



Brussels 20Urban23 Summit



Brussels statement on connecting and empowering cities Urban answers to global challenges

1. Urban leadership

Cities around the world are growing. By 2050, 68 per cent of the population worldwide is projected to live in urban areas. Today we make the decisions to ensure sustainable, inclusive, and well-managed cities for future generations.

The major challenges the world is facing - including climate change, economic productivity, social inequalities, land use, housing, migration – are concentrated in cities.

City governments are the level of public authority closest to people. Their leaders are uniquely placed to engage, mobilise, and coordinate activities of local communities, stakeholders, and businesses.

Cities in different regions globally face different geographical and political realities. Their soft and hard powers vary. Still, the levers for change are universal. When **empowered through governance structures, institutional powers, and financial resources, cities can build with their local economic, social, and environmental resilience** and bring about the major innovation and policy change needed to answer global challenges.

2. Empower cities as global partners

City leaders will make the most of their direct collaboration and competences to deliver policy responses and solutions for their territories and the communities beyond their local boundaries. Yet, no level of government can effectively tackle today's major challenges on its own. The resounding and unifying call from world cities is for *'a seat at the table'*. **City representatives belong at any table where decisions affecting their capacity to tackle urgent and long-term challenges are taken.**

Effective and inclusive urban governance is relevant to all levels of government. It is about **empowering urban leadership world-wide**, ensuring capacity to take on the challenges ahead by involving communities, urban stakeholders, and business communities, and by collaborating beyond administrative boundaries, national borders, and continents. It is essential for cities to succeed in an increasingly challenging global context.

The involvement of cities underpins ownership of the political agendas and requires **new ways of working across levels of governments** which ensures that cities and their leaders are part of a genuine dialogue and effective multilateralism, that support the delivery of the objectives agreed in the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Sustainable Development Goals, the New Urban Agenda, and the Urban Agenda for the EU. **Current governance systems that do not have cities at the table, will just not be as effective in tackling the current and future challenges.**

3. Connect to increase positive impact

Close to their citizens and used to organize stakeholder dialogue, cities have the potential to invent the right solutions for the future. But cities are not closed systems, they are structuring continental and global connectivity as nodes in urban networks. Given the urgency of the different challenges, solutions need to be scaled up. City networks allow Mayors and their teams to exchange and create new knowledge and ensure that this knowledge is mainstreamed to others that will of course adapt it to the local context.



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City-to-city collaboration is an investment in access to effective urban solutions, global solidarity, and collective power. To tackle global urban challenges in different regional contexts, there is a **growing need for urban collaboration** at the metropolitan and regional levels, across national borders and global continents.

To connect you have to meet. The Brussels Urban Summit has been a unique gathering of not only 322 cities but of 3 of the most influential city networks. With BUS, Eurocities, Metropolis and the OECD Champion Mayors for Inclusive Growth Initiative are committed to reinforce their collaborations at regional and global level, combining their strength to amplify the urban voice on a global scale.

The Brussels Urban Summit marks the start of a new journey towards new alliances and joined up forces, recognising the central role of cities in the 21st century. United, the voice of our cities will resonate even further.

4. Urban answers to global challenges

Good urban policymaking is the product of adapting good principles to pragmatic policies in very concrete ecosystems. Building a global urban agenda is a matter of ongoing exchange between scientific analysis and progress. The 21st century, being the century of the cities, will produce new visions on building resilient, fair and democratic societies. Against the background of this ongoing global urban dialogue, the Brussels Urban Summit, zoomed in on several priorities, common actions, and urban solutions that contribute to tackling global challenges.

1. Climate action

- Engage citizens, stakeholders, and business to support and implement prevention, mitigation, and adaptation measures such as ecosystem restoration, flood control systems, urban waste-water circularity, shelters, and heat islands.
- Make use of city competences such as ownership of large building portfolios and urban planning to decarbonize and adapt the urban built environment, promote zero carbon materials and energy sources and prioritize walking, cycling and public transport.

2. Diversity and migration

- Pursue adequate leverage to provide essential public services, affordable housing and economic opportunities for all, tackling all forms of discrimination, acknowledging that diversity is an essential source of creativity and innovation in cities.
- Create a common urban identity through social and cultural investments that break down the barriers between people sharing a common urban space.

3. Inclusive growth and housing

- Combat urban inequalities exacerbated by the [rising cost-of-living crisis](#) that are tearing at the fabric of cities and jeopardizing the social contract.
- Ensure [equitable access to affordable and quality housing](#) that is resilient against climate change and natural disasters.



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4. Digital solutions and future-proofing cities

- Invest in skills development, cities and businesses of all sizes to respond to changes accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic such as remote working, e-commerce and the digital skills divide,
- Use the potential of strategic foresight and digital tools, anticipating the urban challenges and opportunities of tomorrow, while developing user-centric public services that improve the quality of life.

5. Sustainable and inclusive culture

- Promote local cultural policy as an engine of urban development that contributes directly to enhancing the quality of life of citizens.
- Boost the [contribution of cultural activities to a climate neutral future](#), sustainable, and inclusive cities.

6. Care and well-being

- Promote [care as a public good](#) that benefits everyone by creating structures, services and policies that support caregivers, especially women, and those who need care, and address the inequalities and exclusions that result from care work.
- Adopt a territorial approach that recognizes the diverse care needs in urban areas and integrates [care into urban planning](#), mobility and access to services and infrastructure, to enhance the well-being and mental health of urban residents.

7. Metropolitan governance

- Reinforce [metropolitan governance](#) to connect diverse and interdependent territories, address social and spatial inequalities, and work in partnership with surrounding rural communities to deliver strategic solutions to shared challenges.
- Enhance effective local and metropolitan multilevel governance to advance Sustainable Development Goals through policy coherence, cross-sectoral alignment and multi-stakeholder engagement and participation.

