Social Affairs Forum strategy for 2019-2020

Adopted by the Social Affairs Forum members at meeting in

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Introduction

The Social Affairs Forum (SAF) will guide its work for the next two years by an overarching strategy rather than adopting two annual work priorities as in the past. This is a good opportunity to review the focus of the forum activities as well as realign its priorities to the needs of the members and the ongoing changes in cities. In doing so, SAF will build on the achievements from the period 2017-2018 and will seek to grasp any new opportunities in policy and funding available for cities at EU level in the field of social affairs.

The new SAF strategy addresses the major social challenges that cities are facing now and in the future. A session on 'Imagine the Urban Futures' was held at the SAF Spring meeting 2018 in Utrecht where members identified the main social challenges and opportunities in their cities. There was a broad consensus that cities are witnessing increasingly complex social realities, which bring both new challenges and new opportunities. At the same session, members discussed how to better prepare to tackle the identified challenges and to seize the opportunities as well as the kind of support they would need from EUROCITIES. They agreed that cities must continuously innovate and be forward-looking. Cities need to find innovative ways to improve the quality of life and well-being by engaging and working together with citizens, civil society, businesses and academia. Cities need to become open living labs and learning environments, and share this learning to other cities with support from EUROCITIES.

The results of the discussion with SAF members in spring 2018 informed the formulation of the draft SAF strategy for 2019-2020, which was discussed and agreed with members at the SAF meeting in Stuttgart on 23-24 October 2018. This is the adopted version of the strategy.

1. Our SAF vision: leave no one behind

The top overarching social challenge that concerns all cities in Europe is **rising inequalities** of income and opportunities. This is the common root of most urban problems and is reflected in many areas of life. Income inequalities are growing despite EU's economic growth with the wealthiest 20% of the population gaining about five times more than the poorest 20%[1]. This has a negative impact on social mobility as young people have fewer opportunities than their parents' generation over their life course[2]. New forms of inequalities are emerging as a result of technological change and ageing society. Changes in the world of work and digitalisation accentuate inequalities in wage levels and increase the number of working poor. Inequality of opportunities between the foreign-born and native-born people continues to affect the education and career pathways of too many children and young people. The socio-economic background remains the biggest predictor of school performance and dropout. Gender gap persists both in wage and pension levels as well as in opportunities on the labour market. The lack of affordable housing and energy continue to make for the most visible forms of poverty and social exclusion like energy poverty or, in the extreme case, lead to homelessness.

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[1] Eurostat, April 2018 based on data from 2016.
[2] OECD (2018). A broken social elevator? How to promote social mobility; Eurofound (2017). Social mobility in the EU.

Fighting inequality is essential not just because it is at the core of social justice but also because inequalities get in the way of economic growth. In 2017, the World Economic Forum identified inequality as the number one challenge threatening economic growth and stability. It concluded that "persistent lack of inclusion—defined as broadly shared benefits and opportunities for economic growth—can fray social cohesion and undermine the sustainability of growth itself"[3]. That's because economic growth that excludes large portions of the population reinforces inequality in a variety of ways, like access to education, technology, resources and even social connections that help individuals get jobs and remain relevant in the labor market. Indeed, the cost of not reducing inequalities is higher than the cost of promoting equalities.

Inequality affects everyone in society. The bigger the income gaps, the bigger the problems in[4]:

- **Health**: mental illness, drug abuse, teenage pregnancy, child mortality, life expectancy,
- **Human capital**: child wellbeing, school dropouts, social mobility, math and literacy scores,
- **Social relations**: community life, trust, school bullying, imprisonment.

At macro-level, inequality is the key responsible for intergenerational income immobility, lack of equal opportunities for children, the fall in civic participation and the lack of trust and rise in populism and violence. It ultimately threatens social cohesion in our societies. As frontline managers of social cohesion in the EU dealing with growing immigration flows, diversity, ageing populations, urban poverty and disparities, cities have a duty to tackle rising inequalities.

SAF will prioritise **reducing inequalities** as a transversal strategy of our Forum. Inclusive and cohesive cities where everyone has access to equal opportunities to move on throughout their life cycle is essential for cities' economic growth, inclusive labour markets and high living standards. No one should be left behind; on this depends the progress of all cities in Europe.

Our SAF strategy is based on the long-term vision of **inclusive and cohesive cities with equal opportunities for all people**. We aspire to:

- **A city of inclusive growth** where everyone can access inclusive labour market, gain decent wages, high skill levels and opportunities for re-training, up-skilling and career transition;

- **A city where everyone feels at home**: diversity of backgrounds is welcomed as a source of strength for social mixing and social cohesion while discrimination and racism are deplored;

- **A city where no one is left behind** and everyone has opportunities to fully participate in society with equitable access to affordable education, housing, healthcare, social services;

- **A city of equal opportunities for well-being** in which the area where one lives does not affect their chances of graduating school, finding a job or residing a safe and warm home;

- **A sustainable city** where social investment is guiding economic and environmental policies;

- **A city of social innovations** where new technologies are used to foster social and digital inclusion, improve access and quality of services, and engage people in creating the city.

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[3] World Economic Forum (2017). Inequality is threatening the very foundation of economic growth.
[4] OECD (2015). In It Together: Why Less Inequality Benefits All; Pickett et. Wilkinson (2009). The Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better.

2. SAF priorities for 2019-2020

To achieve our long-term vision, SAF will focus on five key priorities that link cities' objectives in the field of social affairs in the medium term with the potential of EUROCITIES to add value.

Thematic priorities:

1. A good start in life for all children and young people
2. Inclusive labour markets preparing for the future of work and skills
3. Tackling housing poverty and homelessness
4. Diversity, social cohesion and integration of refugees and migrants
5. Accessible and age-friendly services

Our strategy adopts a **life-cycle approach** to ensure that the needs and interests of all people in our cities are well taken care of at any age or stage of their life. This involves children having sufficient places in nurseries and schools, young people getting support to move from education and training to work, working-age adults being prepared to face changes in the world of work, all people even those inactive having a roof over their heads, elderly people being helped to fully participate in the community and every person feeling welcome regardless of their origin.

Policy agenda priorities

In addition to the thematic priorities, SAF will give priority to contributing to the EU employment and social agenda. We will focus on three key EU policy processes:

a. **European Pillar of Social Rights** – SAF will continue supporting members to act on implementing the Pillar principles at local level and to get involved by the EU and national authorities in designing and monitoring relevant policies. In doing so, SAF cities will lead the way towards a stronger social Europe with social rights for all people. We will also continue advocating towards the European Commission and the European Parliament for concrete follow-up with legislation and funding to implement the Pillar.

b. **European Semester** – Given the increasing importance of this process in coordinating social policies of the European Pillar of Social Rights and allocating EU funds for reforms, SAF will reinforce its contribution to the country reports and specific recommendations to better capture the diversity of social situations within member states. We aim to get cities involved as partners in the European Semester at both EU and national levels.

c. **EU funding: European Social Fund+ and InvestEU** – using the timely opportunity to shape the EU funding programmes for 2021-2027, SAF will continue lobbying for better access for cities to EU funding for investing in people as well as for social infrastructure investment, while building the capacity of members to influence the priorities of the operational programmes at national and regional level.

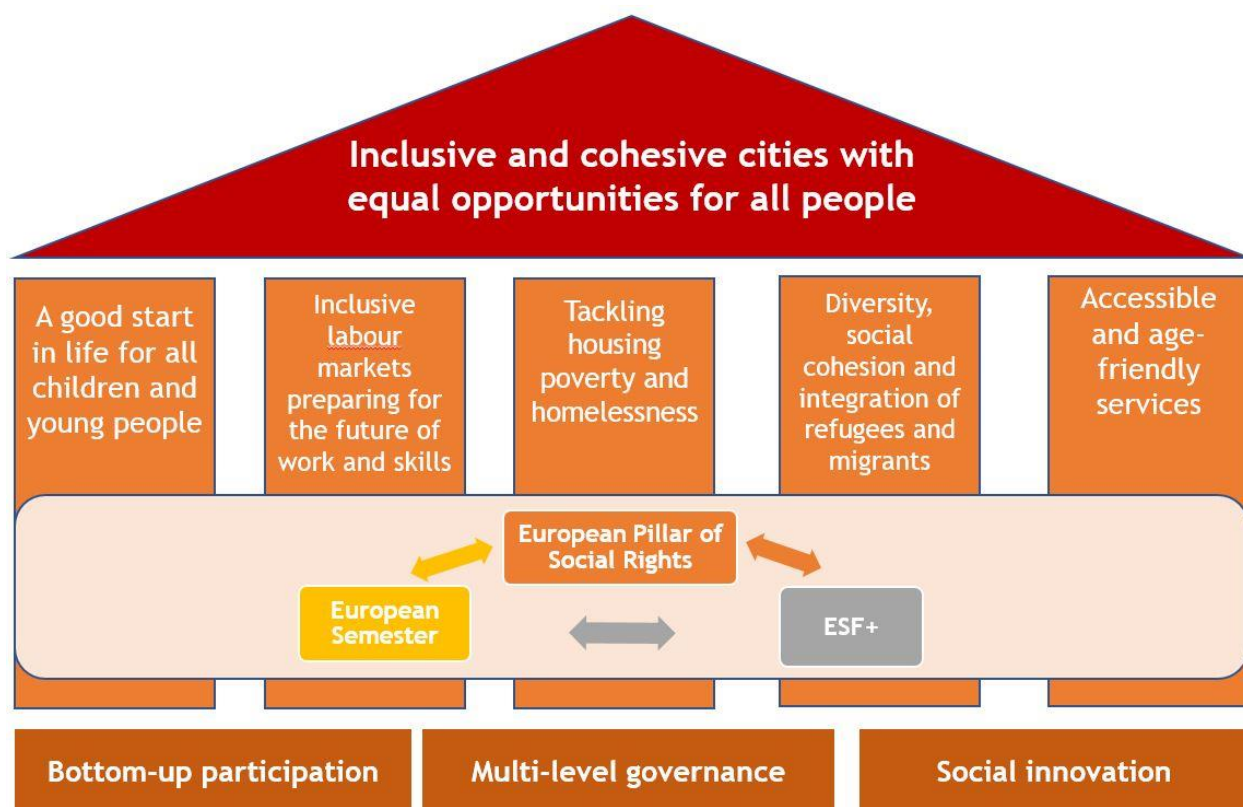Besides these three focus areas, SAF will continue to contribute to the Urban Agenda for the EU and the Sustainable Development Goals as cross-cutting policy priorities of EUROCITIES.

Operational priorities

Meeting these SAF ambitious objectives is not the only goal, but also the way to reach them is important too. We aim to guide all our SAF activities and working groups by three principles:

i. **Bottom-up participation and co-creation**: working in partnership with relevant actors at local level and engaging citizens in creating new solutions to social problems is at the core of our work. SAF will continue sharing learning among cities on how to meaningfully engage locals in the design and delivery of city initiatives. We will invite civil society and social enterprises to share experiences during SAF and working group meetings.

ii. **Multi-level governance**: Given that social policies often involve competences at different levels of government in the same country, multi-level governance is the most effective and efficient way forward. SAF will continue supporting cities to work in partnership with regional and national authorities, and will facilitate the dialogue with the European Commission to enable learning from local to EU level, whenever possible.

iii. **Social innovation**: SAF will prioritise the sharing, learning and transfer among cities of innovative solutions to common social challenges. We aim to build capacity of members to design and pilot social innovations to become innovation and learning ecosystems.

Here is a graphic representation of the SAF strategy for 2019-2020:

3. Proposed actions for 2019-2020

Below is outlined the plan of how SAF will work towards these priorities in 2019-2020. Each thematic priority is detailed in some concrete actions to be delivered by the Forum and/or the working groups. The annual work plans of the SAF working groups will complete this strategic plan. Given the cross-cutting nature of the challenges identified and the priorities set for SAF,

we prioritise a **focus on transversal work** through joint actions between several working groups. Wherever possible, we will also involve another forum(s) of EUROCITIES as relevant.

The asset of the SAF is connecting cities to exchange know-how, share learning and transfer innovative practices among experts from cities as well as to engage city politicians in policy positions to influence and shape the cities' and EU social agenda. Therefore, it is important that all actions of the SAF strategy will involve one or more of the following activities:

- **lobbying** and advocacy at EU level
- **mutual learning** and policy transfer between cities
- **accessing EU funding** to support development of joint projects
- **policy development** based on evidence, trends, challenges and good practices from cities
- **social innovation** and sharing of innovative practices

Priority 1: A good start in life for all children and young people

Context: One in four children in the EU live in or at risk of poverty (26.9%), making children the age group at the highest risk in most EU countries. Children growing up in poverty and social exclusion are less likely to do well in school, enjoy good health and realise their full potential later in life, when they are at a higher risk of becoming unemployed, poor and socially excluded. Therefore, early intervention in child development especially in the first 18 months of life, is vital to break the vicious cycle of poverty and prevent inequality of opportunities.

There are currently over 32 million children below the age of compulsory education in the EU, but only about 15 million of them have access to early childcare provision. This is due to the limited availability, affordability or accessibility of early childcare services in many areas, which disproportionately affects children from poorer and migrant background families. In most countries, spending on early childhood education and care remains lower than on other education levels despite the returns on investment being much higher.

Most European cities have some competences in early childcare provision. By investing in this sector to increase the number of places available and make childcare more affordable, cities can address inequalities and challenges faced by disadvantaged children while bringing positive impact on labour market participation of parents. Moreover, an integrated approach to child development is needed to link up childcare to healthcare (vaccination) and education services.

Proposals for actions of SAF in 2019-2020:
- Mapping the situation and new trends in early childcare provision in cities as well as innovative practices to improve access, availability and affordability of childcare;
- Lobby for involving cities in the new ET 2020 Working Group on Early Childcare and the relevant policy development at EU level and the peer reviews among member states;
- Build capacity of cities to develop quality frameworks for early childhood education and care, according to the 2018 Commission Recommendation, through mutual learning;
- Using the critical friend review and policy transfer method to promote good practices of inclusive education and childcare for children of migrant or disadvantaged background;
- Continue work on inclusive education and vocational training and youth employment by sharing city lessons in Youth Guarantee and the use of ESF funds in this field.

Priority 2: Inclusive labour markets preparing for the future of work and skills

Context: The economic crisis exacerbated inequalities due to the deregulation of the labour market, which led to increased job insecurity. Currently one in four work contracts in concern atypical contracts (temporary, part-time, or self-employment). The quality of jobs is at stake.

The digital transformation of industry is also changing the world of work. On one hand, it creates more flexible working arrangements that can bring a better work-life balance and enable people with disabilities or limited mobility to participate in the labour market. On the other hand, it leads to new forms of work that may increase the risk of unstable employment and the number of working poor (EU-average is up from 8% in 2008 to 9.6% in 2017). Career transitions are becoming the norm as jobs are replaced by automation and artificial intelligence.

Skill-biased technological change is driving inequalities on the labour market as many low and medium-skilled job are disappearing or being transformed. Skills mismatch is increasingly a big challenge with high unemployment in some sectors and labour shortage in others. Lifelong learning is increasingly a prerequisite to catch up with the rapid change of pace. As digital skills are becoming a requirement in our society, cities are facing a digital divide between young and elderly people, the high- and low-qualified. To bridge this digital divide, cities can invest in training, re-training and upskilling in ICT skills. To tackle the challenges technology poses to the workforce, cities should enable preparing people for the jobs and skills of tomorrow.

Proposals for actions of SAF in 2019-2020:
- Mutual learning on skills development, forecasting and matching skills and jobs by gathering innovative practices to be shared with WG Education and WG Employment;
- Formulate contribution to the EU policy debate on future of work and skills by exploring the cities' role in mediating the impact of digitalisation and new forms of work on social inclusion during a Social Innovation Lab involving all relevant WGs;
- Continue work on inclusive labour markets and tackling long-term unemployment by reinforcing cooperation between cities and the ILO, OECD and European Commission;
- Organise study visit and policy transfer on innovative city practices that support social economy to (re-)integrate people on the labour market and re-train or up-skill them;
- Build capacity to access Digital Europe funding and share lessons from using ESF funds for (re-)training and up-skilling in digital skills by gathering good practices between WG Education and WG Employment.

Priority 3: Tackling housing poverty and homelessness

Context: Housing poverty has reached record levels in the EU and has adverse impacts on the health and well-being of communities, costing nearly €194 billion per year[5]. Currently, one in ten people in the EU is a working poor and one in 20 face severe housing deprivation. Homelessness is on the rise in many big cities. Nearly one in 10 Europeans can't pay rent or utilities, or keep their house heated. Cities are facing a critical shortage of affordable housing, which creates new forms of inequality and vulnerability. The current regulation of the housing

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[5] Eurofound (2016). Inadequate housing in Europe: Costs and consequences.

market considers housing as a speculative asset, which aggravates residential exclusion and gentrification. Cities are working towards improving access to adequate and affordable housing. Many cities have committed to ensure a long-term investment in housing and end homelessness.

Proposals for actions of SAF in 2019-2020:

- Build capacity in developing integrated approaches to prevent and combat homelessness by sharing lessons and innovative practices of developing Housing First and co-housing solutions and support services (mental health, social support) (WG Housing & Homelessness);
- Mutual learning on integrated approaches in cities to support the exit from informal slums to a stable, sustainable and adequate housing (WG Roma and WG Homelessness);
- Continue work to share lessons and innovative policies on affordable housing in cities through the urban partnership on housing and in WG Housing;
- Build capacity to access InvestEU funding for infrastructure investment in social and affordable housing in cities, as well as through ERDF and other relevant EU funds;
- Mutual learning on innovative solutions to energy poverty and contributing a city perspective to the EU Energy Poverty Observatory, jointly with the Environment Forum.

Priority 4: Diversity, social cohesion and integration of refugees and migrants

Context: The influx of migrants and refugees in our cities will continue to increase the diversity in our cities. As frontline managers of social cohesion, cities have a big task on their hands to promote the positive values of diversity and mitigate the risk of social polarisation and segregation. By bringing together people from diverse backgrounds, cities can ensure social mixing in new, innovative ways. By social urban planning and regeneration of deprived neighbourhoods, cities can bring newly-arrived refugees in contact with native residents, wealthier and poorer families, young and old, to build welcoming, tolerant and inclusive communities. Social integration happens at local level and cities have a duty to leave no one behind when planning for social sustainable cities and communities.

Proposals for actions of SAF in 2019-2020:

- Continue the policy dialogue with the European Commission, Parliament, OECD, UNHCR, to influence EU policies in the field of migration and integration, and lobby for stronger involvement of cities in policy-making and more direct access to EU funding (WG Migration);
- Organise two mutual learning study visits with policy transfer on socio-economic integration of migrants, resulting in a toolkit with guidelines for cities to use;
- Reinforce support for the Solidarity Cities initiative and use lessons learned from the CitiesGrow project into policy development and mutual learning among cities;
- Prepare a bid for a new transnational project on integration of migrants under the new AMIF call with collaboration of interested cities from WG Migration and Integration;
- Continue work on Roma inclusion at local level through mutual learning study visits, policy transfer and critical friend review to develop guidelines for cities to deliver inclusion plans;
- Collect examples of social innovations in social mixing to foster social cohesion at local level and build capacity for policy transfer through mutual learning (WG Smart Social Inclusion).

Priority 5: Accessible and age-friendly services

Context: Europe is 'turning grey' and the demographic change is felt in our cities better than anywhere else. In 2017, nearly one in five people in the EU (19%) were aged 65 and more. The share of people aged 80 years or older will more than double by 2080 to reach 13% of the whole EU population. The 2018 Ageing Report shows that the working-age population will decline from 65% to 56%, and for every person aged over 65 years the number of people working will decrease from 3.3 to only 2 persons. This does not only put pressure on the pension systems regulated at national level, but also on the long-term care services available at local level.

Society is ageing and this requires that cities adapt their environment and services to make them more accessible to the elderly. Cities are already developing age-friendly strategies and tailoring services (transport, culture, adult learning) to the needs of the elderly. Cities are offering more opportunities and incentives for the elderly to continue participating fully in (digital) society. An increasing focus is on inter-generational cohesion between young and old.

Proposals for actions of SAF in 2019-2020:

- Mutual learning study visit and policy transfer on age-friendly city strategies with a focus on innovative policies and practices in tailoring city services to the needs of the elderly;
- Recruit more cities to the WHO age-friendly network and continue cooperation with the European innovation partnership on active and healthy ageing (EIP-AHA);
- Build capacity in promoting access to adult learning and training in use of digital tools, and share lessons in using ESF funds (WG urban ageing &WG Education);
- Explore ICT solutions for active ageing and digital inclusion, e.g. on e-health and e-mobility, in cooperation with WG Smart Social Inclusion and Knowledge Society Forum;
- Build capacity of cities to develop and improve municipal strategies for accessibility in line with the EU Accessibility Act, through mutual learning visit and policy transfer in cities that won the Access City Award title in previous years (with WG Barrier-free city).

4. Working methods in SAF

The SAF priorities will be implemented through:

- the Social Affairs Forum
- eight SAF working groups
- SAF steering committee
- the strategic partnership with the European Commission DG EMPL during 2018-2021 with support from the Employment and Social Innovation (EaSi) operational grant
- other policy and funding support from our institutional partners.

In all our working methods in SAF, we will prioritise a focus on the following new approaches:

- working in a **more integrated way** across WGs to address cross-cutting challenges
- more space to jointly **develop new ideas** for policies and projects on transversal issues
- focus on **innovative approaches** in policy and practice at city level
- more support for **policy transfer** of good practices

- **result-oriented approach** to mutual learning by setting clear objectives and expected outcomes and then following up after each study visit to **capture the impact** and results
- build capacity of cities on how to collect, measure and **use data** for policy solutions

Membership development

The Social Affairs Forum has welcomed 10 new members in 2017-2018 (Aix Marseille, Cluj-Napoca, Constanta, Cologne, Munster, Murcia, Palermo, Solna, Thessaloniki and Valladolid), reaching 145 members in total, the highest number of members in a forum in EUROCITIES. In 2019-2020, the Social Affairs Forum and its Working Groups will continue to attract new members and strengthen the participation of existing members by offering a variety of avenues for participation in Working Groups and Forum meetings, as well as through project work and presentations of the work of the Social Affairs Forum at external events. To attract new cities and better reach out to existing members, SAF will be guided by the following technical criteria:

a) **Geographical balance**: we will try to have all territories in the EU well represented in our Forum, both at meetings, in projects as well as in policy inputs. We will pay specific attention to involve members from Central and Eastern European cities to ensure that our Forum includes all diverse challenges and main topics of every area and reaching everyone.

b) **Gender balance**: all Working Group and Forum meetings will pay special attention to ensuring gender balance among participants, speakers and chairs / vice-chairs.

c) **Consider the language diversity**: we will seek to use more languages besides English to reach out and actively involve more cities and their representatives in our work. Whenever possible, we will try to ensure interpretation at our Forum and Working Group meetings, translate our main publications and hold webinars in more languages than English, upon request and availability of staff speaking the given languages.

d) **Digital tools**: we will aim to make more use of digital tools, such as webinars, to involve in our work the members who cannot attend the physical meetings due to cost or other reason.

e) **Activate 'dormant' members**: there are some members that, for different reasons, have not attended any Forum or Working Group meetings in recent years. We will seek to map the challenges these members are facing in their participation to our activities and gather their suggestions for specific topics and working methods that would help them to take part.

SAF will continue to involve members in driving policy and advocacy on social affairs through our Forum meetings and working groups. In addition, we will keep engaging our members in key EU policy events in direct contact with the European Commission, such as the Annual Convention for Inclusive Growth, the Migration Forum, the EU Roma Week and other key events.

Forum meetings

The meetings of the Social Affairs Forum will continue to be the milestone in our work with a strong focus on 'Learn and Share'. We will explore new methods and new ICT tools to enhance the mutual learning and sharing of know-how between city experts at our Forum meetings. We will reinforce our focus on creating synergies and exploring potential collaborations between cities, such as partner search for EU-project applications. We will also strengthen the

involvement of city politicians in driving policy and advocacy on social affairs through regular political roundtables held alongside Forum meetings.

In 2019, we wish to pilot a new, innovative format for our spring meeting. This meeting will be held in the form of a '**Social Innovation Lab'**. The focus will be on social innovations in cities and how to learn from them to explore their potential transferability to other urban contexts. The theme will tackle a cross-cutting challenge of interest to many working groups and will open a multi-dimensional debate on innovative solutions to address this challenge. The sessions will be built around co-creation, co-learning and co-sharing of ideas for new policies and new projects. The expected result is nurturing new city-to-city collaborations for common projects.

The autumn meeting will remain a 'traditional' Social Affairs Forum consisting of panel debates, workshops, speed-networking, site-visits and a political private session. We aim to get more feedback and inputs from city politicians and officers to feed into our policy and advocacy work. A stronger focus will be placed on sharing examples of cities that transferred policy or practice as a result of mutual learning in Forum or working groups. We will also facilitate more networking and partner search for developing joint projects or initiatives between cities in SAF.

Working Groups

The backbone of SAF remain our eight working groups:

WG Inclusion through Education (chair: Nantes – Jean Jacques Derrien)

WG Employment (Chair: Nantes – Celine Schroeder)

WG Migration and Integration (Chair: Athens - Lefteris Papagiannakis)

WG Housing (Chair: Vienna – Susanne Bauer)

WG Homelessness (Chair: Oslo – Tilde Hagen Knudtzon)

WG Urban Ageing (Chair: Oslo – Anne Berit Rafoss)

WG Smart Social Inclusion (Chair: Rotterdam - Kris Luijsterburg)

WG Roma Inclusion (Chair: Ghent – Maaike Buyst)

All work undertaken by working groups will relate to one or more of the SAF priorities. We will reinforce **synergies between working groups** to support cross-sectorial work on SAF priorities:

- Priority 1: A good start in life for all children and young people – relevant for **WG Education**, WG Employment, WG Roma inclusion, WG Migration and Integration
- Priority 2: Inclusive labour markets preparing for the future of work and skills – **WG Employment, WG Smart Social Inclusion**, WG Roma inclusion, WG Migration & Integration

- Priority 3: Tackling housing poverty and homelessness – **WG Housing, WG Homelessness**, WG Roma inclusion
- Priority 4: Diversity, social cohesion and integration of refugees and migrants – **WG Migration and Integration, WG Roma inclusion**, WG Smart Social Inclusion
- Priority 5: Accessible and age-friendly services – **WG Urban Ageing**, WG Smart Social Inclusion, WG Education, **WG Barrier Free Cities**.

We will focus on joint activities that bring two or more working groups together (meetings, study visits, workshops, publications) to work on cross-cutting topics. Working groups will also be encouraged to increase advocacy activities towards the EU institutions and to regularly involve in their meetings experts from the European Commission, European Parliament, OECD, ILO, etc. Policy transfer of innovative policies and practices will be at the core of WG activities. Capturing the results/impact of the mutual learning will become integral part of WG work.

Working groups will continue meeting once or twice a year, either alongside the Forum meeting or separately at the invitation of a host city. Working groups will also work in between the face-to-face meetings by using ICT technologies, such as webinars, emails and similar tools.

Steering Committee

The SAF will continue to be managed by the Steering Committee which consists of the SAF chair, vice-Chair and the working groups' chairs and vice-chairs as well as the EUROCITIES team in charge of coordinating SAF. The Steering Committee members will meet before and after each Forum meeting. They will also meet for a training session at the beginning of each year to discuss matters of cross-cutting importance as well as ways to further develop and advance the work of the forum and synergies between the working groups. The face-to-face interaction will be complemented by webinars, email and telephone contact between meetings.

On policy issues that transcend the thematic scope of individual working groups, such as urban poverty, rising inequalities and social exclusion, the Steering Committee will strengthen cross-cutting work and gather inputs from all relevant working groups. This will be undertaken, among others, through strengthening the contributions of working groups to SAF policy statements, to Forum meetings as well as in the context of the EU urban agenda partnerships.

In 2019-2020, the Steering Committee will aim to improve the monitoring and coordination of the progress of SAF in achieving the set priorities as well as communicating more regularly this progress to the SAF members. We will explore new methods and tools to share real-time and accessible information on most relevant issues to SAF members and involving them in our work.

Strategic partnership with DG EMPL

The work of SAF is supported through a multiannual framework partnership with DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL), financed under the European Programme for Employment and Innovation (EaSI) for the period of 2018 to 2021. Through this operational grant (renewed annually), EUROCITIES receives resources to bring cities' voice into the EU social agenda, promote EU social policies at local level, collect evidence on new social trends in cities

and build capacity of EUROCITIES and its members to engage in the EU policy making. Specifically, in 2019-2020, this grant will support SAF members to get more involved in the European Semester process and the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

Thanks to the operational grant through the partnership with DG EMPL, SAF has the capacity and resources to organise the following types of mutual learning activities involving members:

- **study visits** for peer-to-peer learning to explore good practices of the host city;
- **mentoring visits** where the host city receives advice from one or more mentor cities;
- **peer reviews** when experts from different cities visit to evaluate against a benchmark the performance of the host city;
- **critical friend reviews**, which are a type of peer reviews with a focus on giving the feedback in a friendly, positive and constructive way to the host city.

5. SAF Contribution to the EUROCITIES work programme 2019 and the strategic framework 2014-2020

The Social Affairs Forum will link to the EUROCITIES Strategic Framework 2014 – 2020 and work programme 2019 by providing evidence on the role of **cities as drivers of quality jobs** through its contribution to the EUROCITIES high-level roundtable on employment, its work on youth employment and tackling long-term unemployment as well as the contribution to the Urban Agenda partnership on jobs and skills.

On the theme of **inclusive, diverse and creative cities**, SAF will continue to prioritise the contribution to the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights as the overarching policy framework for our work in SAF. We intend to initiate a new political initiative on 'Inclusive Cities for All' to involve city mayors and deputy mayors who wish to commit to deliver actions in line with the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights. Furthermore, we will continue to support the Solidarity Cities and attract more cities to join the initiative. We will disseminate the findings from our new Integrating Cities report and feed them into our policy and advocacy work. We will also use the results of the CitiesGrow project to strengthen our cross-cutting work on the labour market integration of migrants.

We will continue to be closely involved in the work on the **Urban Agenda for the EU** and contribute to the urban partnerships by involving SAF members and providing inputs on the themes of affordable housing, urban poverty, migrant integration and public procurement.

SAF will contribute to the cross-cutting work of EUROCITIES on the Sustainable Development Goals. Our intention is to link the work already done in SAF and create synergies with the Economic Development and Environment Forums to facilitate common solutions for the task.

We will continue to strengthen our strategic partnership with DG EMPL. We will also continue working with the European Parliament (relevant committees and inter-groups), Committee of the Regions, the EU's Fundamental Rights Agency, International Labour Organisation (ILO), OECD and other institutional partners. We will also keep up and reinforce our synergies with

EU-umbrella civil society organisations in the social policy field, namely FEANTSA, Housing Europe, Social Platform, PICUM, COFACE, EAPN etc.

We will continue to take part in all major EU forums and events, such as the Annual Convention for Inclusive Growth, the European Migration Forum, the European Platform for Roma Inclusion and the European Education Summit, among others, to advocate for EU policies that acknowledge the key role of cities in delivering policies and providing services that help citizens access and enjoy their social rights and lead to tangibly improve people's lives.

We will also encourage project development in our forum and working groups. We will aim to build capacity of SAF members to apply for EU funding through sharing timely information on funding opportunities, exchanging know-how and facilitating consortium-building and project ideas development through webinars, dedicated workshops and focus groups. We will support joint EU project applications when at least 5 members from 3 different countries are involved.

Cooperation with other EUROCITIES forums

The Social Affairs Forum plans to **work together with other EUROCITIES Forums** in 2019-2020 to strengthen the coherence and complementarity in reaching the priorities of SAF and EUROCITIES. Specifically, we aim at synergies on overlapping topics with the following Forums:

- Economic Development Forum (EDF) on social economy, innovation and entrepreneurship, jobs and skills, and long-term investment
- Environment Forum on circular economy and energy poverty
- Knowledge Society Forum (KSF) on digital skills and e-solutions for active ageing
- Culture Forum on social cohesion through culture
- Mobility forum (WG Barrier-free city) on accessibility.

We will continue to map synergies with other Forums and working groups on transversal topics, and to provide SAF inputs to other Forums' work as relevant.

Overview of the SAF strategy for 2019-2020 with intervention logic

CONTEXT	Inputs	Activities	Outcomes	Impact
rising inequality, child poverty, rise in homeless, influx of refugees & migrants, digital gap and skills mismatch, new forms of work and working poor, ageing society, rise in populism.	8 working groups	Mutual learning and policy transfer (study and mentoring visits, peer reviews, critical friend review)	Better know-how of cities to address social challenges	Improved local and EU social policies:
	Coordination by steering committee		Better capacity to implement EU social policies	1. A good start in life for all children and young people
	145 members involved in SAF	Lobbying & advocacy	Influence EU social policy-making	2. Inclusive labour markets preparing for the future of work and skills
		Policy development		3. Reduced housing poverty and homelessness
	Strategic partnership with DG EMPL and EaSi operational grant	Project development with EU funding	New joint projects and collaborations	4. More diversity, social cohesion and integration of refugees and migrants
		Social innovations	Transfer and upscale of social innovations	5. Accessible and age-friendly services
	Cooperation with other Forums	Identifying new trends & good practices	Better recognition of cities' challenges and role in social policy	

Policy context: European Pillar of Social Rights, European Semester, ESF+

Inclusive & cohesive cities with equal opportunities for all