of partners' thematic and procedural expertise. Adequate resources will ensure

79 Partnerships can achieve their objectives and operate within low-threshold administrative procedures. In
80 order to ensure a higher sector-specific impact, close cooperation with representatives of the relevant
81 European Commission Directorates-General and national ministries should be operational from the start
82 of each Partnership.

83
84 **We point out** that it is pivotal to build on the valuable body of work produced by the 14 Thematic
85 Partnerships since 2016 and to continue supporting action implementation. The thematic clustering of
86 Partnerships' actions in order to create synergies can potentially be a very strong tool for the further
87 development of the Urban Agenda for the EU's thematic orientation. Procedurally, too, lessons can be
88 learned from the pilot phase of the Urban Agenda for the EU: stronger transfer of experiences to relevant
89 stakeholders as well as stronger cooperation between Partnerships need to be promoted.

90
91 New themes for Thematic Partnerships or comparable multi-level instruments should be in line with and
92 provide input to EU policy priorities and initiatives, especially when these have a clear urban dimension.
93 This applies in particular to the European Green Deal, the European Pillar of Social Rights, the European
94 Digital Strategy, and the Recovery Plan for Europe and in connection with global priorities highlighted in
95 the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda.

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98 ***3. Achieving Better Regulation, Better Funding and Policy Coherence***

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

106
107 **We emphasise** that structural legal and procedural expertise is key and needs to be available to the
108 Partnerships to ensure effective and timely actions. This expertise is indispensable in order to establish
109 close links to the Better Regulation Agenda, including the Fit for Future Platform.

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111 **We therefore recommend** that the Better Regulation strand of the Urban Agenda for the EU will be
112 linked to the Annual Work Programme and considered, where appropriate, as regards the Rules of
113 Procedure of the Fit for Future Platform. In addition, the future Urban Agenda for the EU should provide
114 dedicated and specialised legal support to the Thematic Partnerships – and other multi-level governance
115 instruments under its umbrella – in order to foster legislative actions and recommendations that directly
116 benefit EU cities and regions.

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

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122 ***4. Ensuring Better Knowledge and Stronger Communication***

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

128

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

141

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

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147 **We therefore regard** communication hubs as pivotal to support the relevant capitalisation,
148 communication and dissemination activities. This can, for example, be achieved through the
149 establishment of National Contact Points. Hereby, the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality need
150 to be safeguarded and the duplication of structures should be avoided.

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153 ***5. Governing the Urban Agenda for the EU with Efficient Decision-Making and Support Structures***

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155 **We, the Ministers, confirm** that significant progress has been made in strengthening the urban
156 dimension and the creation of a common framework for urban policy initiatives through the Urban
157 Agenda for the EU. The assessment of the Urban Agenda for the EU clearly demonstrates that its
158 achievements are related to the strengthened cooperation between local and regional authorities,
159 Member States and the European Commission and in close partnership with other relevant European
160 institutions and stakeholders. However, the assessment also indicates that the Urban Agenda for the EU

161 lacks an effective governance mechanism and that the outreach to stakeholders as well as the
162 implementation of the actions require more attention.

163
164 **We acknowledge** the key role of Member States in addressing these shortcomings to deliver a more
165 impactful Urban Agenda for the EU in the future.

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

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

175
176 For the future delivery of the Urban Agenda for the EU, the Partnerships will require communication,
177 expertise, management and administrative support, as well as guidance regarding cross-cutting issues
178 and stronger cooperation among each other. Member States and the European Commission will jointly
179 conduct ex-ante assessments, prepare the relevant calls for Partnerships, monitor progress, and
180 capitalise on the experience and results in a transparent manner. At the same time, there is a need to
181 support inter-governmental cooperation on urban matters in line with the Presidency Trio's priorities,
182 thus promoting strategic analysis and synthesis, coherence and continuity within and between Trio
183 programmes, providing support to the DGUM and UDG, and ultimately strengthening urban policies in
184 Member States.

185
186 **We therefore agree** that a dedicated and permanent support structure can deliver these tasks in the most
187 coordinated and efficient way, and will therefore work towards the establishment of a Secretariat under
188 the European Urban Initiative. We believe that this will result in an overall stronger cooperation and a
189 greater impact at the urban scale across Europe.

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192 ***II. Conclusions***

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

198
199 CALL ON the Commission:
200 a) to continue playing an active role in the further development and implementation of the Urban
201 Agenda for the EU in line with the strategic principles set out in the New Leipzig Charter and in

- 202 close cooperation with the Directors-General for Urban Matters, the Urban Development Group
203 and all other stakeholders;
- 204 b) to continue facilitating the implementation of the Urban Agenda for the EU through the provision
205 of support of the European Urban Initiative, in close cooperation with the Member States and
206 through the engagement of the relevant Directorates-General in the process;
- 207 c) to ensure the continuity, coherence and coordination of the Urban Agenda for the EU by
208 supporting, where relevant, the implementation of the set of actions and recommendations
209 emerging from the Urban Agenda for the EU to date, as well as by future Thematic Partnerships
210 or other multi-level and multi-stakeholder delivery modes established under the Urban Agenda
211 for the EU;
- 212 d) to continue its efforts of further strengthening its coordination and streamlining of policies
213 affecting urban areas in order to enhance the complementarity of policies and to strengthen their
214 urban dimension, in particular in the areas of Better Regulation, Better Funding and Better
215 Knowledge;
- 216 e) to align its actions on strengthening the urban dimension of EU policies to the Urban Agenda for
217 the EU, in particular regarding its political priorities, work programme, legislative work, and
218 planned consultations;
- 219 f) to take into account, where relevant, the results and recommendations of Thematic Partnerships
220 or other multi-level and multi-stakeholder delivery modes established under the Urban Agenda
221 for the EU, after guidance by the Directors-General for Urban Matters, for possible discussion in
222 relevant Expert Groups when dealing with new and existing EU legislation;
- 223 g) to continue to explore improved assessments of urban and territorial dimensions, where relevant,
224 as part of impact assessments;
- 225 h) to report back regularly to the Directors-General for Urban Matters, on the implementation and
226 results of the Urban Agenda for the EU;
- 227 i) to ensure the continued contribution of the Urban Agenda for the EU to the implementation of
228 the New Urban Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular their urban
229 dimensions.

- 230
- 231 CALL ON the Member States:
- 232 a) to take appropriate steps for and engage relevant bodies at all levels of government in the further
233 development and implementation of the Urban Agenda for the EU in line with the strategic
234 principles set out in the New Leipzig Charter and in line with the respective competences and the
235 principle of subsidiarity and proportionality;
- 236 b) to support, where relevant, the implementation of the actions and recommendations emerging
237 from the Urban Agenda for the EU to date, as well as by future Thematic Partnerships or other
238 multi-level and multi-stakeholder delivery modes established under the Urban Agenda for the
239 EU;
- 240 c) to take into account, where relevant, the results and recommendations of Thematic Partnerships
241 or other multi-level and multi-stakeholder delivery modes established under the Urban Agenda
242 for the EU, after guidance by the Directors-General for Urban Matters, for possible discussion in
243 relevant Council Working Parties when dealing with new and existing EU legislation;

- 244 d) to contribute to improving the linkages between national urban policy frameworks and the Urban
245 Agenda for the EU, inter alia through communication hubs to support the relevant capitalisation,
246 communication and dissemination activities;
- 247 e) to ensure the continued contribution of the Urban Agenda for the EU to the implementation of
248 the New Urban Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular their urban
249 dimensions;
- 250 f) to promote the mobilisation of high-level support for the Urban Agenda for the EU, and to
251 consider organising, at least once a year, an Urban High-Level Meeting, in order to drive progress
252 on urban matters in the EU, including the implementation of the principles of the New Leipzig
253 Charter, and to inspire a strategic and political cross-sectoral agenda for cities and regions in
254 Europe.

- 255
- 256 ENCOURAGE the local and regional authorities:
- 257 a) to take an active role in the development and implementation of the Urban Agenda for the EU in
258 line with the strategic principles set out in the New Leipzig Charter and in line with their respective
259 competences and the principle of subsidiarity;
- 260 b) to capitalise on their knowledge which is essential to the Urban Agenda for the EU, as well as that
261 of European networks representing urban interests such as the Council of European
262 Municipalities and Regions and EUROCITIES in contributing with expertise to the ongoing
263 assessment of the implications at local level of EU's legislative and financial framework;
- 264 c) to continue and reinforce city-to-city collaboration at European level, including for example
265 through the URBACT programme, to support knowledge sharing, capacity building and
266 implementation, also in relation to the Urban Agenda for the EU's work;
- 267 d) to cooperate with other local and regional authorities of all sizes, the private sector, local
268 communities, knowledge institutions and civil society in advancing the objectives of the Urban
269 Agenda for the EU.

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- 271 INVITE the European Parliament:
- 272 a) to take into account, where relevant, the results and recommendations of Thematic Partnerships
273 or other multi-level and multi-stakeholder delivery modes established under the Urban Agenda
274 for the EU, after guidance by the Directors-General for Urban Matters, for possible discussion in
275 relevant Committees when dealing with new and existing EU legislation;
- 276 b) to establish a continuous link between the Urban Intergroup and the Urban Agenda for the EU
277 process.

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- 279 INVITE the European Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee:
- 280 a) to provide input and support, within their competences, to the further development and
281 implementation of the Urban Agenda for the EU in line with the strategic principles set out in the
282 New Leipzig Charter;
- 283 b) to contribute to the objectives of Better Regulation, Better Funding and Better Knowledge by
284 way of supporting the Thematic Partnerships or other multi-level and multi-stakeholder delivery
285 modes established under the Urban Agenda for the EU with legal and procedural expertise, and

286 by way of dissemination activities aiming to involve a broader range of stakeholders in the
287 process.
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289 INVITE the European Investment Bank:

- 290 a) to contribute to the work of Thematic Partnerships or other multi-level and multi-stakeholder
291 delivery modes established under the Urban Agenda for the EU, especially with regard to Better
292 Funding and Better Knowledge, with its financial expertise;
- 293 b) to reflect, where relevant, the strategic principles of the New Leipzig Charter and the objectives
294 of the Urban Agenda for the EU in its lending, grant-loan blending and advisory services approach
295 in the urban context taking into account the need to support sustainable urban and regional
296 development strategies;
- 297 c) to develop financial instruments and financing approaches in support of the strategic principles
298 of the New Leipzig Charter, working together with other international financial institutions and
299 promotional banks;
- 300 d) to work with urban stakeholders to design and implement circular and innovative business
301 models required to achieve climate-neutral, socially sustainable and productive cities.

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