

I. "Cities for Europe" Agenda: Cities and urban societies create Europe from the bottom up.

I. Basic Principles

The future of Europe is founded on the shared responsibility of its citizens for the development of the continent. This shared responsibility is an issue for cities and urban societies, for local politics, but above all for the citizens of Europe themselves. It is not just about large cities. It also affects medium-sized cities, and small and medium-sized communities. Together they are the local and communal basis of a common Europe.

European citizens – Stadtbürger, citoyens, cittadini, ciudadanos, politeia – their countless clubs, associations, societies, local associations of political parties, and interest groups are the cross-border builders of a common Europe and must not remain its merely passive, possibly dissatisfied consumers. The binding power of older justifications for the unification of Europe has diminished, i.e. as a bulwark against the outbreak of war during the interwar and the post-war periods, negotiated between European countries by strong leaders and far-sighted politicians and parliaments. Today, the needs of European citizens in their local lives are a source of new perspectives on unification. They have every right to say, "We are Europe".

- Long before the emergence of nation states, cities issued city rights and civil rights that became the basis of the European, globally radiating legal system. Centuries ago, city alliances, such as the Hanseatic League, formed European and globally networked structures.
- European democracy is rooted in cities and urban societies. They are its foundation. They are the test laboratories, schools and workshops of Europe.
- Cities are the hubs of the European transport system and the guardians of their citizens' mobility needs.
- The forms and rules of coexistence and the culture and art of Europe unfold in cities and occur predominantly within their jurisdictions.
- Urban schools and universities are the schools of nations and their European interconnections.

- It is the power of urban citizens to achieve social and cultural cohesion that turns foreigners into European citizens. Only they are able to foster cultural diversity and rise to the challenges it poses.
- Cities manage and maintain places of common European memory.
- Cities keep Europe's material and immaterial cultural heritage alive: buildings, landscapes, infrastructure, cuisine, languages, customs, media landscapes, music and art.
- The European city itself is a cultural achievement developed over thousands of years. On-going urban renewal and the reactivation (conversion) of abandoned building structures through new uses is one of its most important cultural tasks.

The goal is to increase the impact of Europe, which is already felt at local, civic and everyday levels. Nothing strengthens Europe more sustainably than this.

II. Shared Responsibility for Europe

Cities and their citizens can become "Cities for Europe" by putting their talents and abilities at the service of European development. This does not require new and additional activities, but rather the European orientation of existing good municipal practice.

In their own processes, implemented from the ground up, cities can contribute in diverse ways to Europe. Their geographical location, economic power, political vigilance, cultural performance and social and civic structures are preconditions and capacities for influencing the development of Europe.

Examples:

- Migration, integration

In cities and rural areas, a large number of public and private initiatives are engaged in settling migrants at the locations where they enter Europe. These decentralised integration and conflict prevention services contribute to the EU's overall performance in this area and provide Europe as a whole with a growing pool of know-how for pan-European development.

- Cultural diversity and social cohesion

European cultural diversity and the social cohesion of urban societies have a tense relationship. It is cities and their citizens who make the difference when it comes to making diversity productive and coping with segregation tendencies, for urban society itself, the region, the national and European identity of their country, and for Europe as a whole. They do this in different ways in individual initiatives, groups, associations and clubs.

- Cultural services

Many European cities organise art, music, traditional, and other festivals. Apart from such events, which are explicitly European and recognised as such throughout Europe, there are many characteristics and strengths in the cultural lives of cities and their citizens that, although not expressly European, collectively constitute Europe's cultural profile. These range from typical cultural activities, to local cuisine, particular aspects of animal husbandry and agriculture, how individuals address their history and the international relations arising from it, and networks of artistic activities.

- Architecture and urban development, conversion, and urban renewal

With the conversion rather than the demolition of abandoned buildings and the challenges in terms of the openness and design of new developments, cities, citizens and local investors contribute to the preservation and development of Europe's cultural identity and provide local projects with European added value. While the problems are similar in all European countries, the procedures and solutions are different and should be made publicly available. In the great European tradition, cities are continuing to build the urban framework for the lives and dwellings of the people in urban communities.

- Mobility

Building Europe from its civic base requires that citizens have greater knowledge of Europe and the individual experiences of European societies and cultures outside their home countries. Increasing

general mobility is one of the most reliable instruments of European integration, the development of a community in Europe.

Cities are the best place to locate pan-European initiatives that provide local stimulation, such as the Erasmus programmes. Beyond the "Europa macht Schule" programme, Erasmus alumni should be looked after in their home cities as well as their host cities and act as multipliers in a variety of ways. With cities serving as "resonance areas", the Europe-wide "Free Interrail" programme could increase its catalytic effect, e.g. through experience reports or "travel diaries".

- Joint responsibility of European citizens

Local and regional "citizen consultations", as prepared by several countries as part of "Europe from the ground up", should be based on the civic foundation of cities in order to develop civil society services for European cities. National and transnational cooperation and interconnections of urban societies can make a decisive contribution to the sustainable European impact of such consultations.

The cities concerned should not only see themselves as venues for such consultations, but also as places of European discourse and form, anchoring the awareness of European co-responsibility in citizenship. In dialogue with sister cities and other interested municipalities, urban societies and their municipalities can organise an exchange of experience on the consultations and carry the results to the national and European level. In this way, the Europe that is present among citizens can serve as a network of transnational exchange and design.

III. Procedure

- Taking Stock

The shared European responsibility of cities and their citizens is based on identifying the existing activities, initiatives and capabilities of a city and its citizens that can contribute to the success of Europe. Projects explicitly labelled as "European" are not the only ones of European relevance. The inventory also includes "normal" sectors of the municipal economy, society, education, culture and politics, as long as they are interpreted and lived in European terms.

The European orientation of municipal work should bring the society and politics of the respective city into conversation with each other and facilitate agreements in this regard. This discourse and its results enable politicians, citizens, initiatives and organisations to orient and communicate their work, including as participants in the construction of Europe. In this way, municipal officials obtain a picture of the European orientation of their civic base and can affirm their own European-related activities. This then becomes the basis for cooperation, mutual support and the joint pursuit of European objectives.

- Facilitation

The shared understanding of work and cooperation for Europe in a city is the foundation for information and public relations work about the European profile of the community. This is a meaningful way of communicating internally to the local public and externally to the European public, right up to the political channels through which Europe can influence European development from the ground up.

- European urban agenda

The European urban agenda develops from mutual information and European cooperation. It identifies the special European commitment of the city and makes it concrete. The stakeholders involved in this European agenda include politicians, urban citizens and urban society in its manifold forms.

- European cooperation

The understanding of the shared responsibility of Cities for Europe and the influence of local authorities and citizens on European development depends on cooperation, such as:

- between civil society initiatives and their international partners,
- between civil society and local politics,
- between the cities that have agreed to be "Cities for Europe", together with a special European commitment,
- with European associations of municipalities and cities (e.g. EUROCITIES),
- between European sister cities,
- with "their" European politicians in the region, the country, and the European Parliament.

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