

# **Declaration**

## **by the Mayors of the EU Capital Cities on the EU Urban Agenda and Refugee Crisis**

**21 April 2016, Amsterdam**

### **PREAMBULE**

1. Throughout the centuries our capital cities have been the engines for growth and the arena for European social, economic and cultural innovation. Our cities have always been oriented towards Europe. Therefore, we strongly underline the necessity and the value of close cooperation at European level.
2. Today our citizens are posing many questions on the different societal challenges we are facing in Europe, to which local, regional and national governments, together with the European institutions, should respond with adequate answers and concrete measures.
3. Our citizens in Europe are looking for jobs and opportunities. They want to leave behind the years of economic downturn and move towards a period of growth and prosperity as soon as possible. They need access to quality education and relevant skills which prepare them for a labour market which is increasingly globalized, competitive and complex.
4. The refugee situation has become a primary issue for the EU, and as cities, we deal with people not numbers. How we respond to the plight of people fleeing persecution, war and destitution is not only key to any successful effort for integration. It is a crucial test for our European values as well as for solidarity and cooperation within the Union.
5. And as most of our capital cities are growing at considerable speed, our citizens are asking for comfortable housing at a fair price in properly maintained neighbourhoods. They need high quality health care and cities designed for people of all ages. They need our cities to be accessible and clean, and free from congestion and pollution, and demand responsible, resilient and preventive actions to climate change.
6. Our citizens, above all, are creative, open-minded and inspiring. They are Europe's sources of innovation and the basis of our solutions. And they need space and opportunities to develop their talents. They are at the heart of Europe's great potentials and should be our starting point for everything we, local, regional and national governments as well as Europe's institutions, endeavour to achieve.

**THEREFORE WE, the Mayors of the Capital Cities of the European Union, joined together in Amsterdam during our 5<sup>th</sup> Direct Dialogue with the European Commission,**

7. Seeking in the spirit of European solidarity to engage in effective partnerships with the European Institutions and the Member States, with a view to delivering effective policies and accelerating solutions in the interests of our citizens.
8. Appreciating and fully supporting the efforts by all partners, in particular the Member States and the European Institutions to agree on an EU Urban Agenda.

9. Having discussed the state of play of the EU Urban Agenda which has as its primary goal to identify bottlenecks and improve, develop, coordinate and implement European policies and instruments that address the major societal challenges Europe is facing while taking into account the needs and concerns of our cities.
10. Taking into account the Vienna Declaration by the Mayors of the EU Capital Cities "A strong voice in Europe"<sup>1</sup>, as well as the Commission Staff Working Document on the Results of the Public Consultation on the key features of an EU Urban Agenda<sup>2</sup>, the Riga Declaration of Ministers towards the EU Urban Agenda<sup>3</sup>, the Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on concrete steps for implementing the EU Urban Agenda<sup>4</sup>, the Report of the European Parliament on the urban dimension of EU Policies<sup>5</sup> and the EUROCITIES statement on an EU Urban Agenda<sup>6</sup>.
11. Referring to the 'Pact of Amsterdam' establishing the EU Urban Agenda which is scheduled to be adopted on 30 May 2016 in Amsterdam during the informal meeting of ministers responsible for urban policy, upon invitation by the Netherlands Presidency of the Council of the European Union.
12. Having in particular addressed the urgent situation in Europe concerning the refugee crisis, which is having a major impact on many cities across Europe, both because of the needs in the short term to provide decent primary services such as housing, welfare and health care as well as longer term requirements for integration and participation.

**DECLARE AS FOLLOWS, concerning the EU Urban Agenda:**

13. On the EU Urban Agenda we fully agree with the list of the twelve priority themes and actively support the establishment of the four current pilot partnerships. Given the importance of the EU Urban Agenda we would like to focus on concrete challenges from the viewpoint of the citizens. Each of the partnerships should, through effective multilevel governance, be meaningful to our citizens and improve their wellbeing as well as provide outlets for their talents. To this end, we as capital cities will assume our responsibilities and provide our expertise, experiences and solutions to ensure that the EU Urban Agenda will be a successful instrument with a recognisable added value.
14. The current Partnership on Housing addresses a crucial challenge for our cities. European cities need a supply of housing which is affordable for a broad range of citizens and enables high standards of liveability in our neighbourhoods. Strong social housing providers can play a vital role in this but the current state-aid approach, fiscal controls and limitations in access to funding for social housing by the European Commission risk limiting the quality of life in our urban areas.

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<sup>1</sup> The Vienna Declaration was adopted by the Mayors of the EU Capital Cities, Vienna, 21 April 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Commission Staff Working Document / Results of the Public Consultation on the key features of an EU Urban Agenda (SWD(2015) 109 final/2).

<sup>3</sup> The Riga Declaration was adopted at the informal meeting of EU ministers responsible for Territorial Cohesion and Urban Matters, Riga, 10 June 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Opinion of the Committee of the Regions, Concrete steps for implementing the EU Urban Agenda (COTER-VI/010), (2016).

<sup>5</sup> Report on the urban dimension of EU Policies, Committee of Regional Development, European Parliament (2014/2213(INI)).

<sup>6</sup> EUROCITIES, Towards an EU urban agenda; the building blocks from a city perspective (2015).

15. In the Partnership on Air Quality, we hope to see a focus on more integrated European policies aimed at effectively reducing pollution at the source. We know that poor air quality has major health impacts on our citizens and improving this situation, not least through promoting clean urban mobility is a key priority, as it offers our residents a healthy future thereby maintaining the vitality and competitiveness of our cities.
16. In the Partnership on Urban Poverty we need better aligned policies and instruments at local, national and European level in order to counter developments of structural concentration of poverty in deprived neighbourhoods. And in particular child poverty and homelessness must be effectively addressed.
17. The Partnership on Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees should focus on enabling refugees in our cities to become active and engaged European citizens, so that they too become part of Europe's talent for the future. We should look into how to facilitate synergies among cities as well as all relevant stakeholders and to promote the necessary changes on EU regulations and funding schemes so that cities are equipped with the adequate means to take initiatives and initiate policies to tackle mid and longer term challenges concerning refugees integration.
18. We express our hope that the current pilot partnerships make more progress in identifying the bottlenecks hampering more effective EU, national and local action and, in addition to the four pilot partnerships, we propose the following themes as priorities for the coming period: a) the need for growth, jobs and skills , b) improving urban mobility and c) the transition towards a circular economy and d) use of (open) data and technology to make our cities smarter and to empower our citizens. Furthermore, with a view to strengthen Europe's social cohesion, we propose as an additional priority the need to invest in European strategies and solutions to counter radicalization and violent extremism.
19. We also express our hope that all parties involved in the EU Urban Agenda, as reflected by the 'Pact of Amsterdam', which is to be adopted on 30 May 2016 by the informal meeting of ministers responsible for urban policy, will commit themselves to rapid development and implementation of actions which will genuinely remove the bottlenecks preventing progress towards addressing today's key urban challenges. The final goal of the EU Urban Agenda should be a genuine cross-cutting anchoring of the urban dimension in the EU decision-making process ('urban mainstreaming'), which applies to all relevant European policies and legislation, with a bottom up approach. In this respect, we are truly convinced that the formal adoption of the 'Pact of Amsterdam' cannot be the end, but the starting point of an Urban Agenda at EU level.
20. In order for the EU Urban Agenda to become a relevant, effective and reliable framework for European policies, regulations and instruments that will serve our citizens' needs and concerns, we urge the European Commission in particular to adopt the EU Urban Agenda as one of its priorities during its mandate and include it in its annual work programmes. The European Commission should be coordinating the EU Urban Agenda and thus ensure the coherent and integrated policy solutions that our cities need at European level, as well as to guarantee the link with the Better regulation agenda. The Commission should strengthen its internal co-ordination of issues relevant to urban areas and, for example, expand the instrument of impact assessments to include the urban dimension more systematically.
21. The Annual Direct Dialogue between the Mayors of the EU capital cities with the European Commission provides a unique opportunity for the exchange of views on the progress of the EU Urban Agenda, and we invite the European Commission to use this process to take stock of progress on the EU Urban Agenda that will be made in the coming years and to consider future priorities.

**DECLARE AS FOLLOWS, concerning the Refugee Crisis:**

22. With regard to the unprecedented number of refugees currently seeking asylum in Europe, our capital cities, as well as other local and regional authorities, go to great efforts to provide shelter and care for those in need. Not everyone can do the same, but we believe that everyone should take its fair share in finding a solution. However, in many cases local governments face financial constraints in relation to the measures needed, both in the short and long term, and we therefore urgently call upon the Member States, the European Commission and the European Parliament to give priority to making additional funds directly available at local level for the reception, support and integration of refugees.
23. Without effective European measures at all levels, it will become very difficult for the cities in Europe, however hard we try, to manage the refugee-crisis, address people's needs and make effective use of the opportunities that come with the situation, in particular in the area of employment.
24. We call upon the Member States concerned to assume their responsibilities and together to accelerate, in close cooperation with the European institutions, the implementation of decisions regarding operational hotspots, the strengthening and safeguarding of the external European borders, and especially a more balanced European relocation scheme for refugees, based on the principle of solidarity.
25. We are at any time available to provide our assistance and expertise should this be helpful in advancing the solutions that Europe urgently needs.

**The Mayors of the Capital Cities of the European Union  
Amsterdam, 21 April 2016**