



LJUBLJANA AGREEMENT

Informal Meeting of Ministers responsible for Urban Matters

26 November 2021 | Brdo pri Kranju, Slovenia

PREAMBLE

The EU Ministers responsible for Urban Matters gathered at Brdo pri Kranju (Slovenia) on 26 November 2021 for the Informal Ministerial Meeting. The meeting was also attended by the *European Commissioner for Regional Policy and representatives from the European Parliament (EP), Committee of the Regions (CoR), European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), European Investment Bank (EIB), Eurocities and Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), as well as Norway and Switzerland* and several observers.

Today's global challenges are complex and intertwined. They require a multi-level and multi-sectoral response, combining urban and territorial interventions. In times of disruption, it is in towns and cities where place-based, citizen-centred responses emerge and are applied. Whether it is the mitigation of and adaptation to climate change, countering the loss of biodiversity, or managing health crises like the current pandemic: a fair recovery should be based on a green and digital transition. Many cities are leading this process of change and pursuing the principles for just, green and productive cities. The New Leipzig Charter rightly emphasises the transformative power of cities for the common good. National urban policies, developed in close collaboration with urban authorities and other stakeholders at regional and local level, can contribute considerably to the implementation of the New Leipzig Charter and Urban Agenda for the EU and therefore ensure improvement of the quality of life for all European citizens.

Cooperation on urban matters in Europe is a case in point: the goal of achieving climate-neutrality by 2050 requires a multi-level and multi-stakeholder approach to urban development. Building on decades of informal intergovernmental cooperation on urban matters, the Pact of Amsterdam launched the Urban Agenda for the EU (UAEU), and ushered in a new phase. For the first time, cities of different sizes were at the centre of an initiative that aimed to find joint solutions in direct dialogue with Member States, the European Commission, and other stakeholders. In that context the chance to develop this approach in cooperation with different initiatives such as the new Horizon Europe Mission to achieve 100 climate neutral cities by 2030 is very welcome.

The UAEU has introduced new working methods to urban policy and practice. It is viewed by urban stakeholders as a remarkable case and indeed experience of multi-level governance, one that has enabled cities to explain the impacts and challenges they face on the ground, highlight their daily implementation bottlenecks, and to put forward tangible actions to improve regulation, funding and knowledge exchange. At the same time, the UAEU is in a transition towards a new phase. As agreed under German Presidency with the adoption of the New Leipzig Charter and its document on 'Implementing the New Leipzig Charter

through multi-level governance' (Implementation Document), our common goal is to make the UAEU more impactful and efficient.

With this declaration we state our political support for continuation and further development of the Urban Agenda for the EU in full respect of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, and we acknowledge the efforts and commitments of all parties involved to promote the urban dimension of sectoral policies for integrated and sustainable development of European cities of all sizes.

We, the Ministers responsible for Urban Matters:

- (1) **Reaffirm** the value of the Pact of Amsterdam that established the Urban Agenda for the EU (UAEU) and enabled stronger multi-level and multi stakeholder cooperation on urban issues in the EU. Through direct dialogue with Member States and the European Commission the EU cities and regions are reinforced in their contribution to the EU policy making.
- (2) **Recognise** the Bucharest Declaration, emphasising Member States' commitment to the continuation, implementation and improvement of the UAEU.
- (3) **Acknowledge** the New Leipzig Charter, with its set of principles and Implementation Document and consider it as a key strategic reference for the UAEU, in line with its aim of strengthening the urban dimension of EU policies.
- (4) **Acknowledge** the Territorial Agenda 2030 as an important policy framework promoting territorial cohesion, highlighting the importance of all places and the place-based approach for quality of life and coherent development.
- (5) **Underline** the importance of the Council conclusions on urban and territorial development, as approved by the Council on 14 December 2020.
- (6) **Recognise** the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN, the New Urban Agenda (Habitat III) and other global development documents emphasising the role of cities for a better and sustainable future.
- (7) **Highlight** the importance of cities of all sizes, including small and medium-sized cities and towns, and cities facing challenges of deprived areas to pursue the common interest of all citizens by bringing infrastructure, accessible services and goods close to everyone.
- (8) **Recognise** the European cities and regions of all sizes as determining drivers for the future of Europe and their active role in implementing priority policies and achieving goals set in *inter alia* the European Green Deal, the European Digital Strategy, the European Pillar of Social Rights, the Renovation Wave, the New European Bauhaus initiative, the Recovery and Resilience Facility of the Next Generation EU, Cohesion Policy, Horizon Europe's Mission for 100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities by 2030 and the Long-term Vision for Rural Areas. We recognise the work done and contributions by urban authorities in the UAEU.
- (9) **Reaffirm** the fourteen priority themes set in the Pact of Amsterdam and the Bucharest Declaration, as a consolidated thematic framework underlying the UAEU. While

existing priority themes offer further opportunities to be addressed in the future, the UAEU can and should also be enhanced with new priority themes dealing with new challenges, priorities and needs identified by the cities and regions.

- (10) **Acknowledge** the participatory multi-level governance process of the UAEU, the work of the fourteen UAEU Thematic Partnerships (Partnerships) and their positive impact on improving regulations, identifying funding opportunities and improving knowledge about urban areas at all levels.
- (11) **Recognise** the importance of promoting the creation and reinforcement of the national and regional urban policies, *inter alia* as a means to strengthen the urban dimension of sectoral policies and enhance the policy dialogue and multi-level cooperation at national, regional and local level. We pay special attention to post COVID-19 recovery plans and European Cohesion programmes and their potential to transform European cities into more just, green and productive environments for all citizens.
- (12) **Recognise** the work done by the European Commission supporting the UAEU Partnerships, monitoring of the implementation and outputs of the UAEU and its efforts to include the urban dimension and Partnerships' recommendations into policies and programmes on EU level.
- (13) **Acknowledge** the role and work of many cities and their representative organizations EURO CITIES, CEMR and CoR in the development and advancing of the UAEU process.
- (14) **Recognise** the role of the European Parliament, EIB and EESC in supporting and advancing the UAEU process.
- (15) **Acknowledge** the work done and involvement of other relevant actors in the UAEU process, especially URBACT Programme, European Urban Knowledge Network (EUKN), JPI Urban Europe, European Spatial Planning Observation Network (ESPON), Urban Innovative Actions, European Council of Spatial Planners (ECTP) and other stakeholders.
- (16) **Welcome** the efforts of the past Presidencies to foster multi-level cooperation and their efforts to lead inclusive and open dialogue for a better future of all European cities.

We, the Ministers responsible for Urban Matters agree on the following:

- (17) The **Pact of Amsterdam** remains valid and will remain the operational framework of the UAEU, while the strategic framework will be aligned with the New Leipzig Charter.
- (18) The **Multiannual Working Programme**, annexed to this declaration, provides a framework for planning, implementation and monitoring of the UAEU for the period 2022 – 2026. The DGUM is invited to suggest amendments for approval by the Ministers responsible for Urban Matters already before 2026 if relevant.
- (19) In light of the Pact of Amsterdam and the New Leipzig Charter Implementation document the **three pillars** – better regulation, better funding, better knowledge – remain the focus of the UAEU. We perceive these three pillars as the core objective of the UAEU for strengthening the urban dimension in policies.

- (20) The **Better Regulation pillar** will be strengthened for a better alignment of UAEU priorities with the EU regulatory landscape and policy cycles in order to ensure effective and timely actions and to establish close links to the Better Regulation Agenda.
- (21) In order to strengthen the **Better Funding pillar**, the UAEU will contribute to improving the knowledge of urban authorities of better access, simplification, management and blending of different funding sources, use of different financing instruments and conditions, as well as addressing obstacles in preparation and implementation of projects.
- (22) The **Better Knowledge pillar** will continue to play an important role in the exchange of knowledge and experience of urban authorities for leading effective, evidence-based and place-based urban policies, also by taking into account governance aspects. It will contribute to raise the awareness of the EU policy makers on the challenges urban authorities are facing.
- (23) The following new themes are added to the existing list of **UAEU priority themes**:
- Cities of Equality
 - Food
 - Greening Cities
 - Sustainable Tourism.
- (24) Priority themes of the UAEU should be revised in 2023. A new approach can be tested to support the explorative process for revising priority themes by **linking** them to the New Leipzig Charter principles, EU policy priorities, work of previous Partnerships, global agendas, other emerging urban policy trends, initiatives and needs of the cities.
- (25) **Cross-cutting issues** will continue to frame the activities of the future forms of the UAEU multi-level cooperation and should be better reflected in their work. The list from Pact of Amsterdam will be revised according to the principles of good urban governance deriving from the New Leipzig Charter and EU policies and priorities together with the revision of the priority themes.
- (26) **Partnerships** remain the key delivery mechanism of the UAEU as set in the Pact of Amsterdam. The working method of the Partnership will be improved to allow for the deployment of a pragmatic, effective and result-oriented approach aiming at increasing the impact of future UAEU deliverables. The flexibility in the work and decision taking of Partnerships however has to be secured according to the spirit of the UAEU.
- (27) When a more specific and targeted approach is needed, when an urban topic requires faster delivery, a targeted or quick response, a specific focus on one pillar, priority or emerging question can be pursued through **other forms of multi-level and multi-stakeholder cooperation** (OFC).

In this respect we welcome the initiative of Partnerships, their members and other stakeholders to experiment on methods and formats, following the operational framework for the OFC in the Multiannual Working Programme. We invite them to report on their explorations to the UDG and DGUM.

- (28) The next generation Partnerships and other forms of cooperation will **build on** the recommendations, knowledge, expertise and experience gained in the first generation Partnerships whenever possible and relevant. Partners from the first generation Partnerships are invited to support future UAEU multi-level and multi-stakeholder cooperation with their active involvement.
- (29) The **voluntary, action-oriented, flexible** and **bottom-up** nature of multi-level cooperation in the frame of the UAEU as set in Pact of Amsterdam shall be maintained.
- (30) All parties involved will explore different possibilities within their competences and capacities to allocate resources to the UAEU as set in the Multiannual Working Programme, taking into account the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. The European Commission and Member States are invited to **support the work and involvement of urban authorities** within the UAEU process, Partnerships and other forms of cooperation, including small and medium-sized cities and towns, according to available resources.
- (31) It is crucial to keep the UAEU process alive by continuing multi-level cooperation with the **next generation** of Partnerships and other forms of cooperation.

Therefore the process for establishing a first set of pilot Partnerships in 2022 will be launched on the following two themes:

- Greening Cities
- Sustainable Tourism.

The ex-ante assessment (EAA) will be performed in 2022 as an experimental process and will be followed by an open call.

- (32) The UAEU shall maintain its connection to **intergovernmental cooperation on urban matters**, focusing on assuring its coherence and strategic alignment with the New Leipzig Charter, urban and territorial policies across the EU and the global development agendas and goals. The intergovernmental cooperation will also foster the exchange of experiences and discussions on urgent matters contributing to the overall EU-wide debate on urban matters.

National and regional urban policies developed in an inclusive and cooperative spirit can contribute significantly to the implementation of the New Leipzig Charter and the UAEU.

- (33) The main **governance** structure of the UAEU will remain the Directors General on Urban Matters (DGUM). It will continue to coordinate, validate and decide on the activities of the UAEU. The Urban Development Group (UDG) will remain the monitoring and advisory body to the DGUM and assume operational steering of the UAEU. The Urban Agenda Technical Preparatory Group (UATPG) will continue its work as the support structure for the UDG and DGUM.
- (34) The Commission will continue to **support** the UAEU through the European Urban Initiative (EUI). Dedicated support for intergovernmental cooperation will be also provided through this means in a format that has EU added value and is relevant for the UAEU as well as for the EUI.

- (35) The **recommendations and key messages** of the Partnerships or other forms of cooperation of the UAEU will be discussed regularly at the UDG and DGUM meetings, possibly at least once per Trio Presidency. When relevant, these messages shall be discussed at a higher level preferably in existing forums.
- (36) The inclusion of **small and medium-sized** urban authorities and their participation in the UAEU processes and multi-level cooperation should be further stimulated and supported.
- (37) The future process of the UAEU should strive to **reach out** to a wider circle of cities and stakeholders. Future Presidencies together with the European Commission are invited to lead a discussion on communication and dissemination of the UAEU process in the next two years.
- (38) The **National Contact Points** could assist in the communication, dissemination and capitalisation activities of the UAEU and support relevant outreach. According to the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, and taking into account the administrative arrangements and distribution of competences in each Member State, the definition and establishment of the NCP should be based on an individual decision of the Member State in question.
- (39) The linkages between the UAEU and the **Territorial Agenda 2030** will be further explored and strengthened to ensure a balanced development of the European territory and contribute to quality of life of all citizens. The Trio Presidencies are invited to plan at least one joint session on UAEU and Territorial Agenda 2030 in their Programmes.
- (40) The future Presidencies and European Commission are invited to **jointly** steer and support the UAEU process and multi-level cooperation according to the Multiannual Working Programme and in the spirit of the New Leipzig Charter principles.