PES

SOCIALISTS &
DEMOCRATS

Leading the Way

for Progressive and Sustainable Cities

Forewords

When we, socialists and democrats, committed ourselves to addressing the challenges faced by citizens all across Europe in our 2019 European elections manifesto, it was with the aim of putting an end to a decade of neoliberal austerity that had destroyed our social fabric, public services and livelihoods. European citizens young and old, urban and rural needed help to get decent jobs, a good education, quality healthcare and affordable housing, and it was our belief that it was time for the state to once again step in and correct the failures of the market. The past year has shown us quite how urgent it is to restore public action to its full strength.

Using the power of the collective to tackle major problems requires the mobilisation of national governments, but it feeds down to citizens through the different levels of local democracy. The delivery of public services is as much the role of towns, cities and regions as national governments, and they were struggling just as much under the weight of economic diktats. Our manifesto already identified two areas of action that were of particular importance to urban areas: housing and transport.

"By improving mobility and air quality and providing affordable and energy-efficient housing we can improve citizens' quality of life. To deliver this, we will promote a Plan for Affordable Housing and Clean Public Transport in Europe."

As we look back on responses to the first phase of the Covid-19 pandemic and look ahead to the prospects for renewal and rebuilding, it is clearer than ever before that Europe's cities cannot settle for business as usual. This past year has stretched cities' resilience to their very limits. Local public services ranging from hospitals and community health centres to schools and social welfare services have risen to the challenge admirably, despite being on the receiving end of over a decade of neoliberal austerity. On behalf of the socialist family, I would like to extend our deepest thanks to all the frontline workers that have given so much since the start of the pandemic. With most of us confined to our homes for much of the past year, the value of safe, warm and comfortable living conditions has taken on a new level of significance. Excessive costs, energy-inefficiency, overcrowding and disrepair affect every member state. Our citizens do not want to hear that the European Union has no direct powers in matters of housing policy, they want action. This is why I am grateful to our PES common candidate Frans Timmermans for making the case for affordable housing so powerfully during the 2019 campaign, and for leading the charge as Executive Vice President for the European Green Deal: his Renovation Wave strategy is in important first step for improving Europe's housing stock. Housing is a right, not a market, and public authorities from the European Commission to municipalities must not be afraid to build, renovate and regulate their way out of this crisis.

Providing quality public services for all, including at local level, is central to our party's values. Without them it will not be possible to put in place our European and national policies to tackle poverty and exclusion, create new opportunities for our young people and take care of the elderly and vulnerable.

These are the values that drove our leaders to make an unprecedented push for a recovery fund that is commensurate to the size of the challenge ahead. Our family rose to the challenge and delivered the EU's most ambitious initiative to date: the Next Generation fund. The new funds that we have secured for the national Recovery and Resilience Plans and the EU's Structural Funds should be made available for projects in urban areas as quickly as possible.

Across Europe, cities led by socialist, social-democratic and labour parties across Europe continue to chart a path towards a more socially and environmentally sustainable model of urban development. With the proposals set out here, they can now rest assured that they have the full support of Europe's socialist and democratic family.

Sergei Stanishev, PES President

In my role as a member of the European Parliament's Environment Committee and as chair of the PES Environment, Climate Change and Energy Network I have had the privilege of leading many discussions about how our current ways of living, travelling, producing and consuming must change in order for us to live within our ecological means. Yet the range of topics involved, the innovativeness of the practical proposals put forward and the quality of the input from participants have made the elaboration of this document a particularly enriching experience. My thanks go to the members of the Environment network, without whose in-depth comments and pertinent analysis this policy document could not have been realised. I also thank my colleague Agnes Jongerius and the members of the PES Social European Network which she chairs for their time and contributions.

Javi López, Chair of the PES Environment, Climate Change and Energy Network

With three in four Europeans living in and around cities, it goes without saying that the improvements we can make in urban centres will go a long way to reducing our emissions of greenhouse gases and our creation of waste, for the benefit of city-dwellers and rural residents alike.

Yet several of the environmental challenges faced by cities have very immediate consequences on their residents, especially those at risk of poverty, exclusion and inequality. Low-quality and energy-inefficient housing and unequal access to green spaces mean that lower income families will suffer most from the effects of climate change, such as heat waves and colder winters, and the lack of measures to mitigate them.

Air pollution is also an urgent issue. In 2020, the European Environment Agency estimated that nearly 400,000 premature deaths could be attributed to air pollution in the EU. These figures demonstrate how urgent it is that we phase out the combustion engine, inefficient heating systems and fossil-fuel power generation from our cities. This is a priority for us socialists and democrats. Environmental pollution via poor air quality, waste and lack of green spaces hits the poorest neighbourhoods hardest. Making walking and cycling easier, investing in public transport, reclaiming land for green spaces and phasing out private cars is a pressing issue of fairness. Social policy and democratic dialogue are essential to the success of the green transition. This is a core socialist principle: sustainability is not just an environmental question; it is also a social one. I believe that this policy document does an effective job of reflecting these two dimensions of the transition, and I hope that readers will find here a useful basis for furthering progressive action on urban policy. For more than a century our movement has shown that the municipal level is the perfect laboratory for radical new policy ideas, and we have had no shortage of innovative solutions to include here. In the European institutions, in national governments and in regional and local authorities, socialists and social democrats are fighting for a fairer and more sustainable tomorrow.

It is a core belief of our political family that our societies share collective responsibilities, especially towards the most vulnerable. Whether at European, national, regional or local level, we believe in the power of the state and its democratic representatives to improve the lives of each and every citizen.

When the PES first started elaborating this policy document in December 2019, we could not possibly have imagined what was about to unfold. Yet while the high-level negotiations were ongoing on the Recovery Fund, our policy networks were already hard at work mapping out our plans for the post-Covid world.

Throughout the pandemic, citizens have been able to rely on city authorities to deliver locally adapted solutions to the challenges they faced. Through emergency housing, social care for the elderly and the vulnerable, IT equipment for home-schooling, and many other initiatives, local authorities have once again demonstrated their importance for turning our ambitions of solidarity into reality.

As PES, we want to ensure that their voices are heard as loudly as possible in the European policy process, and in fulfilling that objective we know that we can count on the excellent work of the PES Group in the European Committee of the Regions, the institution that represents Europe's cities and regions. Their contributions to this document were invaluable, as were those of PES Local, the association of socialist local representatives. We thank them and their members for all their hard work. Given my experience as locally elected representative, I took great pleasure in our exchanges on social cohesion, education and sustainable economic development. As socialists active at the local level, we can see that our involvement makes a difference. This represents the strength of our political family.

Yonnec Polet, PES Deputy Secretary General

These inputs have combined to form an incredibly comprehensive document, covering the entire range of local policies. An invitation to rethink the spatial organisation of cities, dedicating more space to parks and vegetation is accompanied by a clear demand for more equal access to quality public services and the tools for healthier living. Housing is situated in the broader context of tackling poverty and exclusion, alongside investing in children and young people. Security, local democracy, gender equality and outreach to vulnerable groups combine to ensure that the city belongs to all. Cities are vibrant economies that rely on efficient transportation systems, but they must work harder to reduce their environmental footprint. We know that none of this can be achieved without proper support from the EU and national governments, so this is our call to action – invest in cities, invest in their citizens and the entire Union will benefit.

Presidency Declaration

**Progressive and Sustainable Cities
– Our vision for post-Covid urban policy.**

**Adopted at the Presidency
meeting of 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 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 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.

- **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 Commission, Frans Timmermans, and the Progressive Housing Week in January 2021, we were able 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 an 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 of 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.

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INTRODUCTION

Towns, boroughs and cities are the smallest units of our democratic societies – politics started in the polis, the city. Our socialist, social-democratic and labour movement find their roots in the cities of the 19th century, characterised by rapid industrialisation and urbanisation and their accompanying inequality and difficult living conditions. Our movement has achieved many important victories across Europe, from the building of social housing and public transport to the provision of new schools and other public services for the growing number of city residents.

Cities nowadays face a number of challenges brought about by the structural changes that our societies are undergoing, and which affect urban areas more acutely. The measures we set out below are designed to promote social fairness, eradicate poverty, foster harmonious social diversity and equality, break down barriers in accessing the city and fight against pollution and the degradation of the urban environment. We call for cities to be given the competences and resources that they need to take forward these aspirations for a fair and just urban development.

A decade of neoliberal austerity policies, the emergence of the gig economy and the casualisation of employment have combined to create a rising tide of inequality and segregation in cities around the world. Instead, our vision is one of cities that tackle poverty and exclusion and that allow everyone to thrive individually while contributing to the wellbeing of the collective.

Socialists and social democrats are best placed to tackle the twin challenges of social justice and climate justice. Where others put forward green policies that create additional burdens for ordinary families, our environmentalism is driven by an understanding that the energy transition should be an opportunity to reduce inequality, tackle spatial segregation and unite all neighbourhoods behind a common agenda for change.

Public services – affordable housing, childcare, schools, libraries, sports facilities, community centres, medical centres, etc. – are all indispensable for a good quality of living and to help alleviate poverty. Cities too often struggle to find the funding to meet these needs – this has to stop. Public services like these create spaces for public and community initiatives that promote social cohesion across barriers of socio-economic background, ethnicity and faith. They create common ground and help everyone access the tools of participation in the democratic life of the city. Local government is the closest tier to citizen's everyday lives, and if it does not have the means to reach out to everyone then trust in institutions and trust in others will suffer.

Citizens have a right to the city – meaning the entire city, and for all residents regardless of gender, ethnicity or socio-economic background. Spatial segregation and gentrification are unacceptable features of many European cities, especially when it leads to inequalities in access to public services, housing and opportunities. Everyone has a right to safety, and we cannot accept

that some areas are left to suffer from chronic disturbances and criminality that prevent residents from fully benefiting from these public services. Many neighbourhoods are shut out from wider patterns of mobility due to insufficient transport options; this geographic exclusion has become entrenched into social exclusion. Access to jobs, schools, culture, sports and everything else that a city has to offer must not be contingent on living in a particular postcode. By seeking to restore a dense network of public services, amenities and businesses, we aim to design
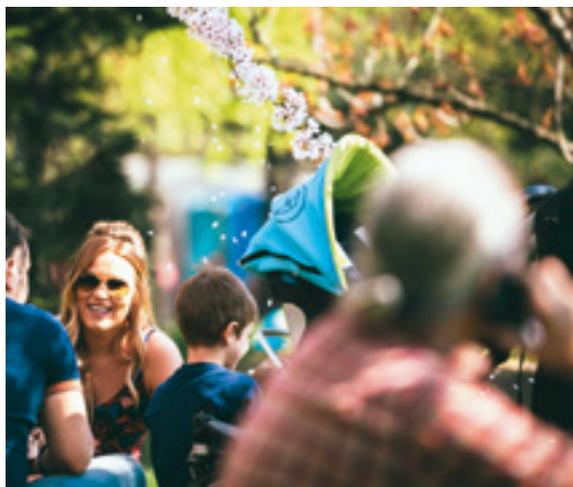
Bucharest

"15-minute cities", in which all residents' needs can be met within a short distance of their place of residence. The mobility revolution that we call for must be an eco-friendly one. The car-first approach of the past 50 years has resulted in congestion and air pollution for residents and has contributed to our unsustainable greenhouse gas emissions. Cities are on the frontline of the climate crisis and must respond as such, putting pedestrians, cyclists and accessible and affordable public transport at the heart of urban development. These means of transport must also ensure a good

connectivity with metropolitan, peri-urban and rural areas around the cities in order to reinforce territorial cohesion. This can only be achieved with the kind of massive, long-term investment strategy that neoliberals and conservatives spend all their energy opposing, rather than joining us in imagining a new path forwards for public action in urban areas. With socialists and social democrats at the helm, citizens can be confident that climate and biodiversity objectives will be a framework in which to improve everyone's lives and opportunities.

It is our role as socialists and democrats to push for cities to be at the cutting edge of environmental and social justice. We do this from the bottom up, through our thousands of mayors and city councillors and hundreds of thousands of grassroots activists. They are the bedrock of our movement, and the vital outreach they conduct in our communities helps democracy to flourish at all levels of government. As PES we work hand in hand with the PES Group in the European Committee of the Regions and PES Local to amplify the voices of progressive cities across Europe, alongside our member parties, governments, European Commissioners and members of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament. By facilitating the emergence and exchange of new ideas in our networks of ministers, MEPs, mayors and policy experts, we will contribute to building eco-friendly and fair societies, starting with sustainable cities.

What makes a city a city?

Throughout history cities have developed as places that bring together human and economic capital. This clustering has fuelled unprecedented economic growth, but also unprecedented inequality. Since the start of the Industrial Revolution, millions of Europeans have been drawn to cities by the prospects of stable employment in industry and services. Nowadays urban and peri-urban areas account for 75% of the EU's population.

Share of the population living in urban areas projected to 2050
Share of the total population living in urban areas, wih UN Urbanization projections to 2050. Urban areas are defined based on national definitions which can vary by country.

No data 0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%
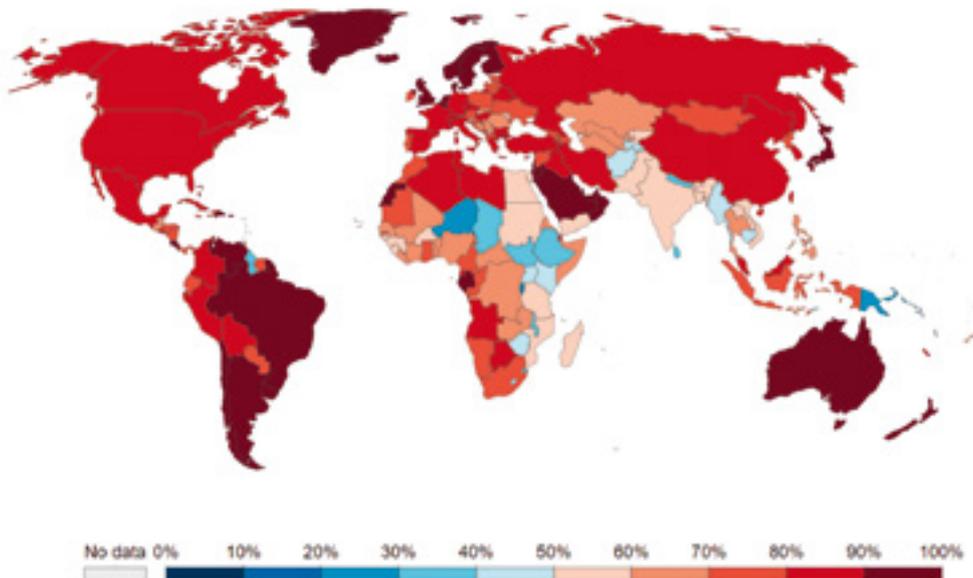
Source: OWID based on UN World Urbanization Prospects 2018 and historical sources (see sources)

The EU and OECD have developed a sophisticated definition of a city: starting with "urban centres" – areas with population density over 1,500 inhabitants per square km and totalling at least 50,000 inhabitants – a city comprises any commune that has at least 50% of its territory inside the urban area.[1] By this measurement the EU has approximately 700 cities, ranging from its 27 capital cities, to its 127 second tier[2] cities and smaller cities all over the continent.

Beyond the academic definition, cities are also united by the challenges and opportunities that they share, albeit on a different scale. Cities are dense, making them catalysts for economic activity, but also causing them to struggle with housing, mobility and public services; cities are diverse, a source of mutual cultural enrichment and intergenerational solidarity, but also a potential factor of friction and exclusion. Bold progressive action can help cities of all sizes fulfil their potential as laboratories of the just transition our citizens and planet so desperately need. The aim of this paper is to present our ambitions and a set of policy solutions that can be adapted to cities of all kinds.

Administratively and politically, no two member states treat cities in the same way. While some communes have competencies set in constitutional stone, with dedicated sources of revenue at their disposal and a wide range of policy areas within their remit, others are dependent on the decisions of regional or national governments and have a very restricted field of action. Most capital cities, and even some second-tier cities, have grown to the point where they have become regions in their own right, with mayors working hand in hand with city region presidents. Our aim is to outline a progressive vision for cities, without being prescriptive about the means and institutional set-up necessary to achieve our ends.

Cities are not islands, and the relationship between urban, peri-urban and rural areas must be one of close cooperation. When it comes to issues of mobility, education and employment, city authorities must remain aware of the gravitational effect they have on surrounding areas and seek to take their needs into consideration as much as possible. The EU's Territorial Agenda 2030[3] situates these objectives of geographic balance within our wider strategy of promoting a just and fair transition.

Berlin

Our vision for fair and future-proof urban spaces

The climate transition requires a fundamental rethink of the ways in which city life has functioned up until now. The profound restructuring that is needed to meet our climate targets will have an impact on some citizens' daily habits. This is why PES supports a just transition that is designed both for the people and by the people. Addressing the climate crisis requires trade-offs and compromises; our role as socialists is to chart a way forward that is open and inclusive, not top-down and prescriptive.

It is our belief that the green transition must be just, or it will not happen at all. Our sustainable future starts with the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the European Pillar of Social Rights, and our agenda for sustainable cities starts by addressing inequality and wellbeing. Our vision for sustainable cities aims to address five major challenges for 21st century urban areas: how to improve the residents' quality of life, how to ensure equality and fairness, how to address new mobility challenges, how to improve local democracy and participation and how to promote local sustainable investments. Rising to these challenges is central to the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 11: "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable".

"We cannot achieve an environmentally sustainable society without also focusing on social sustainability. This is what it means to create a liveable city and it is also the reason why we were the first Swedish city to implement the SDGs into our city council goals—because they focused on both environmental and social sustainability, just as we do."

– Katrin Stjernfeldt Jammeh, Mayor of Malmö, Sweden

"In the past, we, from the regional governments, have been able to make up for lack of social policies on the national level. All levels of government have their tools and a responsibility towards citizens"

– Nicola Zingaretti, President of Lazio Region, Italy

The EU Urban Agenda and the renewal of the Leipzig Charter

In 2016, ministers responsible for urban matters adopted the Pact of Amsterdam setting out an Urban Agenda for the EU.[4] The Urban Agenda is a multi-level working method promoting cooperation between member states, cities and their European networks, the European Commission, the European Investment Bank and other stakeholders in order to stimulate growth, cohesion and redistribution. Fourteen partnerships have emerged so far, addressing issues such as housing, urban poverty and mobility.

The Leipzig Charter on Sustainable Cities, which first set out the EU's common principles for urban development in 2007, was renewed by member state governments in December 2020.[5] This relaunching of the Leipzig Charter should contribute to a better reflection of urban issues in the development of European policies.

New instruments or funding resources are important, but much more could already be done through better coordination among existing ones. The EU Urban Agenda should foster a more structured, regular dialogue between cities, EU institutions and member states, potentially transferring competences from the EU level to urban areas. The European Parliament's Urban Intergroup should be a vibrant forum for discussion of these issues.

Together with the PES Group in the European Committee of the Regions and the S&D Group in the European Parliament, we will continue to push for an ambitious, politically binding EU Urban Agenda. This is the only way to make sure that EU policies understand the needs of cities, while enabling local authorities to promote smart, sustainable, and inclusive policies and provide guidelines for the EU and member state authorities to establish regulatory parameters regarding legislation, infrastructure and financial resources.

MAKING QUALITY OF LIFE A PRIORITY

Cities are a magnet for all sorts of people who come in search of jobs, better living conditions, education or a rich social and cultural scene. Many European cities have succeeded in combining the density and bustle necessary for a vibrant network of community, business and leisure activity with the fundamental tenets of quality of life. These include well-designed public spaces geared towards soft forms of mobility and plentiful green spaces that allow the city and its residents to breathe, but also policies to support healthier habits and encourage personal development. The key to social wellbeing in the city is a strong sense of cohesion, fostered by a sense of collective belonging and sharing.

Brussels

As socialists and democrats, we believe that is the first role of municipal government to promote the wellbeing of citizens. It is no coincidence that the two European cities that figure in The Economist's top ten most liveable cities, Vienna and Copenhagen, have been led by social democrats for over a century.[6] The key to this success is investment in free and affordable public services that are accessible to all citizens and that respond to their needs. Where central governments sometimes fail to provide these basic services, socialist cities step into the gap and substitute for their failings. Instead of the neoliberal logic based on short-term profit, we advocate an approach focussed on wellbeing and quality of life. Wellbeing focuses on each and every citizen, offering each an individual purpose while meeting the needs of the collective.[7] People should be at the centre of public policies, from the EU level all the way down to neighbourhood councils, translating collective actions into tangible improvements for each and every citizen. Our housing and mobility proposals, coupled with our renewed emphasis on investing in the quality and accessibility of public services, combine to contribute to the "15-minute city",[8] reshaping large cities into areas where all necessary amenities – homes, workplaces, public services, shops – are available a short walk away. We want to see human beings placed at the heart of urban policymaking.[9]

2.1. **The built environment and green spaces**

Nature provides the basis for the good health and wellbeing of the European population. Clean air, water and food are essential for sustaining life, natural environment provides space for recreation, relaxation and social interaction. Yet, environmental pollution remains the cause of 13% of all deaths in the EU, due to exposure to pollution at home, in the workplace and outdoors.[10]

Environmental pollution is linked to a range of disease outcomes, including cancer, heart disease, stroke, respiratory disease and neurological disorders. Air pollution and high temperatures are known to increase mortality. The urban environment in particular exposes people more to air pollution, noise and chemicals while also providing less access to green space than in peri-urban and rural environments.

Copenhagen

AIR POLLUTION

World Health Organization

REGIONAL ESTIMATES ACCORDING TO WHO REGIONAL GROUPINGS:

Over 2 million in South-East Asia Region

Over 2 million in Western Pacific Region

Nearly 1 million in Africa Region

About 500 000 deaths in Eastern Mediterranean Region

About 500 000 deaths in European Region

More than 300 000 in the Region of the Americas
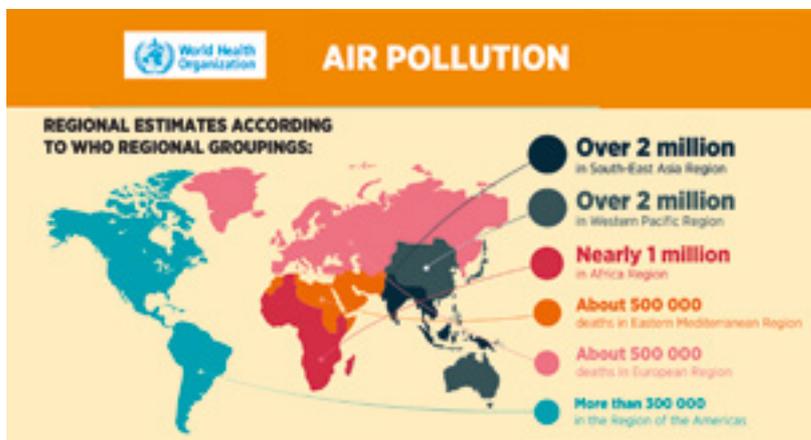
This particularly affects poorer residents. Areas of London in the top income decile have a third of their land taken up by private gardens, and a further third dedicated to public parks. In the bottom income decile those shares drop to a fifth and a quarter respectively.[11] The Covid lockdowns made this fracture even more apparent. When countries worldwide imposed lockdowns to halt the spread of the coronavirus, suddenly playgrounds and parks were locked, access to hiking trails cut off and outdoor recreation limited. Those living in flats without access to private gardens were left without any access to nature whatsoever.

We are witnessing the welcome phenomenon of more and more public space being dedicated to outdoor leisure, for instance through the closing streets for children to be able to play outside safely and the reclaiming of street parking for cafés, bars and restaurants. With the increasing threat of summer heatwaves, which especially impact older and weaker residents, the ability of trees and grass to cool down entire streets and provide a space to shelter from the heat should be harnessed.

This is not the only type of nature-based solution to policy challenges. More green spaces in urban areas can drastically reduce health hazards, increase well-being, regulate the climate, serve as carbon storage and bring back nature to cities. Green spaces, especially in urban areas, can act as places of refuge, both from an environmental (heat, pollution...) and social point of view (stress, loneliness...). In cities, these spaces also improve the quality of the urban environment by filtering the air and water, producing a cooling effect, and buffering noise. In other words, nature benefits people.

By storing rainwater in vegetation and developing more urban water reservoirs in public parcs and preserving and restoring natural rivers and lakes we can increase the quality of life for residents significantly by creating spaces that cool down the city effectively, while simultaneously supporting the creation of well-functioning urban recreational spaces. The artificialisation of surfaces (concrete, paving, etc.) puts substantial pressure on sewer systems and in extreme cases can contribute to flooding, requiring us to return as much ground to vegetation as possible. This process should go hand in hand with the phasing out of pesticides in urban areas for the benefit of human and animal health, as called for in the European Commission's Biodiversity Strategy presented in May 2020.[12] Green spaces and biodiversity are not only essential for recreational uses, enjoying them has great benefits for the wellbeing[13] and health of citizens. Accessibility and proximity of these spaces correlates with less respiratory diseases and mental health.[14] Yet, access to green space is unequally available to the population, largely correlating with the socio-economic status of citizens and the overall economic performance of the member states citizens are living in, making the topic of access to nature an issue of equality within our societies.

- **Redevelopment projects on the local level, including new developments should incorporate mandatory additional vegetation, including on rooftops and walls. This additional vegetation should be insect-friendly, supporting the protection efforts for bees.**

- **When opportunities emerge, local authorities should endeavour to buy back private land to convert it into additional green spaces, either open to the public or preserved for biodiversity.**

- **Following these efforts, more data should be gathered to assess the efforts in increasing urban green spaces and their effect on the affected urban population including their exposure to harmful pollutants.**

- **When reorganizing traffic routes and urban mobility, special consideration must be given to dedicating space to green spaces.**

- **Environmental conditionality must be introduced into the frameworks applied to the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) the Cohesion Fund and the Recovery and Resilience Facility to ensure that projects contribute to protecting our environment and increasing access to nature.**

- **Adopt clear measures against the artificialisation of soils, monitoring the share of land available to natural vegetation and supporting the vegetalization of artificialized areas, notably in the cities. This is essential to combatting the issue of heat islands. Under SPÖ leadership, for the second year in a row,** Vienna has introduced a network of "cool streets" featuring drinking water fountains and mist machines. Barcelona aims to cover 30% of its surface area in trees.

- **Cities need a clear strategy on water. These should include understanding the quality-of-life, cooling and biodiversity value of rivers and other bodies of water as part of public spaces, but also guaranteeing the right to clean drinking water through the effective management of public water distribution, with attention paid to tackling leakages.**

- **At regional and national level, building codes and traffic management must be adapted to ensure that minimum proximity to green spaces and low levels of noise and air pollution are guaranteed to all citizens, but especially to the most vulnerable who have been affected disproportionally by the lack of it.**

2.2. Healthy cities for healthier lives

On the most fundamental level, citizens need fair access to primary healthcare. Cities have a responsibility to work closely with health authorities to improve the distribution of medical facilities so that they are accessible to all citizens, especially the most vulnerable. This can range from generalist primary care provision to more specific services designed to provide combined health and social care, such as family planning clinics, family support services and services to the elderly.

Lyon

This is far from the only channel through which cities can and should act to improve the physical and mental health of their residents. In the July 2020 policy paper *"Affordable and quality healthcare for all"* produced by the PES Social Europe Network and welcomed by the PES Presidency, we call for the use of the "health in all policies" principle, a coherent and holistic approach to promoting long and healthy lives to all. This means that all public policies and institutions – schools, sport, agriculture and notably urban planning – should seek to promote key health objectives in their design, implementation and functioning.[15]

In addition to clean air and the opportunity to exercise daily, cities have a responsibility to ensure that residents of all ages and backgrounds have access to quality nutrition that is affordable, healthy, and environmentally and socially sustainable. As the global Milan Urban Food Policy Pact, initiated in 2015 by Milan's progressive administration, reminds us: "Cities, which host half of the world's population, have a strategic role to play in developing sustainable food systems and promoting healthy diets... Since food policies are closely related to many other urban challenges and policies, such as poverty, health and social protection, hygiene and sanitation, land use planning, transport and commerce, energy, education, and disaster preparedness, it is essential to adopt an approach that is comprehensive, interdisciplinary and inter-institutional."[16] The new EU Farm to Fork strategy also presents an opportunity to improve food security, nutrition and public health for urban residents.[17]

Good nutrition is essential to healthy living, especially at early developmental stages of children's lives. Our proposal for a European Child Guarantee includes enshrining children's right to nutrition in EU law. Municipal authorities in charge of running school canteens are in a privileged position to ensure affordable access to – and education surrounding – healthy and balanced diets. These objectives should be extended to all kinds of collective catering operated by municipalities, including community canteens for the elderly and marginalised groups.

Early evidence from the US suggests that isolation and loneliness have negative impacts on mental and cardiovascular health among elderly citizens,[18] so cities should take every possible step to ensure that any sort

of public initiative, facility or event is accessible to the elderly, for instance by avoiding digital-only procedures. Wellbeing is a right also guaranteed to neurodivergent people and those with physical, learning or developmental disabilities, so inclusive design must be the norm in all circumstances.

In several cities there have been many a pragmatic, evidence-based approach to drugs policy that treats them as a public health rather than a criminality issue. Cities should work alongside health authorities undertaking this paradigm shift by providing facilities that accompany drug users and addicts, rather than repress them. Switzerland led the way in introducing supervised injection sites, clinics where addicts can use controlled substances in a clean environment, with safe equipment and under medical supervision. These have since been introduced in Germany, Luxembourg, Spain and other member states.

- **Work with health authorities to ensure a fair distribution of medical and medico-social facilities that are necessary to meet the needs of all residents, including family planning, family support and elderly support services. Hamburg has almost 50 parent-child centres that provides parents with advice and support before and after the birth.[19]**

- **Using their role in managing schools and community centres, cities must promote healthy dietary choices and support those who are unable to afford quality nutrition. In addition to distributing 15 million pieces of fruit per year to schools, Copenhagen Municipality is going to plant fruit trees in its public parks from which citizens can freely pick fruit.[20]**

- **Cities should rethink their relationship to food production, with particular attention paid to promoting urban agriculture and environmentally and socially sustainable supply chains.**

- **Accompany health authorities in their transition to a drugs-as-health-issue approach by supporting the establishment of safe injection sites.**

2.3. Space for sport, exercise and physical wellbeing

Greener cities are healthier cities because they incentivise healthier lifestyles and a better quality of life. Public health authorities recommend daily walking as, alongside other forms of exercise, it has been proven to reduce the risk of some chronic illnesses such as heart disease, strokes, asthma, type 2 diabetes, obesity and some types of cancer, as well as improve certain mental health issues.

The provision of green spaces (see above) goes hand in hand with giving residents spaces in which to rest, play and practice sport safely and with the necessary equipment. Gender differences in usage of sports and recreational facilities must be borne in mind so that girls and boys alike have space in which to exercise and play. Investing in urban sports infrastructure ranging from small-scale basketball courts to bigger facilities such as gymnasiums and swimming pools can represent a substantial financial cost to municipal budgets. However, this should be seen as a long-term investment in citizens' health and the fostering of social skills and interaction that benefit overall cohesion.

- **The new mayor of Istanbul has developed a Master Plan for Playgrounds, improving existing playgrounds and building new ones, training staff as play workers and organising activities for 200,000 children a year.**[21]

- **Vienna is setting the standard for gender-inclusive playgrounds, with a strategy to ensure equal space for boys and girls.**[22]

2.4. **Personal development through arts and culture**

Cultural policies must reflect Europe's diversity and accommodate different populations and different practices. As the European Committee of the Regions reminds us in the first paragraph of its opinion on local cultural policies.

It is necessary to put in place a broad understanding of culture and Europe's cultural diversity that goes beyond solely the conservation and protection of tangible heritage and helps to understand the social and cultural changes taking place across European society. [23]

Evidence shows that the practice of amateur artistic and creative activities is directly correlated to higher levels of life satisfaction, and that measures destined to promote the social inclusion of minorities and fragile citizens can be improved through the use of culture, arts and creativity.[24] We support introducing European Culture Cheques to facilitate young people's access to cultural events and spaces across Europe.

Progressive municipalities have a long legacy of democratising the arts through free festivals and street performances that reflect a multifaceted conception of popular culture that goes beyond criticisms of elitism and commercialism. The so-called high arts should belong to all, an aspiration that relies on public support for artists' residencies, music schools, theatres and concert venues. Grassroots creativity goes hand in hand with a strong independent cultural sector. Europe's output must not be captured and fenced-off by foreign multinationals. Public funding is the guarantor of our exception culturelle, which Europeans depend on to reflect their realities and experiences. On 12 June 2020, PES Culture Ministers adopted a declaration calling for greater resources to be dedicated to the cultural and creative sectors in the recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. The European Capitals of Culture initiative provides a unique opportunity for the selected cities to support their local cultural scenes with the aid of extra funding and a platform with which to attract external attention.

"In Charleroi, we have supported museums, theatres and workers from the film industry: actors, writers, artists and technicians. Culture is an essential part of our work."

– Paul Magnette, Leader of PS Belgium

- **Local authorities and civil society must be equipped to support widespread access to arts and culture through cultural centres and activities run directly or by socio-cultural associations. Arts funding must not be prescriptive and must reflect the diversity of talents, ideas and lived experiences.**

- **We need a European Culture Cheque scheme to make cultural activities more affordable for young people.**

12 PRINCIPLES FOR PROGRESSIVE CITIES

CITIZENS' PARTICIPATION
LOCAL, REGIONAL,
NATIONAL GOVERNMENT
EU FUNDING

CLEAN MOBILITY

QUALITY JOBS

GENDER SENSITIVITY

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

CULTURE AND EDUCATION

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

SUSTAINABLE WASTE MANAGEMENT

NO MORE HOMELESSNESS

AGE-FRIENDLINESS

INCLUSION OF MARGINALISED GROUPS

SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

SAFE STREETS

2.5. Guaranteeing urban safety for all

Although crime rates having been declining across Europe for the past decade,[25] too many city residents continue to have their lives and livelihoods disrupted by crime and issues of public safety. We must not surrender to the siren call of those who would seek to mobilise these real concerns to stir up hatred and animosity, but we must be able to put forward answers that meet the demands of citizens while ensuring equal treatment of all at the hands of the law. The right to security is a right for all, regardless of where you live in the city. Policing should free from prejudice, which requires appropriate training of the police force. Our guiding principle should be policing by consent and the means of achieving this should be community policing. Dealing with neighbourhood disturbances and anti-social behaviour require long-term dialogue and building relationships with all residents regardless of age and background so that a greater degree of trust can be instilled. The application of Japan's decentralised model of policing, with a dense network of small community police stations (kōban) that can be relied upon for a range of minor policing needs should be explored in the European context.

Police time should also be dedicated to better enforcement of road safety. Deaths on urban roads are declining more slowly than in other areas,[26] a key factor putting many people off the transition to more environmentally friendly modes of transportation. As we discuss in chapter 4, vulnerable users such as pedestrians (especially children and older people) and cyclists must be given right of way to improve road safety for all users.

The police should not always have to be the go-to first responders, as they are not necessarily equipped to deal with the range of emergency situations that can arise. Cities are exploring alternative services, such as emergency mental health response units for situations involving individuals experiencing a mental health crisis, as well as additional funding for outreach to homeless people (see below).

Local authorities are frontline actors in the fight against gender-based violence, and they provide many of the essential emergency and support services that survivors of abuse rely on. The damages caused to these services by austerity must be undone if we are to ensure the safety and wellbeing of women and children across our cities. Police officers should receive appropriate training on how to deal with survivors of sexual assault and other gender-based violence. The most common place for women to be victims of violence is their own home, and municipalities can help by building links between law enforcement and charities, supporting women's refuges, 24/7 helplines and other emergency referral systems. Cities can also reduce risks for women in public spaces through gender-sensitive planning decisions, for instance with regards to street lighting.

- Everyday criminality and disturbances – as opposed to violent and organised crime – should be dealt with using community-oriented policing. Under progressive leadership, the Zugló district of Budapest initiated a series of meetings between local police officers and residents designed to initiate communication.[27]

- The police are not always the most adapted first responders, therefore alternative emergency services should be explored. For example, Stockholm has introduced a mental health ambulance to address suicidal behaviour and psychiatric disorders.[28]

- Authorities should adopt Sweden's Vision Zero approach to road safety, taking every step necessary, including slowing down traffic, to reduce road deaths and serious injuries.[29]

- The built environment should fully reflect concerns about safety, including adequate lighting of all public spaces.

- In addition, as experienced in some European cities during the Covid-19 lockdown, private entities, such as pharmacies or post offices offered to act as "secret" contact points for cases of domestic violence. This could offer many safe places in European cities for abused men and women. The Social Welfare Centre of the city of Mons has set up the collaboration "Talk to your pharmacist" to provide assistance to victims of domestic violence during the period of confinement. It enables all pharmacists of the 19 municipalities of Mons to become valuable intermediaries between the victims and the Public Welfare Centre for Intra-Family Violence of the City of Mons.[30]

- Bologna has implemented a comprehensive system for welcoming, counselling and supporting survivors of gender-based violence, and supports the functioning of the Centre Without Violence, which offers counselling to men to help prevent violence.[31]

"The sad reality is the violence we're seeing on our streets today is an appalling side-effect of increasing inequality and alienation caused by years of austerity and neglect. You can't cut public services and preventative measures, and keep crime low."

– Sadiq Khan, mayor of London

3 FIGHTING FOR EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS IN URBAN POLICY

Cities reflect and magnify the problems of countries as a whole, and inequality is no exception to this. Europe's largest cities juxtapose areas of great deprivation and areas of excessive wealth. Evidence suggests that not only are wealth and income inequality on the rise in cities across Europe, so too is socio-economic segregation.[32]

Though it is generally beyond the powers of municipalities to implement our progressive solutions to inequality – including fair taxation, strong welfare states that extend to all citizens and workers rights' that guarantee a decent minimum wage[33] – they still have a substantial role to play in tackling poverty and promoting social justice and real equality of opportunity through the local implementation of national schemes and the several policy levers they have at their disposal. First and foremost, this means housing policy, for which cities have a responsibility to promote energy-efficient affordable and social housing that is adapted to different families' and individuals' needs. Most cities also have competencies in social policy, whether from managing the implementation of national or European schemes, or through their own initiatives. To be truly sustainable, a city must also take all available steps to tackle inequality and social exclusion among vulnerable and marginalised groups, such as children, young people and the elderly in situations of poverty, the homeless, and those from a migration background.

3.1. **Housing as a right, not a market**

"We are building homes for young people everywhere around the city. But this doesn't imply becoming a grey city: we have increased green spaces from 50 to 53% of Vienna's total area."

– Michael Ludwig, Mayor of Vienna

Housing is a human right, recognised in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and enshrined as Principle 19 of the European Declaration of Social Rights. Since the economic crisis in 2008, investments in affordable housing have steadily decreased. The housing market displays evident failures, distortions and deep fragmentation due to gentrification, financialisation and touristification. With housing costs increasing faster than incomes, models like Vienna's, where 60% of the city's residents live in rent-controlled flats owned either by the municipality or cooperatives, merit being applied to other cities across Europe.[34]

The 2019 PES European Parliament election manifesto called for a Plan for Affordable Housing in Europe, echoed by our colleagues in the PES Group in the European Committee of the Region's recent call for a European Deal for Housing.[35] Such a plan should support the construction of new affordable housing and the renovation of the existing housing stock, community-led neighbourhood development, sustainable land use and the acquisition of land for social, public and affordable housing.

Sargfabrik, resident-managed housing cooperative, Vienna, 1996

"Let me be very clear: fighting climate change is hard and it requires long-term policies with broad popular support. That's why social sustainability is as important as environmental sustainability."

– Frans Timmermans,
Executive Vice-President for the European Green Deal

PES common candidate Frans Timmermans succeeded in making the issue of housing gain visibility during the European elections campaign and during the commissioner hearings. We now want to see additional concrete initiatives at the EU level to improve the housing situation of all Europeans, especially the most vulnerable.

This goes for affordability, but also quality and size. Many parts of Eastern Europe have seen chronic under-investment in housing for decades, resulting in under-provision of new builds and rapid degradation of existing housing stock. Though these problems are particular substantial in rural areas, the elderly and poor in cities are also affected.[36]

Part of the problem is that the current EU legislation sees housing as a market, not a service, meaning it falls under the remit of competition law. For our vision for a progressive urban agenda to be realised, housing must be granted the same kind of exception as education and health. This is the only way for cities and governments to be allowed to take a proactive role in guaranteeing the right to quality, affordable housing. This would also help the establishment of a vibrant third sector in housing, like in Austria, Denmark, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, etc.

Rather than tinker at the edges, we need a complete paradigm shift to a universal housing model, in which social housing is meant for all levels of income. The current narrative has lost the ambition of the post-war years and has led only to ghettoization. The private sector must be regulated so that it contributes to the social mix.

"We have launched a programme to ensure that every Parisian is less than 5 minutes away from sport facilities and gymnastic apparatus. We have improved the connection to the woods, which are our green breathing spaces."

– Anne Hidalgo, Mayor of Paris

In addition to rising demand meeting insufficient supply, rising rents are driven by property developers speculating on the value of land. Perverse market incentives and tax relief models often encourage developers to hoard land rather than build houses, as too many houses arriving on the market at the same time would drive down their value. Public bodies, housing associations and other innovative bodies like community land trusts should reaffirm their role in guaranteeing the right to housing for all.

Regulation of the private sector will remain one of the main instruments for providing affordable housing for all: rent transparency, rent regulation, rent caps, unlimited rental contracts, protection from eviction for renters and mortgage-holders and binding conditions for receiving public subsidies have all been proven effective in bringing this distorted market under democratic control.

- **Acknowledge that housing is a human right, not a commodity and that the role of the state is to provide safe, decent and affordable housing for all. This can be social, public, cooperative, for limited profit, affordable rental and affordable home ownership, but also adapted housing combined with care services for the elderly.**

- **Develop an EU Plan for Affordable Housing that better coordinates EU policies and funding opportunities. EU state aid rules should be reformed and clarified in order not to hinder social housing. The definition should be broadened so as to enable the implementation of sustainability goals such as "social mix" and "social cohesion".** [37]

- Investments in social infrastructure, like housing, should be excluded from fiscal rules.

- Social housing should be intended for all citizens and must be seen as the backbone of socially mixed neighbourhoods. The ambition should be to cover the housing needs of the three lowest income quintiles and reduce by half housing cost overburdening among this group by 2030.

- The House Price Index indicator should be refined and the reference threshold for the Housing Cost Overburden rate should be reduced from 40% to 25 % of a household's disposable income.

- As outlined in the European Parliament's Employment and Social Affairs Committee draft report A strong social Europe for Just Transitions, at least 30% of new builds should be affordable housing for the lower-income group, and another 30% should be affordable for the middle-income group.[38]

- EU legislation on procurement has an effect on housing provision. Specific qualitative criteria which go beyond the financial bid should be introduced and better taken into account when it comes to tenders for public housing projects.

- EU funding for affordable housing construction and low-carbon renovation should be improved, for example, with increased financing via the European Structural Funds, InvestEU and the European Investment Bank.

- Sufficiently big housing associations should serve as intermediaries to use EU funding.

- Cities should support community land trust projects, which enable communities to buy up land collectively and then build privately, lowering the costs of acceding to home ownership.[39] There are over 170 such projects in the United Kingdom and several initiatives are being put in place in Brussels and Ghent.

- We need more housing adapted to the elderly. Furthermore, following the example of Granada, Darmstadt and many others, cities should sponsor the creation of intergenerational housing partnerships.

- In areas of acute pressure, radical options must be explored. Since December 2019, the city of Barcelona has been granted the power to buy properties that have been vacant for over two years at 50% of the market rate.[40] Berlin has recently followed Vienna, Madrid and Amsterdam in capping rents and freezing them for five years.[41]

- Cities need to take serious measures regarding evictions: in order to comply with international human rights law a number of criteria must be met, including meaningful engagement with those affected, exploration of all viable alternatives, relocation to adequate housing.

- The housing market must be regulated in a way that prevents housing being left vacant, avoids the privatization of public of social housing, and disincentivises property speculation and land hoarding through taxes on short-term reselling.

3.2. **Eradicating energy and water poverty**

Public policy issues rarely present decision makers with the opportunity to solve two problems at once but rising energy prices and the need to reduce our energy consumption do have a joint solution: energy-efficient and just renovation. Energy prices represent an additional burden on purchasing power, especially for low-income households. In 2018, 7.3% of European households were unable to heat their homes sufficiently, including 33.7% of Bulgarians and 22.7% of Greeks.[42] By incorporating stringent energy efficiency requirements for new homes and by massively upgrading existing buildings, the EU can help tackle energy consumption while providing a substantial boost to standards of living across the continent. This must be accompanied by national measures to tackle energy poverty and its devasting impact on citizens' health and air quality.

The Renovation Wave announced by Executive Vice President Timmermans is a major step in the right direction.[43] The Commission will seek to break down the regulatory barriers to renovating housing, as well as provide information and funding through existing EU programmes. The objective is to double the annual energy renovation rate by 2030. However, as socialists and democrats, we will stand against renovations being used as an excuse for evictions and will strongly oppose any public funding being used to these ends.

The accompanying New European Bauhaus design initiative must be used to harness the quality, innovation and creativity of our architecture, our way of life and our cities, all the while promoting sustainable living conditions for the benefit of citizens rather than private profits. Particular attention must be paid to ensure that this is not something that benefits only the most privileged citizens and areas.

For those who are acutely struggling with bills, many countries have national legislation forbidding suppliers from cutting off access to water, electricity or gas, especially during the winter period. With the limited resources – legal and financial – at their disposal, cities are often left powerless in the face of rampant energy poverty. National governments must show leadership on this issue and support local authorities in providing emergency assistance.

- **Member States, through a full and effective involvement of local authorities, should work quickly to implement the Renovation Wave and incorporate its objectives into their national climate plans and recovery plans.**

- **Renovations should be cost-neutral for tenants, meaning that rents should not increase higher than energy savings, thereby preventing "renovictions" (evictions by renovation).**

- **The circular economy objectives also apply to the construction sector: sustainable and low-carbon construction standards must be followed, and the use of renewable energy and materials free of harmful chemicals must be specified.**

- **EU legislation on procurement has an effect on housing provision. Specific qualitative criteria which go beyond the financial bid should be introduced and better taken into account when it comes to tenders for public housing projects.**

3.3. **Tackling homelessness**

Austerity and rising housing costs have caused homelessness to spiral in most EU member states The EU should encourage and support projects which address homelessness in an integrative manner, by focusing on simultaneously improving health, wellbeing and social support networks of homeless people. Essential hygiene items, including menstrual products, must be made available to homeless people free of charge. We are firmly opposed to the criminalisation of homelessness in any circumstances.

- **The EU must support prevention programmes, such as eviction prevention in specific neighbourhoods, anti-speculation action and tenants' organisations that give counselling to help citizens at risk of losing their homes.**

- **Member States should give cities the powers to use their European Social Fund+ budgets to effectively combat the most severe forms of poverty with the greatest social exclusion impact, such as homelessness.**

- **Cities should learn from the examples of Denmark and Finland and adopt the "Housing First" approach to homelessness. Housing First works by quickly providing a permanent housing solution before accompanying the homeless with social support programmes, leaving them with a high degree of choice and control.[44]**

- **"Hostile architecture" – such as spikes on window ledges and individualised public benches – should be banned in public developments and planning regulations.**

- **The shelter capacities for homeless people and for victims of gender-based violence must be extended through new emergency housing, including by repurposing public buildings.**

- **We need a single definition of homelessness in the EU which would enable the systematic comparison and assessment of the extent of homelessness across different EU countries; and would allow homelessness rates to be monitored at EU level via institutions such as Eurostat.**

3.4. **A fair start for children**

Local authorities are generally responsible for the provision of early childhood education and care (ECEC), access to which remains very unequal in many member states. Research has shown that providing quality childcare is the single most effective tool for reducing socio-economic gaps in educational attainment. In some countries, fewer than 20% of children from low-income families participate in any kind of ECEC, compared to more than 70% among the top income households. European children aged 0 to 3 from families in the bottom 40% of earners are about 15% more likely to attain average scores once teenagers if they access childcare at the ages of 1 or 2.[45]

In our 2019 manifesto, we committed to introducing a European Child Guarantee, the right for every child to have access to quality healthcare, childcare, education, housing and nutrition. The Child Guarantee will require central governments to grant local authorities the necessary funding and tools to address the under-provision of these basic services.

- **Member states should adopt a fully-fledged and ambitious European Child Guarantee enshrining every child's right to quality childcare, education, nutrition, healthcare and housing. This is an indispensable step to ensure that children and their parents – especially mothers – are able to fulfil their full potential.**

- **This means committing sufficient funding to cities to enable them to best respond to challenges of housing provision, education and childcare quality. Hamburg guarantees families five hours of free day-care per day through a voucher system.[46]**

- **Even in cities where the right support and services exist, effective outreach to vulnerable groups remains critical. Malmö has set up a one-stop-shop for childcare and preschool, health and social counselling, pedagogical support and language learning for children and parents.[47]**

- **Every child has the right to play, even in times of emergency. During the Covid-19 lockdown, the cities of Ghent and Leuven reached out to vulnerable families to provide thousands of children with board games and books.[48]**

3.5. **Equal opportunities for young people and those facing social exclusion**

Thanks to PES Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, Nicolas Schmit, the European Youth Guarantee is to be extended for the next seven years. It is aimed at helping young people under 30 not in employment, education or training (NEETs) to join the labour market by guaranteeing them a place in education, employment, apprenticing or training within four months of leaving education or becoming unemployed. Many city authorities conduct indispensable work reaching out to target groups and creating lasting partnerships between local businesses, NGOs and vocational education institutions.[49]

The role of youth community centres cannot be underplayed – these valuable outreach structures provide places for young people to socialise and learn social skills, but also for municipal authorities to best evaluate their needs, implement local initiatives and inform them about their rights or about national schemes.

More generally, municipalities should work with NGOs and local businesses to eliminate long-term unemployment and by helping NEETs of all ages to (re)join the labour market. Thanks to the action of the French Parti socialiste, cities like Boulogne-sur-Mer and Marseille have been able to experiment with "zero long-term unemployment zones" that treat work as a common good to be shared out among all a community's residents. No one is skill-less, and our cities have many unmet needs that would benefit from redirecting unemployment benefits into supporting such schemes.[50]

- **The updated European Youth Guarantee must be deployed to its full potential by member states, empowering local teaching organisations and employers to develop long-term partnerships to reach out to marginalised young people and integrate them into the labour market. Berlin achieves this with a one-stop-shop Youth Employment Agency.[51]**

- **Cities should lead the way in exploring innovative new solutions to long-term unemployment, including zero long-term unemployment zones that bring together all local stakeholders in a bid to reinsert NEETs into the job market through subsidised jobs with a community benefit.**

- **Accessing information is critical for those at risk of exclusion, which is why the city of Rennes has hired socio-digital educators to help target groups access online resources.[52]**

3.6. **Safe havens for migrants and asylum seekers**

Inclusive cities are cities that reach out to other marginalised groups such as recent migrants and asylum seekers, who often struggle with access to education, training, the jobs market, health services (including mental health) housing and active civic participation, all areas where cities are best placed to respond. Migrants represent a huge opportunity to enrich our societies and respond to demographic shifts, and taking in refugees is a moral imperative inscribed in international law. Many local authorities, like Palermo and the network of German "harbour cities" led by Potsdam, are working harder than their national governments to care for refugees and integrate those that wish to remain in the EU.

There can be no one-size-fits-all approach to migrant inclusion, depending on the size of the city and the specificities of its jobs market. This is why cities should be empowered to devise their own strategies, so long as they are committed to the long-term welfare and inclusion of those who come from a migration background, conveying a positive narrative about migrant integration and consolidating citizens' support. We have called for the establishment of a fund to which municipalities could apply directly to receive support for integrating refugees, while also funding projects for local communities.

"Local authorities must be given a voice on housing and integration policies for asylum seekers. And there must be sufficient financing with incentives on the national and EU levels, to encourage as many cities as possible to pursue these policies."

– Mike Schubert, Mayor of Potsdam, Germany

> - **The EU's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund must be used to support cities' initiatives to address the needs of their different migrant communities.**
>
> - **An EU Integration Fund should be established to fund projects that benefit host communities in cities that host refugees.**

4 CHAMPIONING DIVERSITY THROUGH INCLUSIVE POLICYMAKING

As microcosms of society as a whole, cities are central to breaking down barriers of class and status. Sustainable cities are inclusive cities, cities that reach out to the young, the old and parents alike, to those that face discrimination because they are of a different ethnic background or religion, or because of their gender or sexual identity. At a time when the voices of intolerance are becoming louder, our progressive vision for democratic and open cities would see their role reaffirmed at the forefront of the fight for social justice.

The importance of affirming our openness and showing our pride in diversity cannot be overstated, but it must also be accompanied by concrete actions to evaluate the impact of policies that have for too long been designed on the basis that the "default" citizen is a white man who enjoys a good income. For our policy outcomes to be fairer, our decision-making procedures must take differences into account and involve a broader range of perspectives (see also chapter 6).

4.1. **A feminist city**

Our cities are no different from our countries as a whole, in that the place of women has been consistently marginalised. As a result, women still face reduced visibility and unequal treatment in access to public spaces and public services. This cannot be allowed to continue.

Many local public policies have an unfair impact on women due to the lack of consideration taken for their different needs and uses of public spaces. This is why we support the widespread use of gender budgeting, whereby taxation and spending decisions are submitted to a gender impact assessment to determine whether they disproportionately impact men and women. Proposals relating to specific local policy areas can be found elsewhere in this document, and our colleagues in PES Women have set out a series of structural reforms in their policy document A Feminist Economy for Europe: *Towards a progressive economic system that works for women.*[53]

Women have for too long been misrepresented or erased from the built environment, either through sexist advertising that contributes to the objectification of women, or through a lack of streets and other public infrastructure named after notable women and members of minority groups.

Specific programme to encourage girls to use a greater choice and variety of professional careers, such as the "Girls Day" and other schemes to make them aware of their bodies to develop a free sexuality, to become self-confident and proud of their skills and assist them in developing a strong personality, as with self-defence courses and awareness raising about violence in the online world, have to be complemented by similar programmes directed to boys to overcome prevailing violent role models.

- **Gender and age adapted to empower girls to be strong and proud and enable boys to adopt a non-traditional masculinity should be fostered in public schools, sports facilities, youth centres and training schemes.**

- **Introducing women artists schemes and securing equal participation of women and men in all cultural sectors has to be a precondition for receiving public subsidies.**

- **Cities should implement gender budgeting procedures to ensure that their spending decisions do not unfairly impact men or women.**

- **Cities should follow in the footsteps of London, Paris, Frankfurt and Segovia by banning sexist advertising.**[54]

- **The representation of women and minorities in public spaces should be improved by proactively naming and renaming streets and public infrastructure after notable women and members of minority groups.**

Progressive and Sustainable Cities: Narratives and key figures

A narrative – making the difference

"75% of the European Union's population live in and around cities; cities also concentrate 77% of jobs. **We must take our fight for equality and justice to where the people live.**

"Cities are at the epicentre of many present-day crises: the health crisis, the jobs crisis, the inequality crisis, the housing crisis and the climate crisis. **Citizens can count on socialist and progressive mayors to deliver radical solutions.**

Jobs

"Transitioning cities to a sustainable economic model is not a vague eco-friendly notion: it is those on lower incomes and from marginalised groups that suffer most from air pollution, inadequate public transport, poor home insulation and lack of access to green spaces. **The new economy will create new jobs.**

The **Brussels-Capital** Region used funds available under the European Youth Guarantee to complete rework its public employment agency and better match up young jobseekers with employers, and in doing so managed to more than halve the number of young jobseekers from 14,000 to under 7,000. Cities such as **Marseille** are experimenting with *territoires zéro chômeurs de longue durée*, a job guarantee for those facing long-term exclusion.

Children and families

"**Every child deserves a fair start in life** through access to quality healthcare, childcare and education, yet costs remain too high for many families. With our European Child Guarantee reinforcing local public services, no child will be left behind."

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) is the **single most effective tool for reducing socio-economic gaps in educational attainment**, yet in some EU countries fewer than 20% of children from low-income families participate in any kind of ECEC.

Hamburg is leading the way through its network of almost 50 parent-child centres that provides parents with advice and support before and after the birth, and its guarantee of five hours of free day-care per day. **Malmö** has set up a one-stop-shop for childcare and preschool, health and social counselling, pedagogical support and language learning for children and parents.

Mobility

"Children, young people, women, parents and older people deserve cleaner cities that are easier to get around. This is the 15-minute city: workplaces, public services and shops should only be **a short journey away from where you live, wherever you live.**"

In 2018, an estimated 379,000 premature deaths were attributable to air pollution by fine particulate matter. This disproportionately impacts poorer families, who are **more likely to live near busier roads.** Commuting by car takes up 90 times more space than the same journey by bus or tram and deaths on urban roads are declining more slowly than in other areas. By designing 15-minute cities we can reduce the need for travel and improve quality of life.

The city of **Paris** has an ambitious plan to make mobility easier and more sustainable. With over 1,000 kilometres of cycle lanes, road infrastructure is being redesigned to make life easier and safer for the growing number of public transport users, cyclists and pedestrians.

Housing

"For the past decade, housing costs have increased faster than wages. Every European has first- or second-hand experience of this housing crisis. Our solutions are straightforward: **build more social and affordable houses**, and if necessary, **cap and freeze rents**."

For the past decade **housing costs have increased faster than wages**. As a result, over 80 million Europeans are overburdened by housing costs and homelessness is on the rise in almost all member states.

The city of **Vienna** kept growing its social housing stock, and nowadays 60% of the city's residents live in rent-controlled flats owned either by the municipality or cooperatives, making it one of the most affordable and socially mixed cities in Europe.

Public safety

"Everyone has the right to feel safe at home and in the streets. We want a comprehensive approach built on creating trust between police and residents and equal opportunities for every neighbourhood."

Feeling safe should not be the preserve of those who can afford it. Petty criminality continues to damage the quality of life of many city residents, and restricts their access to public spaces, in particular for women. Repression has its limits, and **effective policing should be based on trust** and the promotion of equal opportunities in every part of the city.

Paris will soon have a new municipal police force to tackle petty crime and anti-social behaviour. In **London**, the Violence Reduction Unit brings together specialists from health, police, local government and community organisations to address violent crime and the underlying causes of violent crime.

Democracy

"For citizens to trust institutions, institutions need to trust citizens. By giving residents from all backgrounds the power to make decisions for their communities, cities can build change from the bottom up."

Across Europe citizens are losing faith in institutions, though local government retains more trust: in a 2020 Eurobarometer survey 52% of respondents said they trusted their local government against 43% for national governments.

Participatory budgeting such as that of **Seville**, whereby a share of the city budget is dedicated to projects proposed and debated by citizens' assemblies, opens up the democratic process and strengthens the link between citizens' needs and public actions.

4.2. **Making sure the city belongs to all**

City authorities have a responsibility to ensure that public places and fora for democratic engagement are welcoming and accessible to people from diverse backgrounds, including ethnic and religious minorities and members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Though the emergence of "LGBT-free cities" in Poland is particularly alarming, it is not enough for cities to simply not endorse openly discriminatory policies. Harassment in the street and in schools is one visible dimension, but discrimination can be more subtle and pervasive, such as in access to housing and dealings with public officials. Progressive cities should have action plans in place to address the ways in which women and minorities experience differentiated treatment in the city.

Diversity should be defended but also celebrated, which is why we support having a wide range of public festivities from the many different communities that make up our cities. We remain strongly committed to facilitating the organisation of Pride festivals.

"I was elected as the first openly gay mayor in Poland and in Central Europe. This was a turning point: the media attention, our debates on tolerance, openness and diversity challenged people to act differently. In Słupsk, we introduced a "Diversity Charter" the first city in Poland to do so."

– Robert Biedroń, MEP, former Mayor of Słupsk, Poland

- **Municipal authorities should listen to community voices regarding the multidimensional discrimination experienced by members of minority communities, whether based on ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation, and respond with concrete steps to educate citizens and officials. Malmö is providing anti-discrimination training to all managers within the city administration, to ensure a discrimination-free workplace.[55]**

- **The city of Brussels recently announced an action plan aimed at improving the safety of the LGBT community by introducing training for all public agents.[56] Cities should seek to make clear their commitment by seeking recognition as LGBT-friendly destinations for tourists and new residents.**

4.3. **Age-friendly cities and disability-friendly cities**

As our societies age, so do our cities. Though their populations do tend to be younger than national averages, our tendency to view cities as places for young people risks missing the large part of the urban population that is made up of older, retired people. Housing difficulties, energy poverty, lack of inclusion in the public debate can just as well affect the elderly as young people. In addition to these issues of social exclusion, elderly people often face issues of reduced mobility, as do many people of all ages with physical disabilities.

As with gender inequality, age-related discrimination and discrimination towards people with disabilities can manifest themselves across all areas of local policy. This requires us to have a cross-cutting approach to tackling these issues, especially when it comes to adapted housing and the accessibility of public spaces, services, and transport. It should go without saying that all new buildings, urban redevelopments, public transport infrastructure and vehicles should be designed with wheelchair users and those with sensory disabilities in mind, but in many countries the speed of retrofitting is insufficient for addressing the urgent needs of different users.

- **The World Health Organisation's principles of age friendly cities should be incorporated into local policymaking by assessing the impact on the elderly with regards to the built environment, transport, housing, social participation, respect and social inclusion, civic participation and employment, communication, and community support and health services.**[57]

- **The European Commission's Access City Awards raise vital awareness of issues of accessibility in urban planning and transport, but the EU should do more to promote the use of Design For All principles in new or redeveloped infrastructure.**
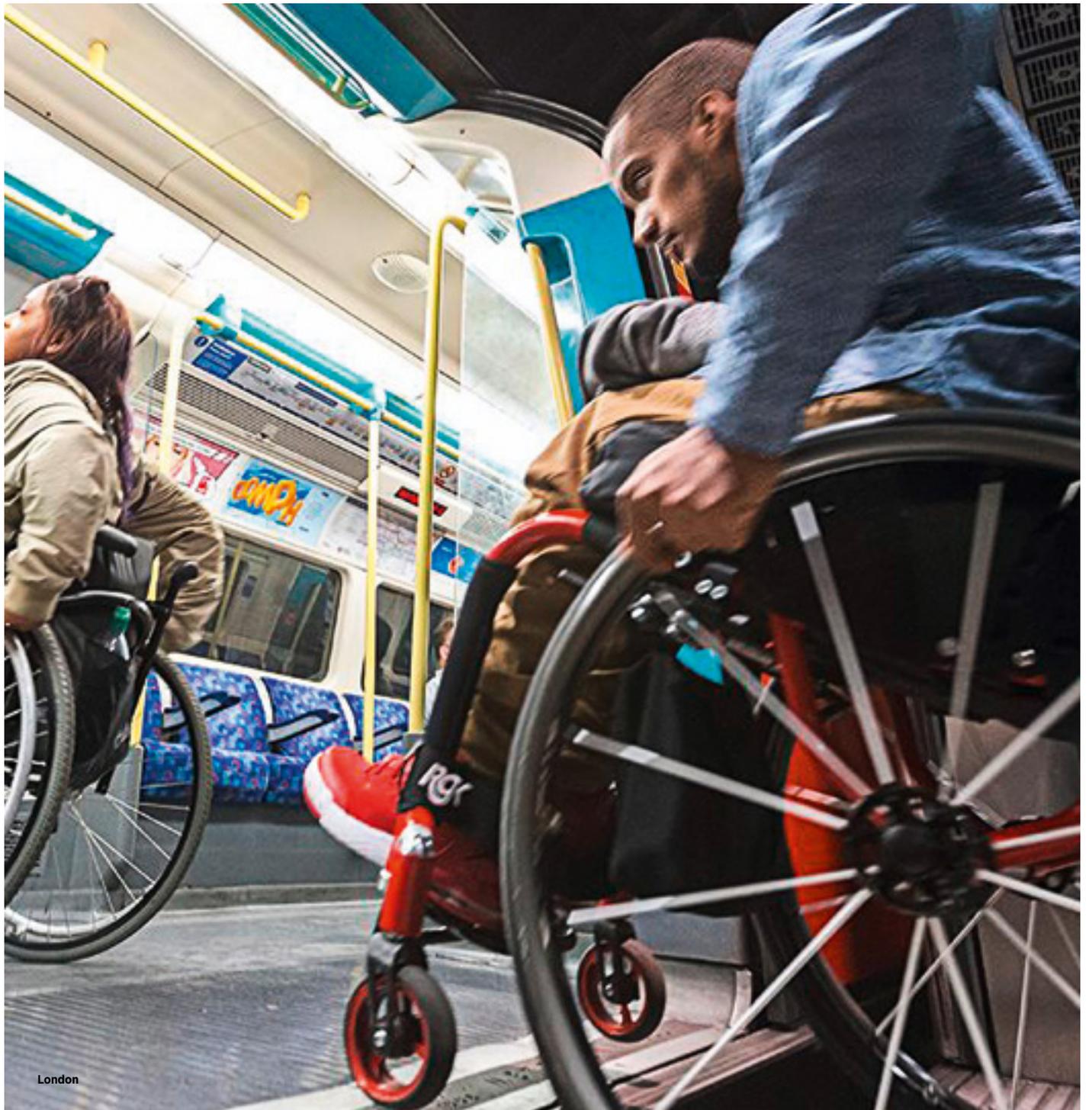
London

RETHINKING MOBILITY FOR A JUST TRANSITION

Mobility, especially in urban areas, has seen fundamental changes in recent years. The paradigm shift towards sustainable non-carbon-based transport solutions is still on its way. Some cities have successfully implemented first steps, but the challenge remains central to city planning, funding opportunities and further efforts in redesigning and re-imagining neighbourhoods and reconnecting cities with their surrounding peri-urban and rural areas. Our core commitment must be to fulfil our climate policy ambitions while making cities more liveable for all residents at the same time.

Multimodal transport solutions that are accessible people with reduced mobility (the elderly, people with disabilities, parents with pushchairs) must play a crucial role in reaching these goals. The necessary steps to fulfil our commitments must include the reduction of individual combustion engine car transport, the modernisation and electrification of our fleets, the extension and improvement of public transport networks and services including a focus on rail services as well as building new and improved bicycle lanes and pedestrian walkways. The mobility infrastructure of the future must prioritise public transport, bikes and pedestrians through enabling commuters to make the switch from cars to bikes and public transport. Specific attention must be paid to women's more complicated, multi-stop daily trajectories due to their unpaid care work responsibilities significantly shaping their mobility needs.[58] Through investment and forward planning sustainable options in mobility must also be the most convenient options. Those dependant on their cars must be given viable alternatives before forcing the switch through extra financial burdens.

Berlin

Learn

Healthy Food

Work

Share &
re-use

Exercise

45mn

15 mn

Home

Move
around

45mn

Buy groceries

Healthcare

15mn

Breathe

Culture

A diagram depicting the concept of the "15-minute city",
used by Paris en commun, Anne Hidalgo's platform
for reelection as Mayor of Paris in 2020.
By Micaël

In the long run, the best kind of trip is no trip at all, and cities should be redesigned with the ambition in mind. The 15-minute city, within which homes, workplaces, public services and shops are accessible within 15 minutes by foot or public transport, should form the basis of our long-term planning. This concept does not just apply to dense city centres, but also to suburbs, whose residents should enjoy the same rights to a car-free, accessible way of living.

While the topic of urban mobility often conjures up images of densely-built metropolises with extended coverage of light rail, metros, trams and buses providing neighbourhood-to-neighbourhood connections, our aim is also to address the situation in small- and medium-sized cities whose residents are much more reliant on private cars.

"Our job is to offer alternatives to car use, before we ban diesel cars or any cars from central Budapest. That's the only sustainable approach."

– Gergely Karácsony, Mayor of Budapest, Hungary, elected with MSZP support

Low density creates additional challenges for transit networks and often results in exclusively centre-periphery connections, rather than periphery to periphery. This is why cycling, pedestrian and carpooling infrastructure are so essential in combination with investment in frequent and regular bus services, to allow residents flexibility without having to use their cars. It also demonstrates the importance of providing services where people live rather than forcing them to move around, no matter the size of city.

5.1. **Urban space distribution**

Space is scarce in urban areas. Much of the space in our inner cities is dedicated to mobility and the car is by far the least space efficient transport option available. The European Commission finds that a journey home or to work by car takes up 90 times more space than if the same journey was taken by bus or tram".[59] Individual motorized transport with associated problems of air pollution, congestion, noise and traffic injuries and the redistribution of space is key in achieving modal split change and sustainable urban environments. The vast majority of car drivers are men, usually driving alone, which has biased the layout of cities to the detriment of other modes of transport mostly used by women.[60] Given the challenges cities are currently facing, taking road space from cars is justified on social, health, environmental and economic grounds.[61] The redistribution of space towards recreational spaces and other forms of transportation such as public transport and non-motorized transport must come with additional benefits for all, including drivers and drivers willing and able to make the switch. Low-emission zones in our inner cities can also greatly reduce pollution and noise levels, as can reductions in urban speed limits to 30 or even 20 km/h.

For those who are dependent on their car, especially workers or vulnerable groups, car-sharing could be encouraged through a network of commuting hotspots and digital infrastructure solutions (supported by community centres) that help match people with similar routes. Benefits to car-pooling like special car-pooling lanes or preferential conditions for parking should be considered. The electrification of this essential fleet must be encouraged, including by providing the charging infrastructure needed and supporting the modernisation of these cars through bonusses and tax incentives.

- **Digital infrastructure to support car-sharing efforts and car-pooling should be provided and further encouraged.**

Ride-hailing	🔴	683g CO2e
Pooled Ride	⚫	455g CO2e
Electric Ride	🟢	220g CO2e
Electric + Pooled	🟢	146g CO2e
Public transit	🟢	103g CO2e
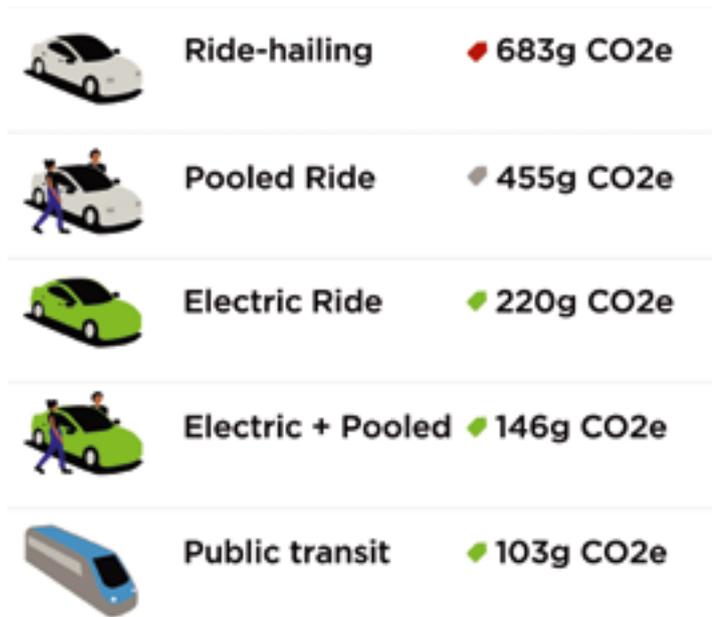
CO2 emissions by modes of transport

- **Electrification of the remaining necessary fleet and supporting infrastructure must be supported through tax reliefs and funding.**

- **We call for cities and local governance to limit the space dedicated to individual motorized transport and encourage recreational uses and public transport as well as non-motorized transport solutions. This also includes dedicating parking spaces to electric vehicles and bikes instead of combustion engine cars.**

- **New traffic management systems can contribute to repurposing existing infrastructure to accommodate new uses prioritising low carbon and zero carbon emission vehicles and uses.**

- **To tackle pollution and road traffic injuries and deaths, the speed limit in urban areas should be reduced to 30 km/h.**

- **Those most reliant on cars must be allowed to continue using them for their daily and essential tasks.**

"Lisbon is the first capital in southern Europe to receive the distinction of European Green Capital, and the jury found that it had improved by every measure. For example, the recycling rate is over 34% and only 1% of waste is sent to landfill. Other highlights are the re-design of public spaces, a 250 hectare increase in green space since 2008 and the cleaning of the Tejo river."

– Fernando Medina

5.2. **Public transport**

Public transport – including busses, electrical and combustion-based, trams and subway systems – are key to achieve our carbon reduction commitments, the goals of the European Green Deal and the Sustainable Development Goals. These networks need to be further developed to increase in coverage, frequency and reliability in order to encourage better take-up. With the support of the Luxembourgish Socialist Workers Party, their ministers and local representatives, this year Luxembourg made public transport free,[62] thereby becoming the first country worldwide to make all public transport nationwide free of charge.

This is a great step in granting all citizens flexible mobility options and encouraging sustainable alternatives to combustion engine cars. However, the financial aspects of urban transport are only one side of the coin, as a network of frequent and punctual transport options, with sufficient capacity can make people shift from their cars to more sustainable modes of transport. Beyond the affordability aspect, which is crucial to encouraging take-up, we also support investments on all levels in maintaining the networks and expanding their reach and their frequencies to ultimately make public transport not only the more affordable but also the more convenient option. It is essential to gather gender-disaggregated data on public transport use to fully comprehend the impact of transit policies on men and women. Transport tickets that are only valid for one line drive up costs for women, who are likely to change lines more often due to more sophisticated journeys associated with care responsibilities such as childcare and food shopping.

Luxembourg

- **Affordability must be our watchword, and we should work towards free transport for young people, the elderly and the unemployed. In smaller cities with underused public transport, free transit for all may help boost ridership.**

- **Investments in public transport must be made available to increase the scope, capacity reliability and frequency of the existing networks, to extend the networks and to close existing loops.**

- **City planning and development must take connection to public transport and the possibility to solely rely on public transportation options into consideration when planning new neighbourhoods and re-developing existing ones.**

- **New low-emission or zero-emission options for existing fleets of busses should be retro-fitted or fleets must be upgraded. This can lower the costs of public transport in the long run while also lowering pollution and noise levels from traffic.**

- **Public transport infrastructure must be accessible to all. This also means taking into account the specific needs of the youngest, the elderly and people with disabilities. Their requirements must be mainstreamed in the development of new projects while existing infrastructure should be retrospectively updated.**

5.3. **Bicycles and pedestrians**

Bikeability and walkability are essential to make cities more liveable and encourage carbon-free mobility solutions. This means essentially that both bike lanes and walkways are secure – ideally separated from car traffic – and well connected, and overall make transport enjoyable. These concepts include the high quality of sidewalks, traffic and road conditions, clear rights-of-way for pedestrians and bikers and building accessibility. City planning and neighbourhood planning have to ensure that in their traffic concepts, the rights of the most vulnerable – especially children and the elderly – in traffic are respected and both walking and biking feel secure, fast and enjoyable.

The recent development of "shared streets" cannot be used as a substitute for true pedestrianised zones. In the absence of elevated pavements, pedestrians with sensory disabilities may find it harder to distinguish between surfaces where cars are and are not allowed to drive, creating a hazard risk. Even if pedestrians have the right of way, they remain the most vulnerable users of public spaces and must be protected accordingly.

Broad, well-maintained and unobstructed pavements and cycle lanes with a focus on central commuting streets can contribute to more cycle traffic and walking, which translates to less car traffic and therefore less congestion and air and noise pollution. To ensure the safety of all participants, a focus on cyclists and pedestrians in traffic education – including driving licenses – must be ensured.

- **Cycling and walking not only have the lowest carbon footprint of all forms of transportation, they also have the greatest direct health benefits. Cycling lanes and broad pavements must be built into new road infrastructure from the very beginning, so as to avoid disjoined cycle lanes or obstacles. Bikes and pedestrians, and these should have rights of way.**

- **Cycling and short-term rental bikes in inner cities are essential components multi-modal transport solution. Short-term rental bikes must therefore be publicly available for low prices and deployed according to commuting habits throughout the cities.**

- **Successful pioneering examples from medium-sized cities (e.g. La Rochelle, France, pop. 75,000) show that bike sharing is not just for large cities.**

- **Cycle lanes especially along the main commuting lines must be further build up and integrated into existing road networks while ideally being securely separated from car lanes. These cycling highways can greatly contribute to lowering commuting times for bikes and making the commute safer.**

6 FOSTERING AN ACTIVE LOCAL DEMOCRACY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

The increasing distrust of public authorities is testament to growing socio-economic inequalities and the perceived disconnect between decisions and those whose lives they impact. This has fed into a growing scepticism and distrust towards democratic institutions, which has been exploited by those who promote racism, xenophobia, sexism, homophobia and transphobia. We have a positive vision for society, based on equality and inclusion. We cannot tolerate ghettoization and defeatism in the face of poverty and insecurity. Local democracy and public action are the guarantors of free speech, freedom of conscience and of religion, and the freedom to lead secure, fulfilling lives.

Cities have a multifaceted role to play in the fight for free and inclusive societies. As the closest decision-making level to citizens, cities have a strong potential for fostering participative democracy and strengthening citizens' engagement in democratic life.

Our 2019 election manifesto strongly supported "civic engagement, public accountability and fair and transparent decision processes at all levels".[64]

As providers of public services and community infrastructure, cities should work to equip individuals of all ages with the social and educational skills needed to flourish as fully engaged citizens. This is achieved through ensuring quality facilities for formal education and supporting universal access to childcare, but also through less formal settings by fostering a dense ecosystem of community groups, non-profits and charities that encourage us to look for and engage with our fellow citizens of all ages. Learning is a lifelong exercise, and local authorities should support civil society in reaching out to all demographics. The arts, culture and sport, are essential to our wellbeing as individuals, but also to a healthy understanding of our relations with others and our place in society.

6.1. Increased and improved citizen participation

Smart communal governance makes cities arenas for collaboration between different stakeholders. It is at the local level that citizens can – and want to – directly participate in decision-making and implementation; it is the level where citizens immediately see the added value of new policies. Cities and boroughs become laboratories for exploring and shaping policies that reconcile social, ecological and economic needs. Citizens' participation is also of great importance for the public acceptance of environmental measures that are likely to change their daily habits. This involvement and acceptance will ultimately drive climate action to happen faster and at greater scale.

By taking control of policymaking in their immediate environment, citizens can decide for themselves on the trade-offs required by the need to transition to a more sustainable model of city. Practices such as advisory citizens' council, participatory budgeting or a more traditional support to NGOs and local associations can make a great difference in a city's endeavour to better meet the just transition challenges. Residents' participation is especially important for redevelopment initiatives, so that neighbourhoods are designed both by and for the people that live there. It is imperative that these forums for participation reflect the diversity of the population, representing all age groups and demographics.

There remains a stark gap between our aspirations and the realities for women's participation in public life. In 2019, only 13% of elected mayors were women, and of the Union's 28 capitals, only eight were led by female mayors.[65] There is no reason why parity should not be achieved in municipal administrations, and where it is not mandated by law, we believe parties should take the lead in achieving this goal.

- **There should be more opportunities for citizens to share their views throughout the decision-making process in an open and accessible format. Public hearings and consultations should be conducted using methods that make them accessible to all citizens, so that they can be closely involved in the implementation and evaluation of all city policies and that it is not only the loudest voices that are heard.**

- **Alongside representative democracy, alternative ways of participation must be further explored and supported to involve citizens between election deadlines and during electoral mandates. Practices such as citizens assemblies, randomly selected citizens' panels and participatory budgeting should be used more often and developed to complement the action of elected representatives. The Parliament of the Brussels City Region is introducing joint citizen-parliamentarian deliberative committees to involve citizens drawn at random in the decision-making process.**

- **Issues should be dealt with in as decentralised a manner as possible, for instance through advisory neighbourhood committees that can provide feedback on the effective allocation of public services and infrastructure.**

- **To this end, EU funds such as Erasmus+ should help cities support a flourishing civil society ecosystem by providing funding and community facilities to organisations that represent local groups and causes.**

- **Children and youth assemblies should be established in order to encourage a sense of civic engagement from a young age.**

- **We cannot tolerate the continued exclusion of non-EU nationals from local democratic life, and therefore call for a revision of the EU directive on voting rights in municipal elections.**

6.2. **Educating the citizens of tomorrow**

Cities are often closely involved alongside national authorities in the provision of primary education, alongside their support for local initiatives and non-profit structures active in the lifelong learning sector, making them key actors of both formal and informal education. This means they have a substantial role to play in implementing the first principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights: the right to quality education. As socialists and democrats, we believe that education should be a public good to which all have access, regardless of age, gender or socio-economic background.

In particular, education allows children and young adults to develop the social and emotional skills necessary to fully participate in democratic societies. Early childhood education care (ECEC), for instance, is associated with better literacy, self-regulation and social-emotional skills.[66] Schools are very often the first forum in which children learn about and experience representative democracy, through civics classes, class representatives and school councils.

Cities should seize the opportunity to build upon these structures and broaden the scope of engagement to other areas of civic life. Public services and measures to support community initiatives and non-profit organisations must be designed with intergenerational outreach in mind, notably access to culture and sports in all their forms. These offer ways in which to build bridges across gender, ethnicity, class and sexual orientation, putting into practice the values of tolerance and inclusion that should be central to national curricula.

Although students may only be living in a city for the duration of their degree, they remain a sizeable cohort of many smaller cities' population. Whether city- or campus-based, they should be integrated as closely as possible with more permanent residents and the organisations and institutions that cater to them. Partnerships with universities offer unrivalled opportunities for further education and lifelong learning for ordinary residents of all ages, and students have the potential to make a significant contribution to local life through volunteering and cultural practices. The opportunities for mutual enrichment are countless.

- **Children and youth assemblies should be established in order to encourage a sense of civic engagement from a young age.**

- **Extra-curricular activities such as sports and cultural practices should be made accessible to all. All disciplines and ways of expression should benefit from appropriate funding.**

- **The Erasmus+ programme should continue to support initiatives for cross-border partnerships between schools and associations involving young people in civic participation, arts, culture and sport.**

- **In the context of the Covid-10 pandemic, the right to education is inextricably linked to the right to digital connectivity. Access to online tools must be ensured for all.**

6.3. Smart cities and public services that respond to citizens' needs

Local authorities are responsible for many essential public services that our citizens rely on, either through their own competencies or through the implementation of national programmes. In many countries, the vast majority of interactions that a citizen will have with the state is with local government. This means that there is a great responsibility on their shoulders to demonstrate exemplarity with the use of public funds and to put into action our core socialist belief that the public sector must address the market's many failings through direct action.

In the era of information technology and the smart city, citizens are entitled to expect that a growing number of administrative formalities should be available online, including registration with municipal services, applying for different forms of financial support, enrolment in schools and after-school activities, etc. This can improve the efficiency and user-friendliness of these procedures, improving the public's experience of accessing public services, thereby improving trust in these institutions. It should not, however, come at the expense of those users who struggle with information technology, but rather offer an opportunity to dedicate more frontline staff to helping them.

The transition to digital modes of service delivery provides an opportunity to drive forward administrative simplification and decentralisation. The shift to remote working has shown a range of possibilities to revolutionise office work, including public administration. If large numbers of staff are no longer required to operate in the same building, a greater number of them can be reallocated to different neighbourhoods so that residents no longer have to travel as far to access in-person services.

Improving the functioning of the city also means reassessing how certain basic services are provided. In recent decades, neoliberal dogma has dictated that cities should outsource as many services as possible to the private sector, including waste collection and treatment, water distribution networks, catering for schools and community centres and cleaning municipal buildings, often at a long-term detriment to service quality and cost.

In 2017, public procurement accounted for an average of 30.45% of public expenditure in OECD countries, of which over a half came from regional and local governments.[67] This represents a large share of public expenditure, to which the highest standards of social rights, environmental protection and transparency must also be applied. Since the 2014 Directive on public procurement, authorities can include further social criteria and require providers to have certain social and environmental certifications. Contracts can also be given to social enterprises for a time-limited period. This represents a major opportunity for progressive cities to push forward our objectives when procuring goods and services from the private sector.

There are also areas where the private sector's resources are under-utilised and could be better harnessed through making available troves of information that local authorities have collected about their cities. Open data on transport and utility networks allows businesses, non-profits and researchers to identify inefficiencies in the current functioning of services, such as mapping water leakages.

SMART CITY

Traffic Management · Air Pollution · Open Data · Education · Internet of Things · Smart Environment · Electromagnetic Emissions · Smart Health · Intelligent Shopping · Smart Buildings · Public Safety · Smart Home · Gas & Water Leak Detection · Smart Street Lights · Smart Energy · Electric Vehicle Charging · Water Quality · Smart Parking · Waste Management

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- **The transition to digital service delivery should be used as an opportunity to simplify administrative procedures by improving the flow of information between different local services. In-person delivery should be maintained and adapted to users who struggle with new technologies.**

- **Public services should be brought closer to citizens through decentralised offices in different neighbourhoods. This can be accompanied by tailored campaigns to reach demographics that are harder to reach due to language and other issues.**

- **City workers, whether directly employed or working for subcontractors, must be paid a living wage, in accordance with the applicable collective agreement, and there must be no gender pay gap.**

- **The viability of outsourced services must be reassessed in view of their long-term financial implications and the working conditions of the subcontractor's employees. The city of Paris and its neighbouring communes have re-municipalised the water management services and have seen improvements in costs and efficiency.[68] The Greater London Authority is seeking to bring suburban rail under public control in order to improve affordability and integration with other modes of transport.[69]**

- **Provided it is not prejudicial to the functioning of public services, cities must make as much of their data available to the public to enable innovative solutions to potential inefficiencies.**

- **When organising the public procurement of goods and services, cities should make sure that suppliers meet the highest social and environmental standards. Procurement can also be used to further policy goals: when the city of Aarhus issued its tender for sewage management services, it required guarantees from suppliers that they would provide training and apprenticeships.[70]**

6.4. **Cooperation across borders**

Structural Funds 2007 - 2013:
Cross-border Cooperation programmes

REGIO*gis*

Throughout history, border cities have thrived as crossroads at the intersection of cultures and trade routes. Many of our continents' largest cities are near present-day borders, and very often form part of cross-border urban areas and conurbations with integrated patterns of commuting and leisure.

The Council of Europe and the EU have sought to encouraged structured cooperation in these areas at the level of the region, respectively through Euroregions and European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation. At an informal level, the areas of cooperation have evolved to be even more granular, centred around cities and their suburbs which just happen to straddle an international border. These partnerships are common in Western Europe's dense post-industrial heartlands – Strasbourg-Ortenau, Freiburg and its Alsatian neighbours, Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai – but are also applied elsewhere, such as across the Oresund between Copenhagen and Malmö, and between the Basque cities of Irun (ES) and Hendaye (FR).

Cities do not have to be adjacent in order to cooperate. The thematic networks managed by the European Commission's URBACT programme, the projects run by the EUROCITIES and Eurotowns associations and the institutional role of the European Committee of the Regions provide valuable spaces for the exchange of best practices. Europe's cities should have a much bigger role in EU policymaking, which is why the work of our colleagues in the PES Group in the European Committee of the Regions is so invaluable. On a smaller level, twin city programmes offer opportunities for cultural exchange that make the achievements of European integration more concrete and visible.

Joint initiatives such as the Covenant of Mayors committed to implementing the EU's climate change targets are to be welcomed, as are international forums like the Global Covenant of Mayors and the C40 cities showing leadership on climate action.

- **The European Commission's proposal for a European Cross-Border Mechanism (ECBM) should be supported in order to further simplify and encourage territorial cooperation across European borders.**

- **Municipal authorities must be functional, not constrained by jurisdictional issues. Therefore, regional and national governments should facilitate cross-border partnerships between cities of all sizes, in all parts of Europe.**

- **INTERREG funding must continue to support the development of cross-border administrative cooperation, as well as the infrastructure that goes with it.**

- **Municipalities should seize opportunities to learn from each other and inspire each other to raise their ambitions through joint commitments to progressive goals.**

- **In line with our colleagues in the PES Group in the European Committee of the Regions, we call for cities to be closely involved in the organisation of the upcoming Conference on the Future of Europe.**[71]

7 BUILDING CITY ECONOMIES THAT WORK FOR THE MANY

Thanks to their clustering effects, cities are our continent's drivers of economic growth and job creation. By concentrating workers and businesses in the same place, they make it easier for the latter to meet their hiring needs and the former to find positions that best correspond to their skills. As a result, cities account for 77.4% of jobs in the EU, with 53% of companies located in European cities and greater cities. 75% of cities outperform the rest of the country in terms of economic growth.[72]

7.1. **Dynamic hubs of activity and social innovation**

Cities need to remain business-friendly environments in which the green- and digital-oriented industries of tomorrow can emerge and in which citizens can find work. It is also the role of municipalities to foster a business-friendly environment. Our social investment policies are a huge help in this regard, by ensuring that businesses can fulfil their needs for hiring skilled workers. Improved quality of life also makes for a more productive workforce, which is why we will continue to fight for workers' rights and social protections at every level. The city economy must not be allowed to become a gig economy where individuals are treated as disposable by exploitative employers.

"The city's Zukunftsorte - innovation sites - play an important role in our strategy. The latest one Siemensstadt was opened in early April 2019. EU funding, in particular from the Structural Funds and the framework programme for research, technological development and demonstration activities, are used to interlink of science, research and business."

– Michael Müller, Mayor of Berlin, Germany

All kinds of economic activities should have their place in cities, from services companies to manufacturing, and even urban agriculture. Having a diverse production base can help cities weather sectoral crises and provide goods and services tailored to residents' specific needs that do not need to travel halfway across the globe. The Green Deal and Just Transition Fund should be used to help factories in urban areas transition to a low-polluting model. Innovations in urban farming and a renewed interest in community gardening are allowing cities to support biodiversity, such as insects and birds, while providing alternative sources of food.

The local level is instrumental in the development of viable social economy ecosystems of cooperatives, social enterprises, mutual societies, non-profit associations and foundations. Organisations like these with a social mission work towards very similar objectives to those of progressive cities: tackling poverty, improving inclusion and reducing waste, among others. Their participatory model mirrors that which we aspire to see shape public policy decisions. Cities have a lot to gain by encouraging their development through partnerships and material support, as their actions can complement public authorities. *Solidarity food shops*, second-hand shops, upcycling and freecycling initiatives, housing cooperatives – many of which use their activities to help integrate people who face exclusion from the labour market – all contribute towards building fair and sustainable cities. Like any other SMEs, they face a number of challenges operating in urban environments.

One of the biggest difficulties that all businesses in cities face is rising rents, which are especially problematic for small, independent businesses and start-ups. As with residential housing, there are a number of initiatives that local authorities can take to tackle the

impact of speculative property development. Many small shops are vulnerable to competition from car-dependent shopping centres at the peripheries, and from online retailers who are able to optimise their tax bills. The dominance of peripheral shopping centres that are able to undercut smaller neighbourhood shops risks irreparably damaging the fabric of small businesses that make every city unique. The decline of city-centre and neighbourhood shops increases the need to resort to cars for essential amenities, creating additional spatial inequality and issues of mobility. As discussed above, cities are also centres of education. The innovative capacities of universities, other institutions of higher education and their accompanying research centres can serve as a catalyst for economic development, through the emergence of new technologies and processes. This can only happen if the right infrastructure and support is available for students and researchers to come from all around the world, especially housing. Municipalities can also contribute to venues that facilitate the emergence of new businesses, such as start-up incubators and co-working spaces.

The creative and cultural sectors, the entertainment industry and catering are vital to many cities' economic fabric and are often reasons many residents and tourists are drawn to a particular city. The network established by the New European Bauhaus initiative can help to create hubs of activity, research and innovation, where citizens, students and researchers from different related groups have the opportunity to express and contribute their ideas in relation to the functioning of the cities. Those that are active outside of business hours constitute the evening and night-time economy, whose interests must be balanced with the needs of residents.

- **Cities must remain aware of the needs of local businesses and industries when planning urban redevelopment initiatives and new transport infrastructure. Planning permission for large shopping centres must be given more selectively and the traffic implications of authorising peripheral retail parks should be taken into greater consideration.**

- **Greater support must be put in place for small businesses established in inner cities facing spiralling rents. The city of Paris offers vacant commercial property for small businesses and the self-employed to use as office or co-working space.**

- **Municipal authorities should put in place planning restrictions on additional peripheral shopping developments in order to bring back commercial investment in city-centres and other neighbourhoods.**

- **Online shopping has continued to grow in market share, threatening the viability of city-centre shops who face rising rents and are unable to use creative accounting to minimise their tax bills. The EU must step up to the plate through the Digital Services Act and the digital levy to deliver a fair playing field for Europe's independent retail sector.**

- **A dedicated person or body should be in place to mediate between the needs of the night-time economy and those of residents. Pioneered by Amsterdam's nightclubs and concert venues, "night mayors" are being appointed all over Europe, from Prague to Mannheim.**

Madrid
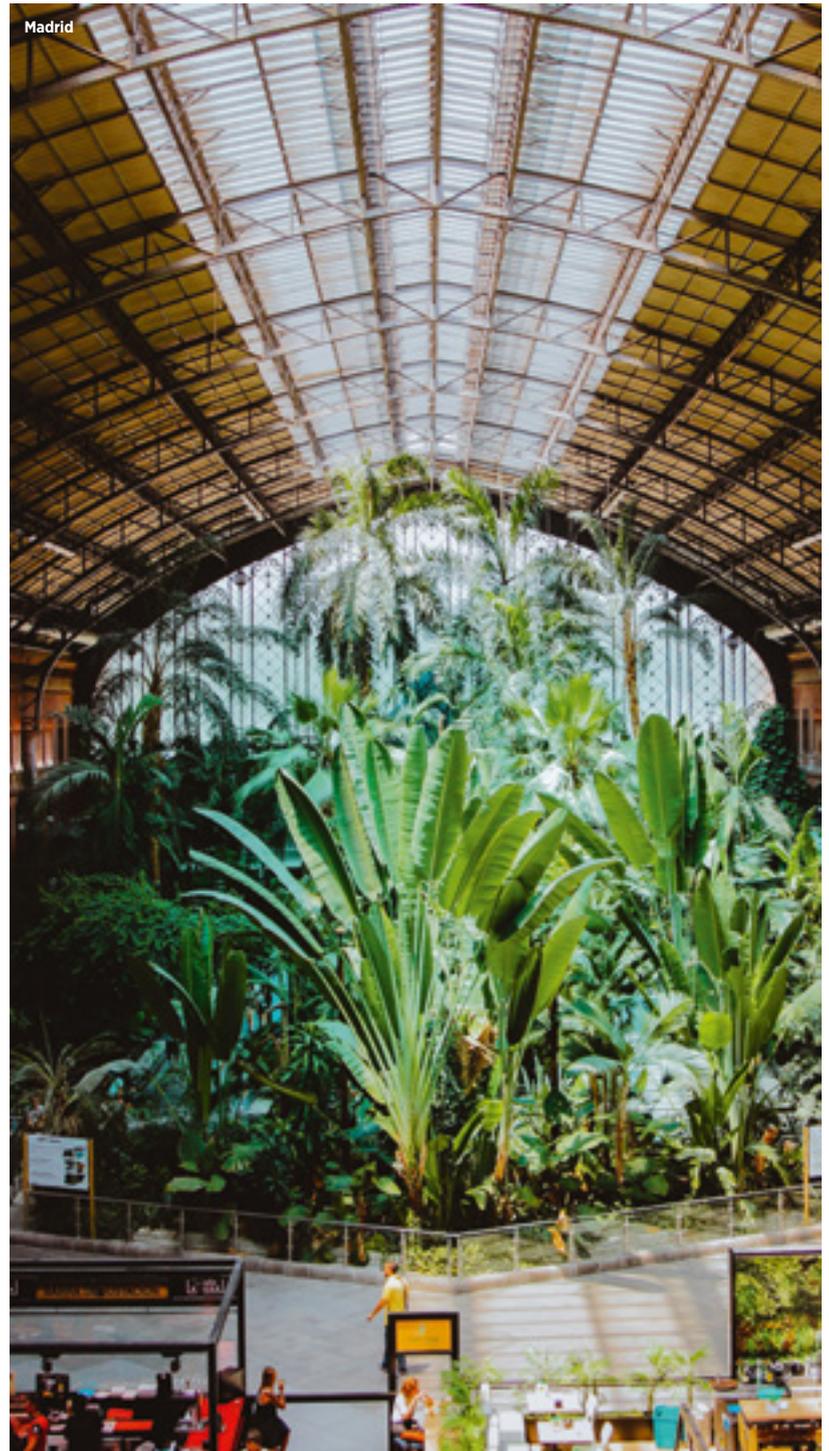
7.2. **Circular urban economies that reduce waste**

In our policy brochure The Circular Transition: Towards an economy that puts people first and respects the limits of the planet,[73] the PES outlines our commitment to moving towards a circular model of production and consumption that respects our planet's limits. This pledge also features in our 2019 manifesto. With the vast majority of Europe's population and economic activity being located in cities, the recommendations contained in that paper by definition apply to the urban context. However, there are certain specific issues regarding which municipal governments can make an even greater difference if they are given the right resources and support by central governments.

Most notably, the dual challenges of waste management and recycling are ones for which cities are most often directly responsible. Here there are some grounds to optimistic, as according to Eurostat, 55% of waste (excluding major mineral waste) is already recycled.[74] These positive figures mask disparities between cities that do not have the same resources at their disposal to invest in as good recycling processes.

We need to design circular economy strategies that reduce consumption and use of resources generally and that can be most effective in our cities. A circular economy will help reduce waste, and will also create jobs; by separating, recycling, repairing and ultimately dealing with waste. Circular economy also helps build stronger local economies so cities should be advancing their action and ambitions in this endeavour. To this end, we need to invest and incentivise innovation in using sustainable materials and closing the loop as well as improve information and inclusive decision-making, especially at city level, regarding the circular economy process.

Going further than focusing on recycling alone, it is even more effective to close the loop on use of materials to avoid waste and revalue the resources in produced goods. Though incentives for businesses in this regard remain mainly in the hands of central governments and the EU, municipalities can take local initiatives to reduce consumption by promoting reuse and sharing. Repairing and refurbishing cannot easily be delocalised, and these skills provides a meaningful retraining outlet for those excluded from the labour market.

Neighbourhood "libraries of things" where community members can borrow gardening tools, DIY equipment and other household appliances that are only needed sporadically reduce the amount of goods produced without impacting standards of living. Items that are only used temporarily (such as children's clothes) can be passed down either through lending or reselling in charity shops.

For municipalities that own their local energy infrastructure, the need to transition to renewable sources is an obvious necessary step and the EU should ensure that they can access the necessary funding. District heating has proven an especially effective means of providing heat from renewable energy sources to residents and businesses.

However, even cities that do not have direct control over their energy supply can do a lot to contribute to the climate transition. As owners and managers of a substantial public building stock, they need to be at the forefront of improving energy efficiency. In fact, the EU's Renovation Wave is also designed to extend to public buildings, such as schools and hospitals. The aspiration should be that all new public developments

be carbon-neutral through better insulation and the installation of solar panels and more resilient to natural disasters. Many parts of Europe are exposed to climate change and natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods and storms.

- **Waste incineration must be a last resort, and no new facilities should be funded with EU funds. Instead, investment should be dedicated to improving the collection and treatment of recyclable materials.**

- **Funding and support should be dedicated to community initiatives to share, reuse and repair existing items, either through libraries of things or second-hand shops. For example, the city of Berlin has opened its own department store for second-hand furniture in a bid to reduce waste.**[75]

- **Sweden is leading the way in energy-efficient district heating that is increasingly able to reuse residual energy from local industries to heat homes thanks to improvements in heat-transferring technology. This should set the new standards for cities investing in district heating.**

- **Cities can contribute to the UN's Sustainable Development Agenda by ensuring that their public procurement supply chains comply with International Labour Organisation standards. The Fair Trade Towns scheme showcases cities that have committed to procuring fair-trade products and encouraging their availability in local retailers.**

The trash-powered plant in Linköping, in Sweden, which generates electricity and heats water for home and commercial use, harnesses 90 percent of total energy. This centralized system of "district heating" warms many buildings in Sweden.

7.3. **A fairer deal for tourism**

As highlighted by the declaration of the PES Tourism Ministerial Network, tourism plays a central role in European societies as a driver of citizens' wellbeing, contributing to social cohesion, employment and economic growth.[76] Travel and related sectors accounting for 10.3% of GDP and 11.7% of total employment.[77] Many cities and communities in less developed areas of the Union have come to rely heavily on tourism revenues to improve their economic prospects and make the long-term investments necessary for their sustainable development.

In addition, tourism is the best way for our citizens to discover the wealth and breadth of our Union's diversity, building connections across borders and developing a common understanding of our European identities. We support a kind of tourism that facilitates these opportunities for cultural exchange and mutual learning, while allowing workers across the continent to enjoy their hard-earned holidays. As much as possible,

sustainable tourism – including the journey and the activities at the destination – should be supported.

In many cities however tourism has come at a cost, most obviously upwards pressure on housing prices and the reshaping of certain neighbourhoods to cater to a clientele of tourists. The overreliance on tourism revenues can make cities vulnerable to exogenous shocks, for instance the Covid-19 pandemic and its accompanying public health restrictions.

Though many citizens benefit economically from tourism revenues, the conversion of residential housing into tourist accommodation through online intermediaries like Airbnb has led to an increase in housing costs. Local citizens must be consulted every step of the way and their needs and quality of life must be protected.

Krakow

- **Involve local residents in decision-making around tourism infrastructure and facilities.**

- **The EU should introduce anti-speculation policies targeting the explosive growth of short-term apartment rentals and the accumulation of housing property owned by investment and vulture funds. In particularly, short-term rentals through online platforms should pay the same taxes and insurance contributions as regular hotels, hostels and rental properties. An alliance of cities led by the mayors of Paris and Florence has called on the European Commission to regulate short-term housing rentals as part of the Digital Services Act.**

- **In the context of Covid, Lisbon has launched Renda Segura, a programme whereby the municipality takes out five-year leases on holiday rentals before subletting them as affordable housing.**[78]
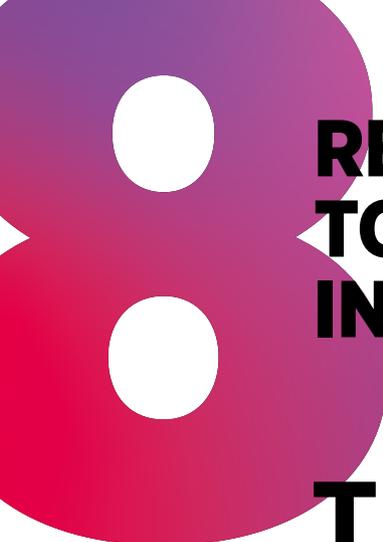
8 RENEWING OUR COMMITMENT TO LONG-TERM INVESTMENT IN CITIES

The huge financial needs associated with the green transition require us to fundamentally rethink the scale of urban investment. The Global Commission on the Economy and the Climate estimated in 2015 that by 2030 an additional USD 93 million would be needed in low-emissions infrastructure to remain on a 1.5°C pathway.[79]

In addition to environmental sustainability, funding must be dedicated to facing the ever-evolving challenges of social sustainability that have been enumerated above. For this reason, we socialists and democrats support a series of measures that empower cities of all sizes to invest in their local economies and their green transitions, through a combination of EU, national and private funding.

8.1. **Public funding**

The share of public investment coming from local government has stayed relatively stable over the past two decades, at around 55%, meaning that it has also been a victim of neoliberal austerity in the years following the Great Recession. This has substantially weakened and continues to weaken cities' capacities to deliver on the bold progressive agenda that we set out here.

While PES Commissioner for Economic Affairs Paolo Gentiloni was able to secure the suspension of the rules of the Stability and Growth Pact to face the immediate Covid-19 crisis, we believe a fundamental change remains necessary. We call for a "fiscal golden rule", whereby certain public investments are excluded from the budgetary rules.

In countries where municipalities enjoy little constitutional protection, conservative and reactionary central governments are known to cut funding to progressive cities in order to put pressure on them and limit their ability to implement alternative policies. We must call this out whenever it happens.

- **Public investment must be permanently excluded from the requirements of the SGP to allow cities to grow their human capital, address housing shortages and fund their energy and environment infrastructure needs.**

- **Funding from central governments must remain consistent and local authorities should have a degree of discretion over revenue raising, so that citizens may have the final say on the public services they wish to see provided in their cities.**

- **Increase the attractiveness of small and medium cities relative to capitals and second-tier cities by improving transport and digital connectivity.**

- **We also call for a reform of the public budgets' accountancy norms (ESA/SEC).**

8.2. **EU funding**

Thanks to progressive leaders we have obtained an ambitious deal on the next multiannual financial framework and the Recovery Fund, renewing the EU's commitment to its cities and regions and to social innovation across the continent.

"It is particularly important to empower cities. We in cohesion policy are committed to this, with slightly over 16 billion euros, earmarked for priorities and projects selected by cities themselves on the basis of their own sustainable development strategies."

– Elisa Ferreira, Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms

EU funding is available in the form of grants from Commission programmes, including the Cohesion Fund, European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), European Social Fund+ (ESF+) and Horizon Europe, and loans from the European Investment Bank (EIB). The Commission's European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) programme, soon to become InvestEU, serves to underwrite EIB loans. Advice on these funding sources is available through a dedicated platform for cities set up as part of the EU Urban Agenda, URBIS, as well as general assistance tools fi-compass, JASPERS, ELENA and JESSICA. The effectiveness of these tools should be judged not based on volumes leant, but rather based on whether they are able to reach the most disadvantaged and underperforming cities. Commission instruments in particular have a duty to seek out riskier projects that can rely on no other sources of funding.

While we strongly support new measures designed to protect the use of EU funds and prevent them for being diverted by fraudulent or corrupt business practices enabled by systemic breaches of the rule of law, city governments that manage the funds they receive responsibly should not be punished for the behaviour of national governments.

- **Procedures for applying for EU funds should be standardised, flexibility should be granted to allow for the integration of different funds and programmes, also on behalf of beneficiaries.**

- **Create one European-side fund for different investments, rather than small financial instruments that use small amounts from Structural Funds. This will lower the risk-bearing factor and increase investment potential.**

- **Technical assistance to local, regional and urban authorities should be granted to increase synergies, exchange best practices and ease the bureaucratic burden and facilitate multi-fund projects.**

- **The EIB and EFSI/InvestEU should dedicate funds to underperforming areas, if necessary, by taking on riskier projects.**

- **A rule of law mechanism linked to the EU budget should make sure funds continue to reach cities, regardless of the central government's failings.**

8.3. **Private funding**

Sustainable finance is a growing sector that is steadily expanding to encompass more and more long-term investment opportunities that factor in climate risk or help fund the green transition. A 2017 study estimates that there is a potential USD 1.2 trillion in investment opportunities in urban areas in Europe and Central Asia, divided across six sectors (see table).[80]

Sector	Investment opportunities (in USD billion)
Waste	17
Renewable energy	88
Public transportation	116
Climate-smart water	64
Electric vehicles	46
Green buildings	881
Total	1,200

One commonly used method of harnessing private investment is through public-private partnerships, whereby companies build economic and social infrastructure traditionally provided by governments, in exchange for some form of risk sharing. Although these are supposed to provide additional services at a lower cost to the public purse, without strict monitoring they can place a disproportionate share of the risk burden on public bodies. We need heightened vigilance to ensure that the bill for overruns and underperformance is not left for the public to pick up.[81]

An alternative for cities seeking to harness private money while retaining control on how it is spent is to issue "climate" or "green" bonds – though this is limited to member states where local authorities are allowed to raise their own funds through debt issuance. Unlike traditional debt issuing, these bonds ring-fence the proceeds for spending on projects designed to reduce cites' climate impact or mitigate the effects of climate change. The resulting bonds can be certified as environmentally sustainable, attracting funds from investors who price in the financial risks related to climate change, or those like public pension funds that pursue certain sustainability objectives.

The main obstacle to green bond issuance by cities is technical, as they are often not experienced in managing capital market financing and may face high transaction costs in terms of certification and attracting potential investors. Despite these constraints, many PES-led authorities have succeeded in using this method to fund public transport (Göteborg), retrofitting accommodation (Hannover), and new schools and social housing (Ile-de-France/Paris region). Even medium-sized cities like Östersund have been able to raise funding this way.[82]

The EU's taxonomy for sustainable activities,[83] adopted in July 2020, provides a comprehensive list of activities that contribute to the following six objectives:

- climate change mitigation;

- climate change adaptation;

- the sustainable use and protection
  of water and marine resources;

- the transition to a circular economy;

- pollution prevention and control;

- the protection and restoration
  of biodiversity and ecosystems.

Any economic activity that contributes to at least one of these objectives without doing significant harm to any of the others is deemed compliant with the taxonomy. This will serve as a basis for elaborating an EU Green Bond Standard for financial products that include investments compliant with the taxonomy. This will facilitate the certification process for cities that wish to raise money to fund their climate transitions.

- **Following the conclusion of its consultation, the Commission must act speedily to put forward proposals for an EU Green Bond Standard. This must be straightforward and easy for investors and issuers to understand.**

- **Technical support must be provided to city authorities wishing to issue green bonds, in order to help them achieve certification and to match them up with sources of funding.**

Alkmaar

9 CONCLUSION

This paper has outlined what we see as the main challenges facing European cities in the coming decade if they are to remain attractive places in which to live. As societies and the climate undergo rapid and unpredictable changes, it is our role as a socialist movement to make sure that the flourishing of individuals and the needs of the collective are front and centre of public policies that shape the urban spaces of tomorrow.

Our aim throughout has been to draw links between the environmental, social and economic challenges that cities face. The entire socialist and democratic family, from local councillors all the way to MEPs and European commissioners, is committed to achieving justice in all three fields at once. Cities can be the drivers of environmentally sustainable investment, while also reducing their own carbon footprints, but only if they are able to emerge as beacons of fairness in which opportunities are guaranteed to all their residents.

In our accompanying policy publication, Changing the Focus: For a Society of Wellbeing, we set out a change of approach that would see a holistic conception of wellbeing become the main policy objective. By putting forward proposals to improve the everyday lives of city-dwellers, we have sought here to showcase quite how concrete these ameliorations can be, and how much of a difference they can make to the urban living experience.

We have also sought to identify areas in which overall improvements in quality of life will not reach the more at-risk groups, and where the municipality can and should do more. Access to affordable housing will remain a key demand of ours in the coming years until we see concrete action at EU level to support those trying to provide this basic need to all their citizens. The Renovation Wave put forward by Executive Vice President Frans Timmermans is an important step in the right direction, but in terms of investment and competition law, liberals and conservatives have a lot of catching up to do.

The best way to achieve radical change is to increase political engagement surrounding the issues at stake. Most aspects of urban policy remain outside of the EU's competences, which is why local activism is so important to pushing for these progressive changes. Driving transformation from the bottom up is the raison d'être of our colleagues in the PES Group in the European Committee of the Regions and PES Local.

Our movement's bold aspirations must not be constrained by limited financial resources. We cannot afford not to transition to a low-carbon economy, and cities are where the bulk of the investments will be needed. It is our responsibility as a Europe-wide party with representatives in national parliaments, national governments, the European Parliament and the European Commission to see that the means necessary to achieve a just transition are in place, that they are commensurate to the size of the challenge and that they reach the cities and citizens most in need.

A model of city that combines social justice with environmental sustainability and democratic participation is within reach; in fact, many progressive cities are already at this stage. With this vision we want to build on what has been achieved so far, in order to make sure that every city in Europe gets on the right trajectory to becoming sustainable and fair for all.

Copenhagen
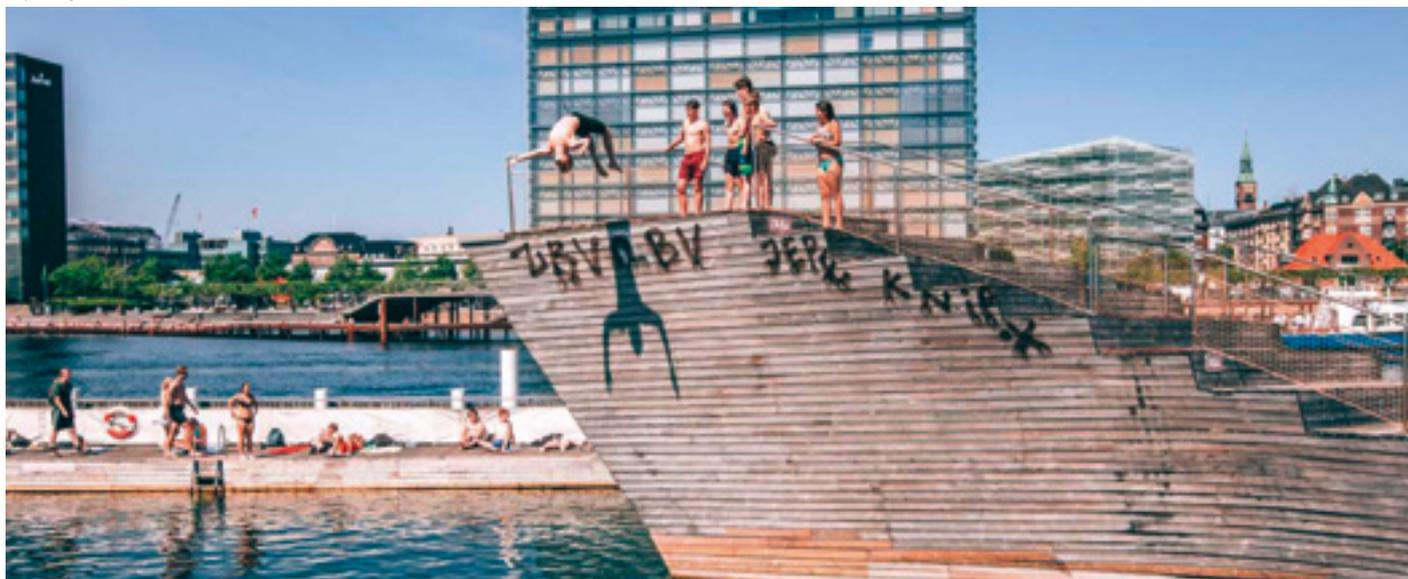
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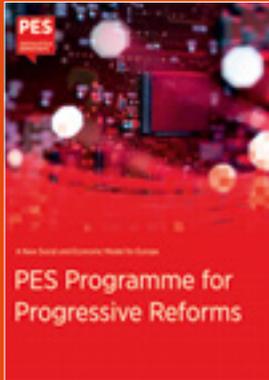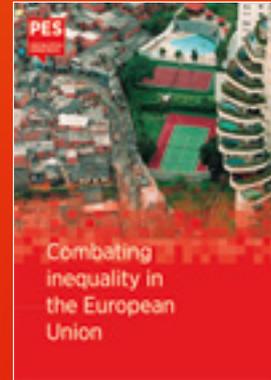
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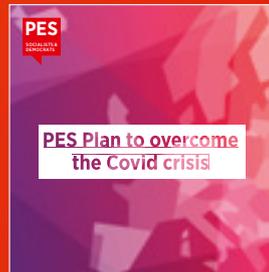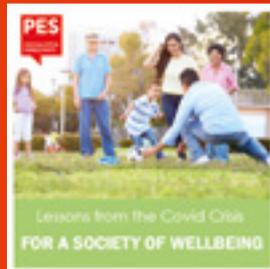
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