



**Progressive and Sustainable Cities – Our vision for post-Covid urban policy.  
Adopted by the PES Presidency on 18 February 2021**

Three quarters of the European Union's population live in and around cities. Our urban areas are facing several pressing and fundamental policy challenges that must be faced. Inequality and poverty are on the rise, against the backdrop of a worsening climate crisis. We cannot ignore the many gaps that have opened up between urban and rural areas. Without urgent action, our cities and conurbations of all types and sizes will continue to be riven by spatial segregation and unequal access to public services, housing and opportunities, with deteriorating air pollution and vulnerability to heatwaves. Cities and their regions have suffered the most from the virus, and it is crucial that we provide an answer to the feelings of insecurity about health, employment, housing, safety in public spaces and the future that dominate many of our fellow citizens' lives. Dedicated proposals are needed for cities to achieve the green, just and digital transitions without leaving anyone behind.

Our European family must now engage fully with the urban dimension and work with local and regional authorities to adapt our policies to cities. Therefore, the PES Presidency welcomes the proposals formulated in the document *Leading the way for Progressive and Sustainable Cities*.

Across Europe, citizens have seen that they can rely on our movement's representatives in local and regional authorities to deliver on public services, sustainability and safety. We stand by the thousands of socialist and progressive mayors and councillors, and we welcome our strong cooperation with the PES Group in the European Committee of the Regions and PES Local as a grassroots network.

The three axes of our family's action are the European Pillar of Social Rights, the European Green Deal and the European Democracy Action Plan, and we must pay close attention to their local implementation. Many of the rights guaranteed by the Social Pillar, including the right to housing, to education and childcare, to employment support, and to gender equality and equal opportunities, relate to competencies of local and regional authorities. Likewise, the energy transition foreseen by the European Green Deal relies on finding savings and efficiencies where people live, which is predominantly in urban areas. Finally, strengthening our democracies can only be achieved through increased participation starting at the level closest to citizens: local government.

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- We want to improve wellbeing, through greater investment in local health and education services, sports, arts and culture, more green spaces and public safety for all based on policing by consent.
- We want to tackle growing inequality and all types of poverty in cities through a paradigm shift in housing policy, a commitment to quality childcare, education and training and outreach to migrants and asylum seekers. Thanks to our campaign for the 2019 European elections and the work of our common candidate, now Executive Vice President of the European Commission, Frans Timmermans, and the Progressive Housing Week in January 2021, we were able to sound the alarm about the European scope of the housing crisis. Over 85 million Europeans are overburdened by their housing costs. Principle 19 of the Social Pillar commits us to providing housing to those in need, but this is sadly insufficient: faced with the rampant financialisation of housing, we must declare housing to be a right, not a commodity!
- We want cities to reflect the diversity of their inhabitants by taking into account gender bias in policy design, celebrating minority groups and including their diverse experiences in policymaking, and adapting infrastructure and services to the elderly and those with disabilities.
- We want to rethink urban and interurban mobility by reallocating space and infrastructure investment away from private cars towards collective public transport and soft modes of transportation, bicycles and pedestrians. Every year an estimated 379,000 of our fellow citizens die prematurely due to air pollution, an unseen public health emergency which we have a duty to address by investing massively in affordable collective public transportation and road infrastructure that works for pedestrians and cyclists. The city should be opened up to the children, young people, women, parents and older people who predominantly rely on softer forms of mobility and who have a right to a greener and healthier city.
- We want to foster active local democracy rooted in good governance practices by increasing citizen deliberation, teaching children the value of civic participation, promoting gender-balanced election lists, encouraging participative and gender budgeting, and ensuring complete transparency in procurement decisions and access to public data.
- We want to put in place sustainable growth strategies that preserve cities' role as attractive hubs of job creation and innovation while introducing circularity, reducing waste and making sure we strike the right balance between residents and tourists.
- We want cities to make full use of the dedicated funding instruments available to them, to make investments for the future that are built on sound public finances.

European cities share a collective identity, based on our social model, our commitment to fighting the climate crisis and our democratic history; these are only improved by the cultural specificities that make our Union what it is. As we turn our attentions to the prospect of renewal and rebuilding after the pandemic, it is essential that ideas for and ideas by Europe's cities feed into our aspirations for just and sustainable societies. Without a new vision for urban and regional development, Europe will not be able to realise its full potential as a beacon of carbon-neutrality, inclusive democracy and social equality. The PES will continue to work hand in hand with cities and local representatives to turn these proposals into concrete improvements in our fellow citizens' lives.