

# The New Leipzig Charter

## The transformative power of cities for the common good

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### 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 original Leipzig Charter 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.

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

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

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

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## **B** The transformative power of European Cities

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58 Europe has a wide variety of small, medium-sized and large cities. As part of a polycentric urban  
59 system, these are functional areas with varying potentials and challenges. European cities are more  
60 than places of densely arranged built structures, they also enable cultural, social, ecologic and  
61 economic interaction. Most cities are unique, historically grown centres of outstanding cultural value  
62 shaping Europe's urban heritage and the identity of its citizens. Thus, culture is at the core of any  
63 sustainable urban development, including the preservation and development of the built and other  
64 cultural heritage.

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

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

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

## 86 / Three spatial levels of European cities

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88 Today, citizens often interact at different spatial scales in their everyday life. Therefore, measures  
89 that focus on local developments should be designed at the appropriate spatial scale. In addition to  
90 formal local policies, specific and informal measures need to be enforced at other levels including  
91 neighbourhoods as well as wider functional, regional and metropolitan scales. This requires  
92 harmonised coordination of measures implemented at all spatial levels to ensure coherence and to  
93 avoid inefficiency.

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95 – Urban challenges are often more pronounced at the **neighbourhood level**. Some  
96 neighbourhoods can reflect social tensions, poverty or environmental stress. Other  
97 neighbourhoods are arrival areas for migrants or subject to gentrification, social mobility and a  
98 shortage of affordable housing. Specific neighbourhood policies should therefore encourage  
99 local commitment for community building and inclusiveness. Neighbourhoods with a multitude  
100 of complex socioeconomic challenges need tailor-made policy programmes and funding to  
101 stabilise in the long term. In addition, neighbourhoods should be regarded as potential  
102 laboratories for innovative approaches covering all fields of urban development.

103

104 – **Local authorities** in their individual national context are responsible for local urban  
105 development. Decision-makers in local authorities set strategic guidelines and specific  
106 operations for the whole city area. They act as a formal link between small scale  
107 neighbourhoods and wider functional areas, with a decisive role in stabilising surrounding and  
108 wider rural areas. Particular consideration must be given to comparable living conditions for  
109 citizens in small and medium-sized towns and cities in shrinking areas.

110

111 – Sustainable and resilient urban development takes place within a regional or metropolitan  
112 context and relies on a complex network of functional interdependencies and partnerships. This  
113 is exemplified by the **functional area** as stated in the Territorial Agenda 2030. In parts this  
114 covers a metropolitan area or a combination of other territorial entities. In order to adapt urban  
115 policies to people's daily lives, towns and cities need to cooperate and coordinate their policies  
116 and instruments with their surrounding suburban and rural areas on policies for housing,  
117 commercial areas, mobility, services, green and blue infrastructure, material flows, local and  
118 regional food systems and energy supply, among others.

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## 129 / Three dimensions of European cities

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

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

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### 139 – The just city

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

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145 All social groups, including the most vulnerable, should have equal access to services of general  
146 interest, including education, social services, health care and culture. Adequate, accessible,  
147 safe and affordable housing and energy supply should meet the needs of different groups in  
148 society, including an ageing and more diverse population, persons with disabilities, young  
149 people and families. Socially balanced, mixed and safe urban neighbourhoods promote the  
150 integration of all social and ethnic groups and generations. Urban areas with a high percentage  
151 of migrants need a comprehensive integration and anti-segregation policy for this.

152 All citizens should be empowered to acquire new skills and education. This requires affordable  
153 and accessible high-quality pre-school and school education, qualification and training for  
154 young people, as well as lifelong learning opportunities, in particular for digitalisation and  
155 technology.

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### 157 – The green city

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

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

176  
177 Urban transport and mobility systems should be efficient, carbon-neutral, safe and multi-  
178 modal. Active and low-carbon forms of mobility and logistics should be promoted including a  
179 modal shift to public transport, walking and biking. Public transport should be accessible,  
180 affordable, clean, safe and attractive for all. To reduce transport and mobility needs, a  
181 polycentric settlement structure should be as compact and dense as possible while supporting  
182 multiple uses including housing, retail, production and transport.

#### 184 – The productive city

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186 The transformative power of cities is based on a diversified economy which provides jobs while  
187 ensuring a sound financial base for sustainable urban development. Cities as attractive,  
188 innovative and competitive business locations need a skilled workforce, social, technical and  
189 logistical infrastructure as well as affordable and accessible space. Ensuring these  
190 preconditions, including a favourable innovative environment as well as opportunities for local  
191 and regional production should be integral to urban planning.

192  
193 In addition to traditional industries, many other economic sectors are shifting more and more  
194 towards a digital, service-oriented and low-carbon economy built on a knowledge-based  
195 society and cultural industries. Small-scale businesses, low-emission-manufacturing and urban  
196 agriculture can be stimulated to re-integrate production into cities and urban areas, enabling  
197 and promoting new forms of mixed-use neighbourhoods.

198  
199 The retail sector in European cities is changing as a result of an increasing digitalisation in  
200 commerce. Staple goods and especially food, however, should be accessible locally to offer a  
201 good quality of life and to counterbalance the adverse effects of demographic change.  
202 Transforming central urban areas into attractive multifunctional spaces provides new  
203 opportunities for urban development through mixed use for living, working and recreation,  
204 where manufacturing, retail and services are found alongside housing, hospitality and leisure.

205  
206 **Digitalisation** is a major transformative, cross-sectoral trend affecting all dimensions of sustainable  
207 urban development. In many ways it offers an opportunity for urban transformation. Digital solutions  
208 can deliver innovative and high-quality services to the public and businesses. These include smart  
209 urban mobility, energy efficiency, sustainable housing, public services, retail, supply of daily goods  
210 and civic-led governance. At the same time digitalisation can trigger a further spatial and social divide  
211 with risks to the protection of privacy. Digitalisation needs to be shaped in an environmentally  
212 sustainable, inclusive and fair manner. In a broader picture, European digital sovereignty is key to the  
213 future competitiveness of the EU. Cities, with their power to scale up digital solutions and to adapt  
214 them to local conditions can significantly contribute to this goal.

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**C Key principles of good urban governance**

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

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

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**— Urban policy for the common good**

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

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**— Integrated approach**

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245 All areas of urban policy have to be coordinated in a spatial, sectoral and temporal manner. The  
246 integrated approach relies on simultaneous and fair consideration of all concerns and interests  
247 relevant to urban development. Therefore, it should pool and balance different, partly  
248 conflicting, interests as well as the mutual effects of different interventions. Cities need to  
249 establish integrated and sustainable urban development strategies and assure their  
250 implementation for the city as a whole, from its functional areas to its neighbourhoods.

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**— Participation and co-creation**

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254 The integrated approach requires the involvement of the general public as well as social,  
255 economic and other stakeholders in order to consider their concerns and knowledge. Public  
256 participation in urban development processes should engage all urban actors, which also  
257 strengthens local democracy. Wherever possible, citizens should have a say in processes that

258 impact their daily lives. New forms of participation should be encouraged and improved,  
259 including co-creation and co-design in cooperation with inhabitants, civil society networks,  
260 community organisations and private enterprises. Experimenting with new forms of  
261 participation can help cities manage conflicting interests, share responsibilities and find  
262 innovative solutions while also reshaping and maintaining urban spaces and forming new  
263 alliances to create integrated city spaces. Public participation is central to the successful  
264 delivery of a high quality built environment.  
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#### 266 – **Multi-level governance**

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

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278 Places should be regarded as reference points for an integrated horizontal and vertical  
279 approach. Urban strategies and urban funding instruments should be based on sound analysis  
280 of the specific local situation, especially potential benefits and risks, stakeholders and  
281 restrictions, while following place-based development. This will enable endogenous urban  
282 transformation and reduce local socioeconomic inequalities. Appropriate formal and informal  
283 instruments should cover all spatial levels, from neighbourhoods to local authorities and wider  
284 functional areas including the metropolitan level.  
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### 287 **D Empowering cities to transform**

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289 Local authorities are closest to citizens and in touch with their daily life and needs. Cities are  
290 responsible for allocating public services that enable citizens to exercise their fundamental rights and  
291 to participate in society. Cities are also responsible for balancing differing, sometimes conflicting  
292 aspects and interests. This gives local authorities a crucial role in guaranteeing and representing the  
293 overall public interest.  
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295 **We, the Ministers, stress** the importance of cities being capable of unlocking their transformative  
296 power, of dynamically responding to rapidly changing conditions, and of providing a high quality of  
297 life. Support from the European, national and regional levels is needed to ensure cities can find local  
298 solutions to global challenges.  
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## 301 / Strengthening Urban Governance to ensure the Common Good

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303 Cities need:

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305 – **Legal framework conditions** at all administrative and political levels based on the  
306 partnership principle and embedded in a multi-level governance system;307 – **Investment capacities** generated through their own income, allocations from national and  
308 regional levels, as well as specific EU-, national and regional funding programmes;309 – **Adequately skilled employees** who are continuously trained and qualified in order to keep  
310 up with future challenges as well as wider technological and societal trends. Local authorities  
311 should also be able to integrate various sectoral policies and plans as well as promote and  
312 moderate complex, participatory and bottom-up processes;313 – **The steerability and shaping of** infrastructure, public services and public welfare. This  
314 includes services for health, social care, education, culture, water and energy supply, waste  
315 management, public transport, digital networks, information systems and public spaces as  
316 well as green and blue infrastructure. In addition, the provision of safe, healthy, affordable,  
317 well-designed and adequate housing is essential for all urban policies.318 **We, the Ministers, stress** that solid urban governance aiming for the common good is necessary to  
319 transform all cities into just, green and productive urban systems. Politicians and administrations at  
320 all levels are therefore encouraged to provide financial and legal framework conditions under the  
321 principles of subsidiarity and proportionality and in respect of budgetary regulations, that support the  
322 following fields of action:

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324 – **Active and strategic land policy and land use planning**

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

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332 – Polycentric settlement structures with appropriate compactness and density in urban and  
333 rural areas with optimal connections within cities to minimise distances between housing,  
334 work, leisure, education, local shops and services. This should minimise traffic and mobility  
335 needs within and between cities, combatting urban sprawl and reducing traffic areas;336 – Fostering the cooperation beyond administrative borders and coordination of spatial  
337 planning in functional urban areas, taking into account urban-rural linkages, in order to  
338 prevent as well as contain urban sprawl;339 – Reducing land take, prioritising the renewal and complex regeneration of urban areas,  
340 including brownfield redevelopment, to limit soil sealing;



- 341 – Land use should balance urban density by favouring green and blue infrastructure, to increase
- 342 urban biodiversity and enable climate-neutral, resilient and environmentally sound urban
- 343 development as well as improved air quality;
- 344 – Design and management of safe and accessible public spaces providing healthy living
- 345 environments for all citizens;
- 346 – Sufficient areas for adequate, safe, well designed and affordable housing to ensure vibrant
- 347 and socially mixed neighbourhoods, avoiding speculative land policy;
- 348 – Mixed-use urban spaces to promote new forms of production and economic activity in a
- 349 green, creative, service-based economy.

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### 351 – **Actively shaping digital transformation**

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

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

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### 373 / **Ensuring Adequate Policies and Funding for Cities**

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

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## 384     — **Powerful national urban policy framework and funding**

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

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

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

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## 405     — **Coherent EU regulation and funding instruments**

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

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417     **We, the Ministers, therefore agree** to continue, reinforce and improve the Urban Agenda for the EU  
418     as a process built on the partnership principle and in full compliance with the principles of subsidiarity  
419     and proportionality in a multi-level governance approach. In addition, we call upon European  
420     institutions to take into account, where relevant, the implications and consequences of EU regulations  
421     and directives related to urban areas in their Impact Assessments and to actively engage local and  
422     regional stakeholders in consultations on new and existing EU legislation.

423

424     **Funding, financial instruments and EU-programmes concerning urban issues** provided by  
425     European institutions play a valuable role for urban policy in European cities and consequently need  
426     to maintain a strong urban dimension. Among other EU-programmes, advisory support and financial

427 instruments, Cohesion Policy is key to implementing integrated and sustainable urban development  
428 strategies and place-based approaches for local and regional urban projects. These programmes  
429 should stimulate, with the help of the European Urban Initiative, integrated, innovative and  
430 participatory approaches in sustainable urban development, promote socio-economic and territorial  
431 cohesion, support polycentric settlement structures and bring the EU closer to citizens.

432

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

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

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## E Closing Appeal

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

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

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456 **We therefore endorse** the document "Implementing the New Leipzig Charter through Multi-level  
457 Governance: Next Steps for the Urban Agenda for the EU" which operationalises and links on equal  
458 footing the strategic principles of the New Leipzig Charter with continuation of the Urban Agenda for  
459 the EU.