

What are the aims of the Leipzig Charter?

The Leipzig Charter will create a foundation for a new urban policy in Europe. To achieve this, the Member States first have to agree on a common perception of the city ("European City"). The aim of the Leipzig Charter is to reformulate the idea of the European City.

To this end, the Leipzig Charter is designed to combat:

- one-sidedness and monotony in urban development. The era of individually optimized residential and business areas, oversized shopping centres and large traffic spaces is over. In its place, the Leipzig Charter recommends that there should once again be a greater mixture of areas for living, working and leisure in cities. This will make cities more exciting, vibrant and socially stable. In addition, cities with a high level of mixed use development are less prone to economic crises.
- one-sided claims to ownership. Cities do not belong to politicians and public authorities, nor do they belong to investors. The Leipzig Charter makes it clear that everyone is responsible for the present and the future of cities and that everyone has to get involved: citizens, politicians and authorities, industry and social organizations. Democratic countries need democracy at the local level.
- individual interests made absolute. The European city of the future should no longer be dominated by isolated interests, such as those of transport, housing or industry. The Leipzig Charter states that urban planning should be the outcome of a public process. In this process, a fair balance has to be struck between all urban development requirements.
- exclusion and isolation of individual neighbourhoods. The Leipzig Charter is based on the social and cultural integration of deprived urban areas and views this integration as being one of the main strategies for international harmonization at the European level. Long-term and stable economic growth will not be possible unless whole cities remain socially balanced and stable.

The Leipzig Charter makes urban development an issue with a European dimension. It concretizes the model of the European city in the early 21st century by recognizing the values associated with this model (co- and self-determination by the citizens, mixed use development, social inclusion, public space).

The Leipzig Charter makes it clear that Member States have to act now if they are to be able to tackle

- demographic change,
- climate change and
- the impact of global economic structural change

in cities. Concrete proposals for action are thus part of the Leipzig Charter.

What is new about the Leipzig Charter?

The Leipzig Charter formulates aspirations and provides strategies. What is new is that all Member States accept to be guided by the aforementioned features of the European City. This is reflected in their voluntary commitment

- to pursue a strategy of integrated urban development and
- to take action to counter social exclusion in deprived neighbourhoods.

Given the serious differences between the conditions in the 27 Member States, the way in which these aspirations and strategies is put into concrete terms will have to vary. As a result, the answer to the question as to what is new about the Leipzig Charter is different in each Member State. Nevertheless, for most European Member States,

- integrated (i.e. based on the objectives of sustainability, responsive to the needs of the citizens and cross-sectoral) urban development planning and
- acceptance of the fact that there are deprived neighbourhoods and that it is a public task to do something about these neighbourhoods

represent new approaches to action by central/local government.

What is also new is the very intensive commitment shown by Member States in drawing up the Leipzig Charter. With over one hundred contributions, it is indeed a document of the Member States.

Who will do what?

From the context of the Leipzig Charter and its formulation there result concrete tasks and self-commitments:

The Ministers

- undertake to consider the possibility of applying the model of integrated urban development in their countries. They are thus in favour of
 - public participation in urban planning;
 - striking a fair balance between the interests of the market and those of the public;
 - better coordination of public and private sector investment for and in cities;
 - taking long-term aspects into account in urban planning.
- believe that the focus of future urban planning is in the city centres (inner cities). They note that, in the future, it will be less and less a question of creating new residential or business areas and more and more a question of modernizing residential areas and making old business areas reusable for cities. With the model of integrated urban development, the

Informelles Ministertreffen Leipzig am 24. und 25. Mai 2007

Ministers explicitly recommend a strategy of attracting people, activities and investment back to the inner cities.

- believe that combating climate change is one of the key tasks of urban development policy.
- state that cities have to be seen in their entirety. In cities, there must be no islands of prosperity surrounded by a sea of deprivation. In the long term, there can only be growth and prosperity for the city as a whole.

To achieve these goals and statements, the following measures were discussed with Member States during the German EU Council Presidency. Member States

- must accept urban development as a public task. To this end, they have to include the public and industry.
- accept integrated urban development planning as a key instrument, perceived as an approach that takes into account all relevant interests simultaneously and equitably.
- have to do more to enhance the quality of public space, roads and squares.
- see a great need for action in the modernization of infrastructure networks.
- undertake to enhance energy efficiency with the aim of combating climate change.
- regard an active educational policy – especially in deprived urban areas – as being key to positive future developments.
- agree that the physical environment of cities has to be upgraded, taking greater account of *Baukultur* (building culture) aspects than in the past.

The European Commission is invited

- to coordinate legislation and the directives developed at European level with the way in which they are applied on the ground, and to do so earlier and better than in the past.
- to take even greater account in future funding policy (Structural Funds) of the problems faced by cities. The EU has to help not only individual industries, but also those regions or neighbourhoods that are especially hard hit by economic structural change. Because the EU is not only an economic association, but also a social and cultural project.

Key propositions

1. **“Europe takes place in the cities”**. 75 % of the population of Europe live in cities. These cities are the focal points of European integration. In addition, cities are traditionally places where research and innovation – and thus economic growth – take place. EU policy needs a greater urban and territorial dimension. EU policy has to “go spatial”.
2. **“Urban renaissance”**. The emerging renaissance of city centres has to be strengthened by means of coordinated public/private projects. This renaissance provides an opportunity to strengthen the “compact European city”. The ministers responsible for urban planning are emphatically in favour of strengthening inner cities. The compact European city is also a contribution to combating climate change, because it reduces the volume of urban traffic and leads to less land sealing at greenfield sites.
3. **“Tackling climate change is also an urban task”**. Cities account for almost three quarters of world energy consumption. More walking or cycling and well-developed local public transport are imperative. At the same time, enhanced energy efficiency in the buildings sector is a fundamental contribution to tackling climate change.
4. **“Involving the citizens”**. Europe must not be a bureaucratic creation. Europe will be credible if it assumes concrete form as a social area and a community of shared values. The idea of European integration will not meet with broad acceptance in society unless this happens. In cities, more than anywhere else, the social question is especially pressing. There must be no “no-go areas” in Europe. Combating social exclusion in cities is an integral component of the European community of shared values. The existence of deprived urban neighbourhoods jeopardizes attractiveness, competitiveness, the forces of social inclusion and security in cities. In this context, more education is the key to greater equality of opportunity. More possibilities for education and training must be provided and improved, especially in deprived neighbourhoods, which address the needs and shortcomings of the children and young people living there.
5. **“The city has to be beautiful”**. As cities increasingly compete to attract business, the *Baukultur* (building culture) aspects of urban development are becoming increasingly important. *Baukultur* is a necessity, not a luxury. *Baukultur* provides an impetus for growth – in an age when everything is available is everywhere, the qualities of buildings become instruments of structural policy.
6. **“Good urban governance”**. Urban planning is not exclusively the responsibility of the public sector. There are two other partners for future urban development policy – civil society and industry. This will strengthen democracy at the grass roots level. At the same time, it can provide a more sound basis for planning and investment. Cities have to forge new partnerships with their neighbours. The city and the city-region need visions based on a fair balance of interests.