The Leipzig Charter
on Sustainable European Cities

A	**Preamble: reasons for an update**

The 2007 Leipzig Charter, adopted by us, the Ministers responsible for urban matters, has defined key themes, principles and governance structures to promote integrated urban development. The Charter has inspired urban policy makers in Europe and beyond, and the message of the Charter is still valid. The need for a renewal is however evident.

Global and local are intertwined more than ever before. Dynamic global challenges such as climate change, resource scarcity, migration flows, demographic change and rapidly changing economies have a direct impact on cities and their inhabitants. Cities are finding new responses to the effects of globalisation, global warming and digitalisation.

Urban transformation offers chances for a new economy based on digital skills, renewable energy and sustainable mobility, but there are also risks that it leads to new forms of social, economic and environmental inequalities. Some cities and regions will prosper, others risk decline and a loss of opportunities. The challenges for urban and regional development to combat societal conflicts resulting from social, environmental and economical inequalities are complex. The liveability of European cities and regions is a priority for all aspects of policy.

The transformation needed in the next decades requires the 2020 Leipzig Charter to be firmly embedded in today's global and European policy frameworks. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals constitute the global framework. The Paris Agreement sets new climate targets, and the New Urban Agenda describes how urban development can contribute towards realising the global objectives. The Urban Agenda for the EU and the Territorial Agenda 2020+ are important European operational frameworks to be taken into account in this aspect.

Changes to respond to global challenges are most effective when rooted at neighbourhood level, close to the inhabitants of towns and cities. Important instruments in that respect are smart, participatory and integrated urban planning processes.

We, the ministers responsible for urban matters, agree that cities need a coherent and supportive multi-level policy framework enabling them to tackle the challenges of today and tomorrow. All stakeholders are called to set the policy framework for urban matters at the European, national, regional and local level to empower cities to implement the core principles set out in this renewed Leipzig Charter.

B   The European City as a Common Basis

European cities of all sizes are more than places of densely arranged built structures. Traditionally they allow citizens to exert and experience democratic rights and values. At the same time, urban environments serve as laboratories for new forms of democracy and problem-solving. Throughout history, urban communities have proven their ability to shape societal transformations by way of cooperation, invention and solidarity. More than anything, for many Europeans, the cities and city-regions they live in are more than just important places of belonging: they are part of people's identities.

Europe is characterised by a variety of small, medium-sized and big cities that are part of a polycentric urban system forming various functional areas. Historically grown structures, partly of outstanding cultural value, make for much of Europe's urban heritage.

Good urban planning and urban design should be reinforced to achieve compact, socially and economically mixed cities with well-developed infrastructures and a high-quality service provision, including public spaces. 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.

/   B.1.Core dimensions of sustainable European cities

To secure and create sustainable European Cities there are three strategic dimensions particularly relevant for European cities: the ecologically and climate friendly city, the inclusive and cohesive city, and the productive city. All three aspects need to be tackled and balanced at the same time in an integrated way. Due to the rapid digital change digitalisation is becoming a forth cross-cutting dimension relevant for all thematic areas of sustainability and forms the "connected" city.

－ **The ecologically and climate-friendly European city**
Despite the rising awareness on environment protection and global warming there is still a lot to do to transform our urban areas into ecologically sustainable, climate friendly, resource-efficient and healthy places for all citizens. For combatting global warming greenhouse gas emissions must be drastically cut by an efficient and low carbon building stock and low-emission energy supply with high shares of renewable energy as well as by active and low emission transport and mobility. This is linked to the improvement of the air quality, especially for the transport sector, which is still very poor in many European cities. Especially for low income groups living in low carbon cities need to remain affordable.

All needed investments can be used for strengthening the green economy and creating jobs. The urban production system as a whole needs to be converted into a circular economy which is a crucial precondition for an efficient and sustained use of scarce natural resources. Besides extensive investments and innovative technological solutions the ecological transformation process requires a general cultural change and modification of behavioural patterns.

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In addition to the climate change mitigation, cities need to get resilient to cope with the inevitable effects of global warming. This includes the climate friendly construction of buildings as well as nature-based solutions for high quality green and blue infrastructure to combat heat islands and rainfall extremes. Concurrently urban nature and ecosystems need to be protected and developed as an important precondition for strengthening biodiversity and to reduce the urban land take. Land use efficiency needs to be promoted by compact and dense settlement structures that are embedded in polycentric settlement structures in order to reduce travelling and transport needs.

The inclusive and cohesive European city
While some cities are losing jobs and people, others are growing rapidly, and sometimes these processes take place at the same time in the same city. On the one hand inhabitants of low social and economic status concentrate in some neighbourhoods while on the other housing dynamics displace poorer households from inner city gentrification areas that are getting more attractive also by urban regeneration measures. Many "arrival cities" need to additionally cope with migration flows from within and from outside the EU. All cities are confronted with demographic change leading to a higher absolute amount and share of elder people.

To ensure and improve cohesion between different social and ethnic groups and between all generations, the main objective for European cities are socially mixed, stable and safe urban neighbourhoods with a high quality of life. This includes good, equal gender- and generation sensitive access to high quality and safe public spaces, social, health care, cultural and mobility infrastructures and services. The whole urban environment needs to be fair for all generations and social groups. The infrastructures, housing and services should be adapted to the needs of an aging population but also suitable for young people and families. One crucial issue for socially balanced and mixed urban areas is affordable and age appropriate housing, considering also lower income households in all areas of the city.

Another important strategic area for more inclusive and cohesive cities lays in the improvement of skills and qualification of the inhabitants. One crucial precondition is high quality pre-school and school education, qualification and training for vulnerable young people as well as lifelong learning opportunities, which is especially important for deprived urban areas with specific social challenges. Urban areas confronted with a high percentage of migrants additionally need an active integration and migration management – including language skills and education and training as well as access to the labour market.

The productive European city
Accelerated by the megatrends of globalization, digitalization and automatization a profound change of the economic basis of the cities took and still take place. As a result of structural transformation many European cities are losing their role as centres of conventional industrial production. Another effect of the above-mentioned trends is the emergence of new

knowledge- and culture-based economies and new forms of production more compatible with dense urban settlement structures. These developments include risks and opportunities for European cities as their development opportunities strongly depend on their economic power.

Europe needs productive, innovative and competitive cities of all sizes to manage these changes and to remain an attractive business location. The newer technological possibilities of low-emission production methods should be used by cities as an opportunity to bring manufacturing back to central neighbourhoods and to foster mixed-use urban areas with working, manufacturing and housing.

This re-thinking of the neighbourhoods as business locations should be combined with investments in the digital infrastructure and the improvement of soft location factors, such as adequate childcare services and affordable housing. The integration of industry, commerce and services into urban development and urban planning is key factor in the success of the strategies in this field of action.

The digitized and automated world of work requires new skills that should be one focal point of qualification programs especially for low-skilled workers. With reference to the skills shortage in many European cites constant further qualification, particularly of older employees is needed to ensure a longer working life. In addition reducing youth unemployment has a significant potential for the local economy. To integrate this target group into the labour market it is important to offer preventive measures for reduction of early school leaving rates and post-qualification for young adults.

The connected European city

All aspects of sustainable urban development need to benefit from the current digital transformation. In the future-proof European City, the energy and transport sector is turned into a resilient networked system that is environmentally and socially viable and carried by sustainable business models promoting the local economy.

Digital transformation can contribute to the success of the energy and mobility transition. Smart energy systems and instruments like smart grids, smart meters and smart homes can lead to more energy-efficiency and a balanced system of supply and demand. Sustainable business models and incentives to foster energy-saving behaviour are developed. Besides, urban mobility is changing. Connected devices are providing real-time information on the traffic situation and allow on-demand planning and pricing. In the future, information on the cost, potential carbon-footprint and on the use of different means and sharing options can be provided.

/ B.2 Leipzig Charter working principles to achieve climate-friendly, inclusive and productive European cities

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 a set of shared working principles. These key working principles are:

— **Integrated approach**
The 2007 Leipzig Charter emphasised the importance of an integrated approach: "*Integrated urban development policy is a process in which the spatial, sectoral and temporal aspects of key areas of urban policy are co-ordinated. … it means simultaneous and fair consideration of the concerns and interests which are 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 city dimensions – climate-friendly, inclusive, and productive European cities – make clear that a thematic and organisational integrated approach is indispensable.

— **Place-based approach**
Following a place-based approach entails making a sound analysis of the specific local situation, given potentials, stakeholders and restrictions for development in order to create measures suitable for the given context and the people living there. This also includes the early detection of general trends affecting future urban development. Three spatial levels require particular attention: urban regions transcending the administrative city boundaries, the city as an administrative entity, and neighbourhoods within the city.

Functional urban areas and the urban-rural continuum. Citizens act across administrative boundaries; they live, work and play in functional urban areas defined by their commuting patterns. 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. Within functional urban areas, 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. A focus on functional urban areas is not only an important principle of a place-based approach with regard to urban development; it also needs to be addressed by the Territorial Agenda post 2020.

Strategic development concepts for the overall city level. The overall 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 and must steer comprehensive infrastructure planning.

Neighbourhoods as focal points of urban living. A multitude of complex urban challenges culminates at neighbourhood level. The need for targeted actions at the level of the neighbourhood remains as valid as ever before. Complex, integrated and topic-related urban development processes cannot be solved top-down; the participation of local stakeholders in a bottom-up approach is indispensable. In many cases, bottom-up participation will lead to cost-savings and offers 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, displacement effects and a shortage of affordable housing. Neighbourhoods with a multitude of complex challenges need specific policy attention and targeted funding.

_ **Multi-level governance**
Closely related to the integrated approach is the inclusion of multiple levels of governance. Although a lot of progress has been made since 2007, the text of the 2007 Leipzig Charter is still valid today: "*Every level of government – local, regional, national and European – has a responsibility for the future of our cities. To make this multi-level government really effective, we must improve the coordination of the sectoral policy areas and develop a new sense of responsibility for integrated urban development policy.*" The complex challenges and their intensive interrelationships must be anchored and mastered jointly across all levels of urban and spatial policy. As recommended by the Pact of Amsterdam, vertical and horizontal multi-level and multi-stakeholder cooperation bottom-up and top-down mechanisms are crucial conditions for good governance.

_ **Participation and Co-creation**
Multi-level governance cannot be seen without the participation of key stakeholders, both governmental and non-governmental. The 2007 Leipzig Charter emphasised already that the need for "*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.

_ **Public interest and common good**
Public authorities should act for public welfare and provide goods and services of general interest. This means good and sustainable governance of infrastructure networks and systems like healthcare and education, water, waste, energy, public transport, digital networks, information systems, and public spaces and green infrastructures. To safeguard the sustainability of communities, including the weakest and most vulnerable members, infrastructure and services of general interest have to be inclusive, affordable and accessible. Therefore, capabilities and capacities of all urban stakeholders should be empowered.

C Empowerment of Cities

/ C.1 Strengthening Urban Governance in the public interest

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.

For being able to shape their own future, to dynamically react on rapidly changing conditions and to provide steadiness cities need the power to act. Besides adequate own resources by municipal taxes and fees, city administrations need sufficient allocations from the national and regional level, going along with the tasks they have to fulfil. Equally important are skilled employees who are continuously 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, are aware that an active public urban governance with the objective to represent the overall public interest is necessary to create ecologically resilient, affordable, accessible, prosperous and liveable urban systems. Therefore, we agree to implement urban development policies that ensure and support ...

... an equal access to high quality goods and services of public interest. Whether those services are organised by public authorities and companies or private enterprises, we will ensure a high quality, fair access for all citizens by affordable costs. Social services for all groups can be gathered in community centres. We will also develop high-quality and safe public spaces and green areas accessible for all citizens. To ensure this we will apply inclusive, participatory and gender-sensitive planning and urban design processes. For vulnerable neighbourhoods we will realise specific strategies and measures providing active integration management. At the same time, we will use the potentials of urban infrastructures and services to foster social cohesion.

... good and affordable housing for all income groups and generations. Although housing is an elementary basic need, in many urban agglomerations an increasing number of people cannot afford housing any more. We will take care of urban planning, land and housing policies that create new and preserve existing affordable housing in all parts of the cities. This is important to counteract segregation and thus to increase socially mixed and cohesive communities. At the same time, keeping cities liveable and resilient requires a high quality building stock which is ecologically sustainable and climate friendly.

... the transformation of urban areas into ecologically sustainable, climate friendly and resource-efficient places. This includes the retrofitting of the existing building stock and providing low carbon energy supply with a high use of renewable energies. We also will promote active and low emission transport and mobility which also helps to improve air quality. Moreover, we will

promote circular economy. Besides investments and technological innovation, the ecological transformation process does especially include integrated planning. We will take care of preserving and qualifying green and blue infrastructure as important elements for adapting to climate change and protecting nature and biodiversity. Integrated urban planning can cater multiple issues in a well-coordinated package, e.g. for a compact city of short distances and mixed uses to reduce traffic, climate friendly neighbourhoods to combine retrofitting, use of renewables and emission free mobility as well as the adaptation to the effects of global warming.

… municipalities as attractive business locations. In order to strengthen the local economy, we need regional value chains and diversified economic structures. We will bring forward integrated economic development strategies and measures promoting medium-sized and small enterprises, migrant economy as well as the creative industries, for example, with suitable business locations and new funding models. Strategies to diversify the economic structures in the cities should aim at an internationally competitive, socially and environmentally sound economy. This "green economy", with its approach to sustainable production and consumption, is an ideal partner to develop a liveable city in which neighbourhoods are transformed and further qualified into new business locations for handicraft and production. The growing mobility of global economic players can be a challenge for cities if they do not participate in local value creation. Cities need adequate tax returns to maintain their urban infrastructure and to boost their position in the global competition between locations – in the public interest.

… that local authorities are able to shape the urban digital transformation. Networks and co-operations between research, business, civil society and administration are becoming more and more important. Processing of the massive, rapid networking of information and data is essential for an integrated urban development. Cities should strengthen transparency, ensure digital inclusion, promote co-creation and prevent private data monopolies. Cities should have access to the data that are relevant to their tasks and retain sovereignty – to guarantee protection, security, and the analysis and interpretation of the data and ensure the resilience and inclusiveness of networked infrastructure and public services. Currently, the main factors constraining the digital transition of cities are lack of funds and lack of skills. To prevent further social and spatial segregation and a deepening of the existing digital divide, public policy must develop strategies and implement tools to strengthen digital participation and foster the development of digital skills, both of public entities and of civil society.

… urban planning as a tool to achieve steerability and balancing of different interests with regard to land use. Space is limited in many cities which often leads to conflicting interests. Growing populations, the effects of climate change, scarce housing and economic development lead to increased demand for land to build on, especially in urban agglomerations. Unhalted land-take, in turn, can intensify environmental degradation and hamper equal access to amenities and services. Cities should use the potentials of public land policies in order to mediate between contradicting requirements of different needs, sectors and stakeholders.

/ C.2 Ensuring Adequate Policies and Funding for Cities

Cities have to be able to shape their own future, to dynamically react on changing conditions and to provide long-term stability. For that it is important that they have a sound financial basis and a valid fiscal policy. Additionally, they need enough skilled employees in order to implement integrated urban development approaches and to foster knowledge.

City administrations should not be left alone with these tasks. They also need good enabling conditions, meaning that all stakeholders have to take their responsibility. Besides the need for inter-municipal cooperation on the one hand, a strong urban development policy requires the valid framework and the support of the regional, national and EU level, too – always under the precondition of the subsidiarity principle.

_ Powerful National Policy Framework and Funding

The Leipzig Charter of 2007 yet made it very clear: Urban development on national level has to play an important role for the empowerment of cities. It can enable the exchange of experiences and knowledge between municipalities and other stakeholders, acting as a platform for dialogue. This may include enhancing the replication and transfer of good examples of urban practice within a place-based framework.

National and regional funding programmes are an important instrument in this regard – not only for providing resources, but also because they act as incentives to build and strengthen integrated urban development approaches and structures. National and regional regulation should support the implementation of these integrated approaches. Furthermore, regulations have to be flexible and open to new ideas. That is important because for being innovative, cities have to take risks; they need space and stable conditions for experiments.

_ Urban-Proof EU Regulation and Funding Instruments

The Urban Agenda for the EU has started in 2016 a pivotal multi-level governance process. The three overall objectives of better legislation, better funding and better knowledge must contribute to less bureaucracy on EU-level, targeted and accessible funding instruments as well as an urban impact assessment, in order to foster an urban-friendly policy framework at the European level in full compliance with the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. It serves as an important operational element to assure urban-proof European legislation, which is necessary to support European cities and functional urban areas of all sizes in implementing the principles and objectives of the Leipzig Charter.

Funding and financial instruments provided by the European Institutions play a crucial role for urban development policy in European cities and consequently need to include a strong urban dimension. We appreciate, that the European Structural and Investment Funds act as central instrument to stimulate and foster the application of integrated and flexible place-based approaches for local and regional urban projects in a broader way. Therefore, it must be assured, that funding instruments

are accessible for cities of all sizes and for functional urban areas, to stimulate both innovative approaches in urban development and to support a polycentric settlement structure to enhance equal chances and living conditions for all European citizens. EU-funded urban development projects provide a high visibility and consequently bear a high potential to counteract Euroscepticism among citizens.

The vertical and horizontal exchange of knowledge and expertise among all multi-level governance stakeholders about good practices, innovative approaches and key working principles and instruments must be continued and strengthened. The exchange of activities of the Urban Agenda for the EU and national stakeholders must be assured and the exchange between European-level programmes like URBACT, the Urban Innovative Actions, the Urban Development Network, the European Structural and Investment Funds as well as the activities of the Urban Agenda for the EU should be better coordinated.