

# VIENNA DECLARATION

by the Mayors of the EU Capital Cities -

“A strong voice in Europe”

21 April 2015

## Introduction

Europe is a continent of cities. Cities constitute a major pillar supporting the concept of a united Europe. EU policies shape the lives and everyday experience of the people in Europe; they also shape the economy and the innovative power of major cities in Europe. Our populations are European and international, and cities are a powerful force for promoting integration of peoples from Europe and around the world. Our solutions for living together are diverse as the framework conditions are different in every country and city. Thoroughly considered, consistent and committed decisions and actions are taken day by day in the cities of Europe to protect and enhance social and gender equity, sustainable economic growth and the future of democracy in Europe. European cities work every day to create truly democratic and inclusive societies. European cities are development test beds. Social and economic developments originate in cities. We, the Mayors of the EU Capital Cities are therefore convinced that the European Union must focus even more strongly on the urban dimension.

## I. Urban agenda: systematic involvement of cities in EU policies

We, the Mayors of the EU Capital Cities, are strategic partners in shaping the European Union's future regional and urban policy. Our joint goal is an Urban Agenda **stipulating an urban dimension in all relevant EU decision-making processes.**

Cities should therefore be involved in the entire policy making process. Existing structures and instruments must be adapted accordingly. For example, impact assessments must also include the territorial consequences a proposed measure would have on cities (**Urban Impact Assessment**). Consequently, cities must be involved in the European policy making process at the earliest possible stage. It is therefore **essential to systematically expand** the EU Commission's **expert groups** by including **representatives of cities**. Efforts have been made to include cities in the development of the Member States' national reform programmes (NRPs) and in the partnership agreements for the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), but in practice progress has been limited.

The drafting of a European Urban Agenda in the **Council of the European Union** should be a continuous process implemented in cooperation with cities. For this purpose, the **different processes at EU level need to be coordinated**, particularly the Urban Agenda to be implemented by the European Commission and the urban topics on the agenda of the Urban Development Group in the Council of the European Union.

In the past as in the present, the **European Parliament** has been an important partner for us when it comes to recognising urban interests, not least through the work of the Urban Intergroup. Given that some cities and regions in the EU have already granted MEPs the right to speak in their municipal or regional elected assemblies, the Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament should equally include a **right to speak for elected political representatives of cities**, their associations and networks. European Parliament hearings are valuable opportunities for the voices of elected political representatives to be heard, and their use should be expanded, in particular when an urban dimension to a proposal has been identified.

In future, the **participation of experts from cities** should be supported more strongly when **national experts are posted** to European institutions.

## **II. Freedom of choice and maintaining the cities' scope of action**

**In consistent compliance with the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality**, the European Commission should limit its role to defining goals or setting framework conditions. It is crucial to consider the regional and local significance of proposed measures. The cities must, however, be free to decide how these goals can be attained, adapting to local circumstances. In particular in the fields of climate mitigation, air quality, welfare policies, mobility and public services (Services of General Economic Interest - SGEIs) the approach taken by individual cities may vary widely depending on the conditions at local level.

The potential of trade for growth – and job creation – in general has always been acknowledged by cities, especially the major European cities. The interconnectedness of a globalised world can not only be seen from an economic perspective, though. In respect of the Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations, there is a special responsibility to create good living conditions for all citizens of all involved partners in trade agreements. It is equally important that free trade agreements **avoid restrictions on the freedom of choice cities have** in providing their services. ISDS provisions in particular must be critically examined in this context.

In future, the distribution of EU resources must **reflect population density** more closely. Major cities have both the expertise and administrative capacities needed to ensure targeted use of resources and because of their proximity to large numbers of citizens and businesses, are in a position to maximise the impact of investment on key Europe 2020 goals. For the same reason, moves by Member States to devolve powers and associated budgets to cities should be welcomed.

For instance, the European Commission has made available funding for initiatives to combat **youth unemployment**, but many Member States have not claimed these resources so far. The European Commission should therefore examine the possibility of **making part of the unused funds directly available to the major cities in Europe** where youth unemployment is a particularly urgent problem.

Cities' **financial scope of action** is restricted in particular by the provisions of the Fiscal Compact that entered into force on 1 January 2013, often in combination with agreements within Member States. For some cities, the ability to make urgently needed investments in long-term public infrastructure projects is limited by fiscal consolidation measures at EU and national level. This is a particular challenge for those cities experiencing rapid population growth. Consideration must be given at EU and member state level as to how cities can be enabled to make essential and growth enhancing public investment.

We would therefore welcome an **open discussion on how current provisions could be modified to reflect a specific, proactive perspective**. In this context, the conditions for the calculation of the **public deficit limit** in order to better **enable future-oriented investments shall be examined** - in the field of public services, in measures to reduce youth unemployment, to promote social welfare investments or renewable energies, and to mitigating climate change. The current Investment Offensive for Europe constitutes a first step in the right direction.

In the interest of the joint implementation of multilevel governance and the further development of urban policy at European level, the Mayors of the EU Capital Cities call for the following measures to be implemented:

1. integration of the urban dimension in all EU decision-making processes;
2. standardised implementation of Urban Impact Assessments;
3. systematic inclusion of representatives from cities in EC experts groups; support for the posting of experts from cities as national experts;
4. European Council: coordination of the different processes concerning cities at EU level;

5. European Parliament: right to speak for elected political representatives of cities; increased use of hearings to ensure city representatives are heard
6. consistent compliance with the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality;
7. population density as a criterion for the distribution of EU resources; further devolution of powers to cities
8. youth unemployment: making available unclaimed EU funding directly to the major cities most strongly affected by this problem;
9. free trade agreements: no restrictions on cities' freedom of choice;
10. cities' financial scope of action: open discussion on making existing provisions more flexible and proactive in order to support for future-oriented public investments for jobs and growth.

## **The Mayors of the EU Capital Cities**

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