

## Mayors 10 priorities for European citizens and cities

As the 2024-2029 political mandate of the European Union begins, we, European mayors, propose 10 priorities to take greater account of citizens and cities at European level.

The need for a strong European Union that defends respect for the rule of law, fundamental rights and democratic values, has not been more apparent since its early days. The daily challenges experienced by many Europeans include access to affordable housing and essential public services, securing a job that offers a decent salary, paying energy bills, and putting healthy food on the table. The rise in the cost of living is putting more middle-income people at risk of poverty and vulnerable groups at risk of social exclusion. The impacts of the climate crisis and the industrial transformation, as well as war in Europe, further add to the sense of insecurity and instability. These crises have deepened existing inequalities and created fertile ground for populism across our continent. Populism drives hostilities, increases alienation, disregards women's and minorities' rights, and undermines Europe's social fabric and our ability to live together. As mayors of Europe's larger cities, we are deeply concerned by the increased divisions in our societies.

Today, 75% of Europe's population lives in urban areas. As the closest and most trusted political representatives of the people, we mayors are leading locally, in conjunction with rural areas, the response to the many significant issues affecting our European societies. We are committed to the European project as a relevant level of action and an area of solidarity, peace and security. We are committed to the fundamental European values of human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, rule of law, justice, and human rights. We promote citizen participation, bring citizens closer to Europe, and lead by example, developing solutions that can be a source of inspiration for the European Union. Cities make a difference to most Europeans by offering a good quality of life in sustainable, inclusive and well-managed urban and metropolitan areas. These assets are highly relevant for a European Union with the ambition to drive a global climate leadership, engage people and industry in the societal transformation, and reinforce Europe's proud policies of cohesion, solidarity, social inclusion, and combatting inequalities. We are convinced that cities are making a decisive contribution to a more united Europe, closer to the people, that cities can be greater actors of the European Union, and that "a better Europe starts in cities."

On the occasion of the European Mayors' Summit in Strasbourg, seat of the European Parliament and Europe's democratic capital, we, European mayors, call on the Members of the European Parliament and the European institutions to collaborate with urban leaders to achieve concrete results for citizens by 2029 towards:



## **A MORE DEMOCRATIC EUROPEAN UNION**

As democratically elected representatives, mayors and Members of the European Parliament are foundations of democracy in Europe. Our closer cooperation shall reinforce Europe's democratic life and make a difference to the daily lives of Europeans. We also believe that it is the only way forward to fight the rise of populism in Europe. During this mandate, the European Union should strengthen its democratic legitimacy by reinforcing the role of the European Parliament as the direct representative of citizens in the EU's decision-making process. Concomitantly, the European Union should build a long-term urban policy and a new partnership with city leaders to decide and deliver European policies that reflect the needs of citizens.



## **ZERO-EMISSION MOBILITY**

Urban inhabitants need to rely on a convenient, sustainable and reliable mobility to encourage shifts toward public transport, walking, and cycling, and create solidarity between urban and rural areas. During this mandate, the European Union should radically increase investment in sustainable urban transport systems to achieve this ambition.



## **ACCELERATED CLIMATE ACTION**

Cities are already exposed to the dramatic consequences of climate change. At the same time, they are key to achieving the European Union's climate targets. During this European mandate, the EU should stick to its climate ambition by reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 90% by 2040, and help cities to implement sustainable transport, energy-efficient buildings, widespread renewable energy adoption, and to adapt to climate change.



## **WELCOMING AND INCLUSIVE CITIES**

Cities are welcoming places for refugees and people in need of international protection. They are committed to the principles of universal human rights and equal access to asylum, regardless of one's background or origins. During this mandate, the European Union should mainstream cities as integration stakeholders by systematically including them in the European migration and asylum policy, and by providing them with direct funding to better integrate refugees in urban communities. Local leaders are also calling for a new strategic alliance with the European Union to give a new impetus to the European Pillar of Social Rights (20 objectives for national social policies, adopted in 2017) and address rising social and economic inequalities in cities.



## ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE AND QUALITY HOUSING

Urban areas urgently need more social and affordable housing. Lack of housing supply creates inequality and puts vulnerable groups at risk of poverty and social exclusion. During this mandate, the EU should have developed a new European Housing Deal, supported by a long-term investment plan with at least €50 billion per year and a partnership between the European Union, national governments, and cities.



## A SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE CULTURE

Culture, arts, heritage and the creative industries develop imagination and should be considered cultural rights. They are a powerful lever to support positive change. They are also drivers for economic development and city attractiveness. During this mandate, the European Union should take more action to stimulate the green transition of the cultural and creative sectors towards a sustainable and inclusive culture.



## HUMAN-CENTRED DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Citizens are increasingly aware of online risks, such as online harassment of children, and call for a human-centred and balanced approach combining cyber security, responsibility and respect for digital rights. During this mandate, the European Union should implement a comprehensive EU Digital Rights Governance framework, support cities to uphold fundamental human rights online and address the digital divide.



## STRONGER URBAN ECONOMIES AND CLEAN INDUSTRIES FOR BETTER JOBS

Urban economies are essential for local industries and innovation ecosystems. During this mandate, the European Union should recognise cities' central role in the Green Deal Industrial Plan (the EU's plan to decarbonise industry by 2050), encourage cities' partnerships with local industries, support cities as shareholders in strategic net-zero projects, and invest in local utility companies to ensure good employment opportunities. In this context, the European Union should empower cities to use public procurement more strategically and shape public markets toward sustainability and social responsibility.



## **SUFFICIENT PUBLIC INVESTMENTS FOR LOCAL NEEDS**

Local public investment is crucial to finance essential public services, climate action, and city development. Cities are fundamental to how we respond to the major challenges Europe is facing, but are hindered by European rules. During this mandate, the European Union should adopt more favourable legislation for local public investment and public services, revise the European rules on public deficits, and guide national governments toward greater fiscal decentralisation. It should also adopt an ambitious European budget that supports investment in sustainable urban development, including in the health and food sectors and how they relate to rural areas.



## **A ROLE FOR CITIES IN THE ENLARGEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**

European cities from the European Union and from candidate countries are engaged in numerous cooperation projects, either city-to-city or in networks like Eurocities. They build bridges between their inhabitants, bring them closer together, and develop their sense of belonging to the same community. This has been the case when cities welcome refugees from Ukraine. This type of cooperation encourages the sharing of best practices, speeding up adherence to the European acquis, and prepares candidate countries to join the European Union. During this mandate, the European Union should further involve cities in the enlargement process and support their cooperation to prepare for the enlargement of the European Union.

We, European mayors, will pay close attention to the progress of the implementation of our priorities. For this purpose, we intend to meet Members of the European Parliament regularly throughout this mandate to ensure that these priorities are shared with the European Parliament.

Done at Strasbourg, 21 October 2024

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