**Implementing the New Leipzig Charter**

**Through Multi-Level Governance:**

**Next Steps for the Urban Agenda for the EU**

**I. The Continued Need for Multi-Level Urban Governance in Europe**

The New Leipzig Charter with its set of strategic principles of good urban governance provides a framework guiding post-2020 urban policy coordination in Europe. This framework reaffirms the objectives and achievements of the Pact of Amsterdam, thus linking the Urban Agenda for the EU’s working method to the New Leipzig Charter’s strategic principles.

**We, the Ministers responsible for urban matters, emphasise** that the Urban Agenda for the EU as a valuable implementation instrument towards more coherent and urban-friendly policies will be continued and developed further to strengthen its impact and efficiency.

**1. Consolidating, Delivering and Advancing the Urban Agenda for the EU**

**We, the Ministers, highlight** that the Urban Agenda for the EU has clearly fostered multi-level and multi-stakeholder governance in Europe and has had a positive effect on the cooperation between local and regional authorities, Member States, the European Commission and other EU institutions, and further urban stakeholders. The key achievement is that the Urban Agenda for the EU has given local and regional authorities the opportunity to discuss urban priority themes with European institutions, national ministries and other partners – jointly identifying possible solutions to enhance the complementarity and coherence of EU policies affecting urban areas and to strengthen their urban dimension. This is in line with the crucial role of cities in multi-level policymaking.

The European Commission’s assessment of the first years of implementing the Urban Agenda for the EU has shown manifold encouraging findings, but also leaves room for improvement inherent to an initiative of this kind and ambition.

**We underline** the importance of the Urban Agenda for theEU as a means to foster the implementation of the United Nations New Urban Agenda and to pursue the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals’ urban dimensions.

**We agree** that we need to make the Urban Agenda for the EU more impactful and efficient in the future and to harness the achievements of the process to date. Hereby, the three key pillars laid out in the Pact of Amsterdam – Better Regulation, Better Funding and Better Knowledge (Base and Exchange) – continue to be instrumental.

Resource constraints being mentioned as an important issue to address by the Urban Agenda for the EU’s assessment, adequate funding and effective implementation structures based on multi-level governance are pivotal for a more impactful delivery of the Urban Agenda for the EU.

**We welcome** the European Urban Initiative under Cohesion Policy as an instrument to support the Urban Agenda for the EU and to strengthen integrated and participatory approaches as well as to foster coherence between EU policies, programmes and initiatives in the area of sustainable urban development. The strengthened urban dimension of Cohesion Policy needs to be based on and should contribute to the principles of the New Leipzig Charter, and promote the concept of functional areas where relevant, thus fostering a harmonious and balanced development for Europe.

**At the same time, we emphasise** that all stakeholders and governmental levels involved should actively explore all possibilities to allocate resources to the Urban Agenda for the EU, taking into account the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality.

***2. Maintaining and Reinforcing Multi-Level and Multi-Stakeholder Cooperation***

The multi-level and multi-stakeholder approach as well as the unique opportunity, particularly for local and regional authorities, to enter into a dialogue between all relevant levels have been identified as important strengths and achievements of the Urban Agenda for the EU.The same goes for the Thematic Partnership approach and the flexible, ‘experimental’ nature of the Partnerships. Yet, the lack of clear and transparent processes, requirements and specific objectives, as well as an uneven level of engagement among stakeholders are issues to be addressed.

**We, the Ministers, reaffirm** that multi-level and multi-stakeholder Thematic Partnerships remain the key delivery mode of the Urban Agenda for the EU, among the wider set of actions aimed at improving the urban dimension of EU policies, as established by the Pact of Amsterdam. Other forms of cooperation in line with the multi-level and multi-stakeholder principles that contribute to sustainable urban development should be considered.

**We therefore agree on** a more flexible setup of Thematic Partnerships in terms of duration, composition, and outputs within a more targeted, balanced and transparent framework in the future. This implies that concrete goals will determine the Partnerships’ work. The involvement of cities of all sizes is crucial. Partner selection will follow dedicated calls for Partnerships based on ex-ante assessments, aiming to safeguard a suitable level of partners’ thematic and procedural expertise. Adequate resources will ensure Partnerships can deliver according to their objectives and operate within low-threshold administrative procedures. In order to assure effectiveness and a higher impact, close cooperation with representatives of the relevant sector-specific European Commission Directorates-General and national ministries should be operational from the start of each Partnership.

**We point out** that it is crucial to build on the valuable body of work produced by the 14 Thematic Partnerships since 2016. Stronger transfer of experiences as well as stronger cooperation between Partnerships need to be promoted. The implementation of existing Action Plans is an ongoing process that deserves ongoing attention.

New themes for Thematic Partnerships should be in line with and provide input to EU policy priorities and initiatives, especially when these have a clear urban dimension. This applies in particular to the European Green Deal, the European Pillar of Social Rights, the European Digital Strategy, and the Recovery Plan for Europe – connecting also with global priorities highlighted in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and New Urban Agenda.

***3. Achieving Better Regulation, Better Funding and Policy Coherence***

**We, the Ministers, acknowledge** that the Partnerships of the Urban Agenda for the EU have provided useful insights into bottlenecks and challenges related to the implementation of EU policies and legislation. At the same time, the Urban Agenda for the EU assessment has found relatively few actions focused on Better Regulation or Better Funding. Consequently, these streams require a more targeted approach. Their future delivery needs to be intimately linked to the EU policymaking and funding cycles and existing institutions and processes.

**We emphasise** that structural legal and procedural expertise is key and needs to be available to the Partnerships to ensure close links to the Better Regulation Agenda, including the Fit for Future Platform.

**We therefore recommend** that the future Urban Agenda for the EU provides dedicated and specialised legal support to the Thematic Partnerships – and other multi-level governance instruments under its umbrella – in order to foster legislative actions and recommendations.

**We commit** to duly consider, as appropriate, the actions and recommendations emerging from the Urban Agenda for the EU.

***4. Ensuring Better Knowledge and Stronger Communication***

The Urban Agenda for the EU assessment yielded a need for improved internal communication among key actors. For the purpose of more transparency, ownership, and a better flow of information particularly on the implementation of actions, the horizontal and vertical dialogue for urban policy should be strengthened.

**We, the Ministers, highlight** that both elements of the Better Knowledge stream – knowledge base and knowledge exchange – should be pursued with a differentiated and targeted approach. Hereby, the Partnerships should be able to capitalise on existing support structures and to involve relevant partners. With regard to knowledge base these are in particular the knowledge policy units within the Commission’s Directorates-General, the Commission’s Joint Research Centre, Eurostat, JPI Urban Europe, and other knowledge programmes and networks. Knowledge exchange, capacity and knowledge building should be supported by the Cohesion Policy programmes and initiatives, in particular by the European Urban Initiative and the URBACT programme. In general, the manifold research and innovation activities supporting science-policy cooperation offer a big potential and should be considered in the future Urban Agenda for the EU process.

**We acknowledge** the need for a stronger strategic alignment between the Territorial Agenda 2030, the urban dimension of Cohesion Policy, national urban policy frameworks, and the Urban Agenda for the EU. At the local and regional level, a wider circle of cities and stakeholders should benefit from the outcomes of the Urban Agenda for the EU.

**We therefore regard** communication hubs as pivotal to support the relevant capitalisation, communication and dissemination activities. This can, for example, be achieved through the establishment ofNational Contact Points. Hereby, the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality need to be safeguarded and the duplication of structures should be avoided. An engagement with the stakeholders from third countries in the frameworks established by global intergovernmental organisations forms another important channel of dissemination and dialogue.

***5. Governing the Urban Agenda for the EU with Efficient Decision-Making and Support Structures***

**We, the Ministers, confirm** that significant progress has been made in strengthening the urban dimension and the creation of a common framework for urban policy initiatives through the Urban Agenda for the EU. The assessment of the Urban Agenda for the EU clearly demonstrates that its achievements are related to the strengthened cooperation between local and regional authorities, Member States and the European Commission and in close partnership with other relevant European institutions and stakeholders. However, the assessment also indicates that the Urban Agenda for the EU lacks an effective governance mechanism and that the outreach to stakeholders as well as the implementation of the actions require more attention.

**We acknowledge** the key role of Member States in addressing these shortcomings to deliver a more impactful Urban Agenda for the EU in the future.

The Directors-General for Urban Matters (DGUM) represent the central coordinating and decision-making body of the Urban Agenda for the EU, advised and supported by the Urban Development Group (UDG) as outlined in the Pact of Amsterdam. The DGUM and the UDG will continue to benefit from the preparatory work by the Urban Agenda Technical Preparatory Group (UATPG).

For the future delivery of the Urban Agenda for the EU, the Partnerships will require communication, expertise, management and administrative support, as well as guidance regarding cross-cutting issues and stronger cooperation among each other. Member States and the European Commission will jointly conduct ex-ante assessments, prepare the relevant calls for Partnerships, monitor progress, and capitalise on the learnings and results in a transparent manner. At the same time, there is a need to support inter-governmental cooperation on urban matters in line with the Presidency Trio’s priorities, thus promoting strategic analysis and synthesis, coherence and continuity within and between Trio programmes, providing support to the DGUM and UDG, and ultimately strengthening urban policies in Member States.

**We therefore agree** that a dedicated and permanent support structure can deliver these tasks in the most coordinated and efficient way, and will therefore work towards the establishment of a Secretariat. This will result in an overall stronger cooperation and a greater impact at the urban scale across Europe.

**We additionally recommend** setting up a High-Level Group on the Urban Agenda for the EU in order to drive progress on urban matters at EU level, and to inspire a strategic and political cross-sectoral agenda for cities and regions in Europe. This policy exchange group should be composed of high-level representatives from cities, Member States, Members of the European Parliament and relevant Commissioners.

***II. Conclusions***

**We, the Ministers responsible for urban matters, commit to** implement the principles of the New Leipzig Charter and to sustain the continued multi-level governance and partnership approach within the Urban Agenda for the EU. We call upon all our partners to work with us to this end within the scope of their competences. In particular, we:

CALL ON the Commission:

1. to continue playing an active role in the further development and implementation of the Urban Agenda for the EU in line with the strategic principles set out in the New Leipzig Charter and in close cooperation with the Directors-General for Urban Matters, the Urban Development Group and all other stakeholders;
2. to continue facilitating the implementation of the Urban Agenda for the EU through the provision of support of the European Urban Initiative as referred to in Art. 10 of the proposed ERDF regulation (XX2018) and by way of ensuring engagement of the relevant Directorates-General in the process;
3. to ensure the continuity, coherence and coordination of the Urban Agenda for the EU by supporting, where relevant, the implementation of the set of actions and recommendations emerging from the Urban Agenda for the EU to date, as well as by future Thematic Partnerships or other multi-level and multi-stakeholder delivery modes established under the Urban Agenda for the EU;
4. to continue its efforts of further strengthening its coordination and streamlining of policies affecting urban areas in order to enhance the complementarity of policies and to strengthen their urban dimension, in particular in the areas of Better Regulation, Better Funding and Better Knowledge;
5. to align its actions on strengthening the urban dimension of EU policies to the Urban Agenda for the EU, in particular regarding its political priorities, work programme, legislative work, and planned consultations;
6. to continue to explore improved assessments of urban and territorial dimensions, where relevant, as part of impact assessments;
7. to report back regularly to the DG Meeting on Urban Matters, on the implementation and results of the Urban Agenda for the EU;
8. to ensure the continued contribution of the Urban Agenda for the EU to the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular their urban dimensions;
9. to take into account the potential and the results of the Urban Agenda for the EU in the preparation and delivery of the Conference on the Future of Europe process.

CALL ON the Member States:

1. to take appropriate steps for and engage relevant bodies at all levels of government in the further development and implementation of the Urban Agenda for the EU in line with the strategic principles set out in the New Leipzig Charter and in line with the respective competences and the principle of subsidiarity and proportionality;
2. to support, where relevant, the implementation of the actions and recommendations emerging from the Urban Agenda for the EU to date, as well as by future Thematic Partnerships or other multi-level and multi-stakeholder delivery modes established under the Urban Agenda for the EU;
3. to contribute to improving the linkages between national urban policy frameworks and the Urban Agenda for the EU, inter alia by establishing communication hubs to support the relevant capitalisation, communication and dissemination activities;
4. to ensure the continued contribution of the Urban Agenda for the EU to the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular their urban dimensions;
5. to consider setting up a High-Level Group on the Urban Agenda for the EU in order to drive progress on urban matters at EU level, and to inspire a strategic and political cross-sectoral agenda for cities and regions in Europe.

ENCOURAGE the local and regional authorities:

1. to take an active role in the implementation of the Urban Agenda for the EU in line with the strategic principles set out in the New Leipzig Charter and in line with their respective competences and the principle of subsidiarity;
2. to capitalise on their own expertise, knowledge and capacity as well as that of specialist European networks such as the Council of European Municipalities and Regions and EUROCITIES and the URBACT programme when participating in the Urban Agenda for the EU;
3. to cooperate with other local and regional authorities of all sizes, the private sector, local communities, knowledge institutions and civil society in advancing the Urban Agenda for the EU.

INVITE the European Parliament:

1. to consider, where appropriate, the results and recommendations of Thematic Partnerships or other multi-level and multi-stakeholder delivery modes established under the Urban Agenda for the EU, after guidance by the Directors-General for Urban Matters, for the agenda of relevant Committees when discussing relevant new and existing EU legislation.

INVITE the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee:

1. to provide input and support, within their competences, to the further development and implementation of the Urban Agenda for the EU in line with the strategic principles set out in the New Leipzig Charter;
2. to contribute to the objectives of Better Regulation, Better Funding and Better Knowledge by way of supporting the Thematic Partnerships or other multi-level and multi-stakeholder delivery modes established under the Urban Agenda for the EU with legal and procedural expertise, and by way of dissemination activities aiming to involve a broader range of stakeholders in the process.

INVITE the European Investment Bank:

1. to contribute to the work of Thematic Partnerships or other multi-level and multi-stakeholder delivery modes established under the Urban Agenda for the EU, especially with regard to Better Funding and Better Knowledge, with its financial expertise;
2. to reflect, where relevant, the strategic principles of the New Leipzig Charter and the objectives of the Urban Agenda for the EU in its lending, grant-loan blending and advisory services approach in the urban context taking into account the need to support sustainable urban and regional development strategies;
3. to develop financial instruments and financing approaches in support of the strategic principles of the New Leipzig Charter, working together with other international financial institutions and promotional banks;
4. to work with urban stakeholders to design and implement circular and innovative business models required to achieve climate-neutral, socially sustainable and productive cities.