

Guidelines on urban governance for the common good

The Leipzig Charter is the guiding document for contemporary urban policies in Germany and Europe. What are the key principles of good urban governance? Where is action needed most urgently? How can we strengthen the resilience and innovative power of Europe's cities to enable them to deal with current and future social, economic and environmental challenges? What support do municipalities and the people who live and work in them need in order to empower them to shape and modify their environment – in cities but also in smaller towns, neighbourhoods, or the entire urban region?

The Leipzig Charter was first adopted by the European ministers responsible for urban matters in 2007, and was comprehensively updated and revised in 2020. The intensive revision process lasted over a period of two years, in which local practitioners and experts from politics, the public administration, the academic community, and many other areas were engaged. On 30 November 2020, the New Leipzig Charter was adopted at an informal meeting of Ministers. It presents guidelines for urban governance for the common good.

» We (...) agree upon the New Leipzig Charter that emphasises the pursuit of the common good using the transformative power of cities. This includes general welfare, reliable public services of general interest as well as reducing and preventing new forms of social, economic, environmental and territorial inequalities. Our common goal is to safeguard and enhance the quality of life in all European towns and cities and their functional areas. No one should be left behind «

The transformative power of cities

The challenges include climate change, the loss of biodiversity, resource scarcity, migration movements, demographic change, pandemics and rapidly changing economies, factors which massively impact the ways we live together in cities. Apart from that, digital technologies are changing our lives fundamentally. Local and global issues are more intertwined than ever before, increasing even further the importance of integrated and participatory urban governance for the common good. Cities and the people who live and work in them need to be empowered and given support to help them develop innovative solutions to preserve and improve people's quality of life in the long-term and in a sustainable manner.

Nowadays, urgent global challenges have a direct and local impact on cities throughout Europe.

The New Leipzig Charter calls on those responsible to activate, bundle and promote the transformative powers of neighbourhoods, local authorities and regions. To be able to do so, all those who shape towns and cities for the common good need political support, reliable administrative action and sufficient resources. The New Leipzig Charter therefore, emphasises the need for a strong financial and legal position of local authorities to give them the necessary room for manoeuvre. It calls on political decision-makers at all levels to create the necessary framework conditions – at the European, national and regional level. Cities need to be able to respond flexibly and take anticipatory action.

» Cities are places of pluralism, creativity and solidarity. (...) Cities are also laboratories for new forms of problem-solving and test beds for social innovation. «

Jointly creating just, green and productive cities

The just city

» The transformative power of towns and cities provides equal opportunities and environmental justice for all, regardless of gender, socioeconomic status, age or origin, leaving no one behind. A just city provides opportunities for everyone to integrate in society. All social groups, including the most vulnerable, should have equal access to services of general interest (...). «



The green city

» Climate-neutral energy supply, renewable resources, the implementation of energy efficiency measures, as well as climate-resilient and carbon-neutral buildings will contribute to significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions. (...) Cities are called on to protect and regenerate endangered ecosystems and their species. (...) Urban transport and mobility systems should be efficient, carbon-neutral, safe and multi-modal. «

The productive city

A digital, service-oriented and low-carbon economy is » built on a knowledge-based society and cultural industries. Small-scale businesses, low-emission-manufacturing and urban agriculture can be stimulated to re-integrate production into cities and urban areas, enabling and promoting new forms of mixed-use neighbourhoods. «





The New Leipzig Charter describes with the just, green and productive city three dimensions of urban governance for the common good. It identifies concrete areas of action in order to make cities resilient and empower them to deal with current and future challenges. Shaping the digital transformation is an overarching task in integrated planning and design processes. The same applies to active and strategic land policies and land use planning strategies at the level of local authorities.

Digitale Transformation

» Today, the digitalisation of processes and their management in cities including massive, rapidly growing data flows is key to integrated urban development. Digitalisation is never an end in itself. Local authorities, as part of the public sector, should drive solution-driven technology based on public needs. «

Land policies and land use planning

» Space is limited in many cities, which often leads to conflicting interests. Local authorities need to apply sustainable, transparent and equitable land use planning and land policies, including local authority land ownership and control. «



Principles and levels of action of good urban governance

» We acknowledge that a balanced, integrated transformation of cities and regions ... will only be successful if both governmental and non-governmental actors from all levels and sectors work together, agreeing on strategic principles. «

The New Leipzig Charter identifies the following key principles defining good urban governance:

Urban Policy for the common good

» Good urban governance can balance public and private interests with market mechanisms" « and it can ensure the secure, affordable and inclusive provision of services of general interest for all.

Integrated Approach

» All areas of urban policy have to be coordinated in a spatial, sectoral and temporal manner. The integrated approach relies on simultaneous and fair consideration of all concerns and interests relevant to urban development. «

Participation and co-creation

» Public participation in urban development processes should engage all urban actors. (...) New forms of participation should be encouraged and improved, including co-creation and co-design in cooperation with (...). «

Multi-level governance

» Every governmental level – local, regional, metropolitan, national, European and global – has a specific responsibility for the future of our cities based on the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. (...) Complex challenges should be jointly tackled by all levels of urban and spatial policy. «

Place-based approach

» Urban strategies and urban funding instruments should be based on sound analysis of the specific local situation, (...). This will enable endogenous urban transformation and reduce local socioeconomic inequalities. «

Overarching measures affecting neighbourhoods, municipalities and urban regions as levels of action should be coordinated to ensure sustainable action and avoid inefficiencies.

» We call upon EU institutions, Member and partner States, as well as local and regional authorities and urban stakeholders at all governance levels for their commitment and contribution to put the agreed framework into practice through European, national, regional and local initiatives and programmes. «

In Germany, the first point of contact for all questions related to integrated urban governance for the common good is the National Urban Development Policy. How can the guidelines for integrated and common good oriented urban development that are laid down in the New Leipzig Charter be translated into daily practice? In this context the National Urban Development Policy is designed to provide funding for innovative projects, bundle knowledge and experiences, and bring together actors from gov-

ernment, politics and civil society. It is an example of national urban policies in many Member States in Europe and beyond. European initiatives and programmes such as URBACT contribute to translating the principles of the New Leipzig Charter into practice in cities.

The National Urban Development Policy is a joint initiative of federal, state and local governments.

www.nationale-stadtentwicklungspolitik.de



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