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

A Preamble

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

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sustainable Development Goal 11 aiming at making cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, the New Urban Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the European Commission's Green Deal with the ambition to make Europe the first ever 'climate neutral' continent in the world underline the need for a sustainable transformation. Europe as a whole has a strong responsibility and 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 is based upon the pursuit of the common good which stands for the concept of general welfare, providing reliable public services of general interest and aims at preventing risks leading to new forms of social, economic, environmental and territorial inequalities. Our common goal is to safeguard the liveability of all European towns and cities and their functional areas. No one should be left behind.

We point out that many cities already take a leading role in the transformation towards just, green, and productive societies. This requires good leadership, urban governance and resources. Cities need the full support of all governmental levels and all key actors, both governmental and non-governmental.

We reaffirm to deliver the needed transformation through integrated urban development, a place-based, multi-level and participatory approach.

41 **We highlight** the important support by the European Union for integrated urban development
42 including Cohesion Policy and other EU policies, research programs and initiatives with an
43 important urban dimension.
44
45 **We acknowledge** that the Urban Agenda for the EU, established by the Pact of Amsterdam, has made
46 an important contribution to introducing a widely appreciated multi-level and multi-stakeholder
47 approach to urban development.
48
49 **We emphasise** our support for the objectives of the Territorial Agenda 2030 which, like the New
50 Leipzig Charter, advocates the place-based approach as an overarching principle for all places and
51 policy sectors. The New Leipzig Charter provides guidance for applying the approach in cities and
52 their functional areas. We therefore support strengthened cooperation between and across spatial
53 levels.
54
55

B **The transformative power of European Cities**

57
58 Europe is characterised by a variety of small, medium-sized and large cities. As part of a polycentric
59 urban system, they form functional areas with varying potentials and challenges. European cities are
60 more than places of densely arranged built structures, but also key places of cultural, social and
61 economic interaction. They are mostly 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 non-
64 built cultural heritage.
65
66 Cities are places of pluralism, creativity and solidarity. Cultural and political traditions have
67 constituted the basis for cities as places of democratic rights and values. And, they are the laboratories
68 for new forms of problem-solving and the test fields for social innovation.
69
70 High-quality, open and safe public spaces function as vibrant urban places, allowing people to
71 interact, to exchange and to integrate into society. Good urban planning and design ought to be
72 reinforced in order to achieve compact, socially and economically mixed cities with well-developed
73 infrastructures and a healthy environment contributing to the well being of all. This requires a high-
74 quality *Baukultur* based on a thorough planning and design process for every man-made shaping of
75 the built environment of European cities. This encompasses the handling and conversion of existing
76 buildings as well as the design and construction of contemporary buildings, infrastructure and public
77 spaces.
78
79 Cities and urban systems need the flexibility and ability to respond to external disruptive events and
80 chronic stress. The robustness of cities to cope with changing framework conditions need to be
81 supported by the ability to learn from past events, flexibility through an urban governance for the
82 common good as well as a balanced implementation of a just, green and productive city. Predictive
83 policies, plans and projects should include diverse scenarios to anticipate environmental challenges
84 and economic risks but also social transformations.

85

86

87 / Three spatial levels of European cities

88

89 Today, citizens often interact at different spatial scales in their everyday life. Therefore, measures
90 that have a focus on local developments are to be set at the adequate spatial scale. Besides policies
91 at the formal local level, specific and informal measures at other levels including neighbourhoods or
92 wider functional, regional and metropolitan scales need to be enforced. This requires a harmonised
93 coordination of all measures implemented at all spatial levels in order to ensure coherence and to
94 avoid inefficiency. Depending on the respective challenges, they need to be addressed at the
95 appropriate territorial scale.

96

97 _ Urban challenges often culminate at the **neighbourhood level**. Some neighbourhoods can be
98 places of social tensions or poverty. Other neighbourhoods are arrival areas for migrants or
99 characterised by gentrification, social mobility and a shortage of affordable housing. Specific
100 neighbourhood policies should therefore encourage people's and local stakeholders'
101 commitment for community building and inclusiveness. Neighbourhoods with a multitude of
102 complex socioeconomic challenges need tailor-made policy programmes and funding to
103 achieve stabilisation in the long term. In addition, neighbourhoods should be regarded as
104 potential urban laboratories for innovative approaches covering all fields of urban
105 development.

106

107 _ The formal scale of urban development are the **local authorities** in their individual national
108 context. Decision-makers in local authorities are called to set strategic guidelines and specific
109 operations for the whole territory of the city. They act as a formalised link among small scale
110 neighbourhoods and wider functional areas and hold a decisive role in stabilising their
111 surroundings and wider rural areas. Particular consideration must be given to comparable living
112 conditions for citizens in small and medium-sized towns and cities in shrinking areas.

113

114 _ Sustainable and resilient urban development is embedded in a regional or metropolitan context
115 and relies on a complex network of functional interdependencies and partnerships.This is
116 exemplified by the **functional area** as stated in the Territorial Agenda 2030 which in parts is
117 constituted as a metropolitan area or unions of other territorial entities. In order to adapt urban
118 policies to people´s daily needs, towns and cities with their surrounding suburban and rural
119 areas need to cooperate and coordinate their policies with regards to housing, commercial
120 areas, mobility, services, green and blue infrastructure and energy supply, among others.

121

122

123 / Three dimensions of European cities

124

125 **We, the Ministers, acknowledge** three dimensions of the transformative power of cities: **just, green**
126 and **productive**. Combined and on equal footing, these three dimensions contribute to building

127 resilient cities allowing them to deal with upcoming social, economic and ecological challenges to
128 provide and guarantee a high quality of life.

129

130 _ **The just city**

131

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

135

136 All social groups, including the most vulnerable, must have equal access to services of general
137 interest, including social services, health care and culture. Adequate, safe and affordable
138 housing and energy supply should meet the needs of different groups in society, including an
139 ageing and more diverse population, young people and families. Socially balanced, mixed and
140 safe urban neighbourhoods promote the integration of all social and ethnic groups and
141 generations. Urban areas with a high percentage of migrants need a comprehensive integration
142 policy.

143 All citizens should be empowered to acquire new skills and education. This requires affordable
144 and accessible high-quality pre-school and school education, qualification and training for
145 young people, as well as lifelong learning opportunities, in particular in the field of
146 digitalisation.

147

148 _ **The green city**

149

150 The transformative power of cities contributes to combatting global warming and developing
151 high quality urban environments for all. The use of climate-neutral energy supply, renewable
152 resources and carbon-neutral buildings will contribute to significantly reduce greenhouse gas
153 emissions and enhance energy efficiency. The transformation requires investments in
154 innovative and efficient technologies and a fundamental change in the modes of production
155 and consumption – supported by economic actors and citizens alike.

156

157 Climate adaptation and mitigation are core elements of the needed transformation. Cities are
158 called to regenerate endangered ecosystems and to use nature-based solutions allowing high
159 quality green and blue infrastructures to cope with extreme weather conditions. Well managed
160 and connected green and blue areas are a precondition for healthy living environments and
161 adapting to climate change as well as for preserving biodiversity in cities .

162

163 Urban transport and mobility systems should be efficient, carbon-neutral and multi-modal. All
164 active and low-carbon forms of mobility and logistics should be promoted. Public transport
165 should be accessible affordable, safe and attractive for all. To reduce transport and mobility
166 needs, a polycentric settlement structure supporting mixed uses, with appropriate
167 compactness and density is essential.

168

4

169 _ **The productive city**
170
171 The transformative power of cities is based on a diversified economy which provides jobs and
172 assures a sound financial base for sustainable urban development. Cities as attractive,
173 innovative and competitive business locations need a skilled workforce, social, technical and
174 logistic infrastructure as well as affordable and accessible space. The sufficient provision of
175 these preconditions as well as opportunities for local and regional production should be an
176 integral part of urban planning and can pave the way to a circular economy.
177
178 Besides traditional industries a significant amount of economic sectors is shifting more and
179 more towards a digital, service-oriented and low-carbon economy which is built on the
180 knowledge society and cultural industries. Small-scale businesses, low-emission-
181 manufacturing or urban agriculture can re-integrate production into cities and urban areas
182 which allows for new forms of mixed-use neighbourhoods.
183
184 The retail sector in European cities is changing as a result of an increasing digitalisation in
185 commerce. Basic offers for daily supply, however, should be accessible to offer a good quality
186 of life and to counterbalance adverse effects of demographic change. A transformation of
187 central urban areas into attractive multifunctional spaces provides new opportunities for urban
188 development through mixed use for living, working and recreation, where manufacturing, retail
189 and service provision go in pair with hospitality and leisure.
190
191 **Digitalisation** as a major transformative, cross-sectoral trend affects all dimensions of sustainable
192 urban development. In many ways it represents an opportunity for urban transformation. Digital
193 solutions can deliver innovative and high-quality services to the public and to businesses like smart
194 urban mobility, energy efficiency, sustainable housing, public services, retail, daily supply and civic-
195 led governance. At the same time digitalisation can trigger a further spatial and social divide. In a
196 greater picture, digital sovereignty of Europe is one of the keystones of the future competitiveness of
197 the EU. Cities, with their power to scale up digital solutions can significantly contribute to this goal.
198
199

C Key principles of good urban governance

201
202 The key working principles from the 2007 Leipzig Charter are still valid. However, they need to be
203 updated in view of today's global challenges and put broadly into practice by all actors of urban
204 development.
205
206 **We, the Ministers, acknowledge** that a balanced, integrated transformation of cities and regions to
207 achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and the objectives of the European Union's Green Deal,
208 will only be successful if both governmental and non-governmental actors at all levels and sectors
209 work together, agreeing on the following strategic principles. They also shape the basic elements to
210 develop further and implement the Urban Agenda for the EU and the urban as well as territorial
211 dimension of EU Cohesion Policy. We emphasise our support for the objectives of the Territorial
212 Agenda 2030 which is based on a shared understanding of the key principles of good governance.

213
214

215   _   **Urban policy for the common good**

216

217   Public authorities should act for public welfare and provide services and infrastructures for the
218   common good: inclusive, affordable and accessible for all, including the weakest and most
219   vulnerable groups in society. All people should have equal access, in particular those who live in
220   towns and cities in shrinking and remote areas. This regards health care, social services,
221   education, cultural services, housing, water and energy supply, waste management, public
222   transport, digital networks and information systems. Furthermore, the management of public
223   spaces and green and blue infrastructures as well as the preservation and revitalisation of built
224   cultural heritage are important. Therefore, the skills and capacities of all urban stakeholders
225   should be strengthened; strategies and tools for their empowerment should be implemented
226   and activated. Good urban governance can balance public and private interests and market
227   mechanisms.

228

229   _   **Integrated approach**

230

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

237

238   _   **Participation and co-creation**

239

240   The integrated approach requires the involvement of economic actors, the general public and
241   other stakeholders in order to consider their concerns and knowledge. Public participation in
242   urban development processes should involve all urban actors, also to strengthen local
243   democracy. Citizens must have a say in these processes that impact their daily lives. Therefore,
244   new forms of participation should be encouraged and improved, including co-creation and co-
245   design in cooperation with inhabitants, civil society networks, community organisations and
246   private enterprises. Experimenting with new forms of participation can help cities manage
247   conflicting interests, share responsibilities, find innovative solutions as well as reshape and
248   maintain urban spaces and form new alliances to create integrated cityspaces. Public
249   participation is central to the successful delivery of a high qualitative built enviornment.

250

251   _   **Multi-level governance**

252

253   Every governmental level – local, regional, metropolitan, national, European and global – has
254   its specific responsibility for the future of our cities based on principles of subsidiarity and
255   proportionality. Complex challenges should be tackled jointly across all levels of urban and

256 spatial policy. This requires the cooperation of all societal actors, including civil society and the
257 private sector. As recommended by the Pact of Amsterdam and the New Urban Agenda,
258 vertical and horizontal multi-level and multi-stakeholder cooperation, both bottom-up and top-
259 down, is a key condition for good urban governance.
260

261 _ **Place-based approach**
262

263 Places should be regarded as reference points for the horizontal and vertical integrated
264 approach. Urban strategies and urban funding instruments should be based on a sound analysis
265 of the specific local situation, given potentials, stakeholders and restrictions, following a place-
266 based development. This will allow for the catalysation of endogenous urban transformation
267 potentials and reduce local socioeconomic inequalities. Appropriate formal and informal
268 instruments from all spatial levels should be employed, from the neighbourhood, to the local
269 authorities and wider functional areas including the metropolitan level.
270
271

D Empowering cities to transform
273

274 Local authorities are closest to citizens and in touch with their daily life and needs. Cities are
275 responsible for the allocation of public services that enable citizens to exercise their fundamental
276 rights and to participate in society. Cities are also responsible for balancing different, sometimes
277 conflicting aspects and interests. This gives local authorities a crucial role in guaranteeing and
278 representing the overall public interest.
279

280 **We, the Ministers, stress** the importance of cities being capable to act in order to unlock the
281 transformative power of cities, to dynamically respond to rapidly changing conditions, and to provide
282 a high quality of life. Therefore, support from the European, national and regional level to find local
283 solutions to global challenges is necessary.
284
285

286 / Strengthening Urban Governance to assure the Common Good
287

288 Cities need:
289

290 – **Legal framework conditions** at all administrative and political levels based on a partnership
291 principle and embedded in a multi-level governance system;
292 – **Investment capacities** generated through their own income, allocations from national and
293 regional level, as well as specific EU-, national and regional funding programmes;
294 – **Adequately skilled employees** who are well-trained and qualified in order to keep up with
295 future challenges as well as wider technological and societal trends and who should be
296 capable to integrate different sectoral policies and plans, able to promote and moderate
297 complex, participatory and bottom-up processes;

298   – **Access to and steerability** of infrastructure, public services and public welfare. This includes
299   services for health, social care, education, water and energy supply, waste management,
300   public transport, digital networks, information systems, and the management of public
301   spaces as well as green and blue infrastructure. The provision of safe, affordable and adequate
302   housing is essential for all urban policies.

303 **We, the Ministers, stress** that a good urban governance aiming for the common good is necessary to
304 transform all cities into just, green and productive urban systems. Politicians and administrations at
305 all levels are therefore encouraged to provide the financial and legal framework conditions, given the
306 principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, to support the following fields of action:

307

308   ‗   **Active and strategic land policy and land use planning**

309

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

315

316   – Polycentric settlement structures with appropriate compactness and density in urban and
317   rural areas with optimal connections within cities, allowing short distances between housing,
318   working, leisure and local supply, in order to minimise traffic and mobility needs within and
319   between cities and combatting urban sprawl;
320   – Reducing land take, prioritising renewal and regeneration of urban areas, including
321   brownfield redevelopment, to limit soil sealing.
322   – Enable land use in favour of green and blue infrastructures, to increase urban biodiversity and
323   to allow a climate-neutral and environmentally sound urban development as well as improved
324   air quality;
325   – Design and management of safe and accessible public spaces providing healthy living
326   environments for all citizens;
327   – Areas for sufficient new and adequate, safe and affordable housing to ensure vibrant and
328   socially mixed neighbourhoods, avoiding speculative land policy;
329   – Mixed-use urban spaces to promote new production forms and new economic activities in the
330   green, creative, service-based economy.

331

332   ‗   **Active shaping of the digital transformation**

333

334 Today, the digitalisation of cities and processing of massive, rapidly growing data and information
335 flows are key elements of integrated urban development. Hereby, digitalisation is never an end in
336 itself. Local authorities, as part of the public sector, should act as drivers of solution-driven technology
337 based on public needs. To make sure not to leave anybody behind, the digital transformation and the
338 collaborations needed to implement should be based on common human values – such as

339 inclusiveness, human-centeredness, human rights, international law and transparency. Cities should
340 be able to shape the digital transformation by:

341

342 - Developing and implementing integrated smart city strategies for the common good,
343   including technical impact assessments.
344 - Improving decision making and public services. Therefore, data should be used for the
345   common good, and the ethical and socially responsible access, use, sharing and management
346   of data should be promoted.
347 - Implementing a comprehensive, powerful and resilient public data infrastructure and data
348   governance. Cities should have access to data relevant to their public tasks.
349 - Promoting life-long learning tools to empower citizens and public administrations to foster
350   digital skills and ensure digital cohesion.
351 - Digital solutions can – particularly in states of crisis – safeguard and boost local authorities'
352   capacity to act.

353

354

355 / Ensuring Adequate Policies and Funding for Cities

356

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

361

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

363

364 The Leipzig Charter of 2007 and the New Urban Agenda stated that national urban policies should
365 be strengthened to empower cities.

366

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

369

370 - **enable the exchange** of experiences and knowledge between cities and other stakeholders
371   at regional, national, transnational and EU levels to strengthen capacity-building for
372   implementing integrated and sustainable urban development strategies;
373 - **act as platforms** for a dialogue process among urban and all other partners supporting the
374   implementation of a multi-level governance approach through different means, including
375   multi-level partnerships;
376 - **support the development of national or regional funding programmes** for significant urban
377   challenges and to activate the co-financing by European Funds as important instruments
378   implementing integrated and sustainable urban development strategies and projects.
379 - **provide incentives for innovation** and experimentation of projects that address current and
380   future challenges in urban development.

381

382
383

384   _   **Coherent EU regulation and funding instruments**

385

386   *The Urban Agenda for the EU*, launched in 2016 by the Pact of Amsterdam, started a pivotal multi-
387   level governance process to enhance the position of cities in legislation and policymaking. We highly
388   value the work of the multi-level partnerships with the three overall objectives of Better Regulation,
389   Better Funding and Better Knowledge. Their work has contributed to increased coherence in the EU
390   regulative framework on urban topics and to improving the EU policy development with an urban
391   dimension, refining and adjusting funding instruments as well as enhancing the common knowledge
392   base on urban issues in Europe. The Urban Agenda for the EU is a major process at the European level
393   to support European Institutions, Member States, regions, cities and functional areas of all sizes to
394   implement the strategic principles of the Leipzig Charter.

395

396   **We, the Ministers, therefore agree** to continue, reinforce and improve the Urban Agenda for the EU
397   as a process built on the partnership principle and in full compliance with the principles of subsidiarity
398   and proportionality in a multi-level governance approach. In addition, we call upon to take into
399   account the implications and consequences of EU regulations and directives in urban areas in the
400   Territorial Impact Assessments and to activaly engage local and regional stakeholders on EU
401   consultations on new and existing EU legislation.

402

403   *Funding and financial instruments and EU-programmes taking up urban issues* provided by the
404   European institutions play a valuable role for urban policy in European cities and consequently need
405   to maintain a strong urban dimension. Among other EU-programmes, the Cohesion Policy is key to
406   implement integrated and sustainable urban development strategies and place-based approaches for
407   local and regional urban projects. These programmes should stimulate innovative and participatory
408   approaches in urban development, promote socio-economic and territorial cohesion, and support
409   polycentric settlement structures. EU-funded urban development programmes and initiatives such as
410   the European Urban Initiative aim at bringing the EU closer to its citizens by enhancing equal
411   opportunities and living conditions for all European citizens.

412

413   *The vertical and horizontal exchange of knowledge* and expertise among all multi-level governance
414   stakeholders should be continued and strengthened. They allow for learning from good practices,
415   innovative approaches and key working principles and instruments. The Urban Agenda for the EU
416   offers an exchange platform for European, national, regional and local urban stakeholders.

417

418   **We, the Ministers, encourage** the European institutions, Member States and regional authorities to
419   foster the coherent coordination of methods and objectives among European programmes and
420   initiatives such as the Urban Agenda for the EU, URBACT, the Urban Innovative Actions and the
421   Cohesion Policy programmes.

422
423
424

425
426
427
428

E	Closing Appeal

430

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

434

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

438

439 **We therefore endorse** to agree on [*"Implementing the New Leipzig Charter through multi-level*
440 *governance Next steps for the Urban Agenda for the EU"*] which operationalises and links on equal
441 footing the strategic principles of the New Leipzig Charter with the continuation of the Urban Agenda
442 for the EU.