



Wilfried
Martens Centre
for European Studies

Retaking the Cities

A Plan for the Centre–Right

Konrad Niklewicz



Summary

November 2020

The social and economic role of cities, regardless of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, is set to remain crucial for global development. However, the importance of cities is not mirrored in the European centre–right political agenda. Over recent years, cities have become increasingly distant—in terms of their residents’ self-perception and voting patterns—from the rural parts of Western countries. In this context, cities are striving for more tangible powers, improved rights of self-governance and new development-support tools, which would allow them to better address the challenges they face. The European People’s Party (EPP), the leading political family in the EU, should acknowledge the importance of cities and the fact that city-based electorates share particular political expectations. The recent string of elections in various European countries has shown that EPP-affiliated parties and candidates can only win in big cities when they adopt a more city-oriented political platform. The EPP cannot afford to lose urban voters; therefore, it should develop a ‘City Agenda’. Urban-related issues should be at the centre of the EPP’s political activity, as is the agricultural policy. This agenda, drawing on the experience of EPP-affiliated mayors and members of the Committee of the Regions, should identify the challenges cities face and come up with ways to address them. Among the most pressing are climate change–related themes such as public transportation and urban planning, but also the ongoing housing crisis and, more broadly, rising social inequality. This paper suggests that the EPP could promote a new ‘EU Cities Fund’, a city-tailored, directly accessible fund that would add financial heft to the EU’s existing urban policy.

Keywords City – Urban policy – European funds – Climate change – Housing



Introduction

‘The economic and social futures of whole countries, regions, and the world will be made in cities’, states UN Habitat—the UN programme that promotes socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities—adding, ‘the role of cities is neither widely understood nor fully recognised in global official and public debates’.¹ EU institutions and European political parties need to recognise and better understand the growing role of cities.² This paper focuses on how the European People’s Party (EPP) and its member parties can do just that by responding to some of the challenges faced by the urban middle classes. This group used to be part of the EPP’s core electorate but in recent years has increasingly drifted towards the liberal or green left.

The paper consists of three sections. The first examines the growing economic, cultural and political importance of cities. The second shows, based on recent electoral records, that European cities, especially big ones, lean towards liberal, green and left-wing political forces—though with some notable exceptions. The electoral victories of centre–right, EPP-affiliated mayors in several major European cities are also discussed here as case studies. The third section moves from diagnosis to therapy by proposing the adoption of a new EPP City Agenda—a political platform to help EPP-affiliated political parties contest city elections successfully. Procedural recommendations are made on how to develop this agenda within EPP structures. Also included are preliminary recommendations on what changes in EU policies the agenda should focus on and which areas should feature more prominently within it.

Why are cities important?

On 11 February 2020, Mayor of Warsaw Rafał Trzaskowski, Mayor of Budapest Gergely Karácsony and Mayor of Prague Zdeněk Hřib presented a letter to

¹ UN Habitat, *World Cities Report 2016: Urbanization and Development – Emerging Futures* (2016), 161.

² As will be discussed later in the paper, the assumption of the growing importance of cities has been thrown into question by the COVID-19 pandemic. There have been a number of voices and predictions pointing towards the possibility of people resettling in the countryside thanks to new technologies and flexible models of work. However, historical records, available data and behavioural studies have not supported this belief so far.



the presidents of the European Commission and the European Parliament. Co-signed by 14 mayors of other European cities (Berlin, Athens, Milan and Barcelona, among others), it urged EU institutions to recognise the pivotal role of cities and urban areas in implementing climate policies. The mayors called for directly accessible, city-tailored EU funds to secure these outcomes. ‘Cities led by elected leaders now represent two-thirds of Europe’s population and are responsible for the bulk of its climate mitigation and adaptation efforts. The fight against climate change will be won or lost in cities’, they wrote.³ The joint letter was the first fruit of the Pact of the Free Cities—an unprecedented political project established in 2019 by the mayors of Warsaw, Prague, Budapest and Bratislava. The Pact is yet another sign of the growing ambition of cities to play a bigger political role—on both the national and international level. Mayor Rafał Trzaskowski later explained the logic of this: ‘There is a specific voters’ expectation behind this: that their views are represented not only locally, but also in the national and international context’.⁴

Cities are financial hubs, consume 60%–80% of energy resources globally and account for at least 70% of the world’s GDP. Paris, for example, is home to 16% of France’s population, but generates 27% of the country’s GDP.⁵ In Poland, the impact of Warsaw is even more obvious: it comprises just 4.7% of Poland’s population, but accounts for 13% of the country’s GDP.⁶ In general, urban areas contribute proportionally more to GDP creation than their share of the national population.⁷ The economic clout of cities is a consequence of their productivity, which is higher than average because of businesses’ proximity to their clients and suppliers. Proximity also brings savings: the cost of delivering essential services (water, housing and education) is 30%–50% cheaper in concentrated population centres than in sparsely populated areas.⁸ City-based businesses draw from rich labour pools and have smoother flows of information and ideas; they also profit from the creativity boost caused by the abundant supply of art and culture. After all, cities have been the major centres of artistic and cultural creation throughout human history.

³ E. Zalan, ‘Central Europe Mayors Join in Direct EU Funds Plea’, *EUobserver*, 13 February 2020.

⁴ Author’s interview with Rafał Trzaskowski, 8 May 2020.

⁵ UN Habitat, *World Cities Report 2016*, 16.

⁶ Poland, Warsaw Statistical Office, ‘Regional Accounts’.

⁷ PwC, *Raport o stanie polskich metropolii: Warszawa* [Report on the State of the Polish Metropolis: Warsaw] (Warsaw, 2019), 3.

⁸ UN Habitat, *World Cities Report 2016*, 32.



Unfortunately, concentration has negative consequences too. Cities are also responsible for 70% of greenhouse gas emissions and those living in them suffer from inequality and social exclusion. They might be magnets for wealth creation, but they are also breeding grounds for crime and other social woes. In spring 2020, a terrifying new characteristic of urban living appeared: the higher risk of the spread of disease due to high population density as well as more closely knit social networks. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected cities the most: Bergamo, Milan and Madrid, to name just a few, have become symbols of the tragedy it has caused. The economic consequences of the pandemic and the ensuing lockdowns are also expected to mostly affect cities, as they are the natural hubs for the industries most severely hit by the disease.⁹ Some authors predict that 50% to 60% of the population might permanently switch to remote working, which, in turn, would trigger the emptying of big cities.¹⁰ However, such predictions might be too hasty. History tells us cities can recover from pandemics. All major European cities rebounded from the bubonic plague in the Middle Ages. Or, for a more modern example, cities bounced back from the Spanish Flu in 1918–20, even though the death toll was far greater than that so far caused by COVID-19.¹¹ Urban areas will continue to generate most of the future growth, for cities are not only the hubs of political and cultural innovation but knots in the global network too.¹² While only 21% of Europeans have declared their trust in national governments, 45% have said that they have faith in regional and city governments.¹³ As *The Economist* notes, ‘cities are where people learn to live in modern, open society. They are machines for creating citizens’.¹⁴

For all these reasons, cities can be expected to continue to grow and prosper. By 2030 two-thirds of the world might live in cities. And not only the biggest metropolises: most people will live in towns of under one million, followed by those of between one and five million. Small- and medium-sized cities are currently growing at twice the rate of megacities.¹⁵

⁹ For example, the hospitality, entertainment and tourism industries.

¹⁰ A. Hernández-Morales, K. Oroschakoff and J. Barigazzi, ‘The Death of the City’, Politico, 27 July 2020.

¹¹ N. Storchlic and R. Champine, ‘How Some Cities “Flattened the Curve” During the 1918 Flu Pandemic’, *National Geographic*, 27 March 2020.

¹² M. Castells, *Société en réseaux, L’ère de l’information* (Paris: Fayard, 1998), 461.

¹³ European Strategy and Policy Analysis System, *Global Trends to 2030. Challenges and Choices for Europe* (Brussels, April 2019), 13. The European Strategy and Policy Analysis System is an interinstitutional EU collaboration focusing on global trends and strategic foresight.

¹⁴ *Economist*, ‘After Disaster’, 13 June 2020, 9.

¹⁵ European Strategy and Policy Analysis System, *Global Trends to 2030*, 13.



All this has led some prominent observers to posit that a more central political status for cities in the future would be beneficial. American political theorist Benjamin Barber stated that the *polis*, the bedrock of modern democracy, may now once again offer a way forward, the chance to save democracy and solve the most pressing challenges our civilisation faces—with climate change taking first place.¹⁶ Barber believed that national sovereign states are too large to engage local civic participation, and at the same time too small to address global issues; where nation states seem dysfunctional, cities are naturally inclined to cooperation and interdependence.¹⁷ Barber was not alone in his belief in the growing role of cities. Oxford-based scholar Jan Zielonka argued that cities, the engines of the European economy, should play a significant role in countering the weaknesses of the European construct. Thus the EU should allow for greater integration along functional lines, with growing cooperation among cities being part of this.¹⁸ Functional integration cannot, therefore, be imposed from the top-down, but develops spontaneously, from the bottom up, based on shared interests in various policy areas that can be better pursued through cross-border cooperation, including by non-state actors such as cities.

The EPP has the most to gain from paying more attention to cities; therefore, it should consider adding city-focused policies to its political platform. When doing so it should, of course, take into account the differences in legal systems (and in the distribution of power and competences) in the EU member states. How cities are governed, their autonomy, empowerment and involvement in national policy vary significantly from country to country.¹⁹ As the European Commission has noted, many member states have followed a trend of decentralisation over the last 30 years, even if this process has not always been accompanied by a corresponding increase in resources.²⁰

¹⁶ B. Barber, *Gdyby burmistrzowie rządzili światem?* [What if Mayors Ruled the World?] (Warsaw: Muza, 2014), 18.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 183.

¹⁸ J. Zielonka, *Is the EU Doomed?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014, 90.)

¹⁹ European Commission, *The Urban Dimension of EU Policies – Key Features of an EU Urban Agenda*, Communication, COM (2014) 490 final, 18 July.

²⁰ *Ibid.*



Are cities liberal?

Available data suggest that cities, especially the bigger ones, are becoming liberal and progressive. Take Austria's 2019 general elections as an example: nationwide, the Christian Democrat Austrian People's Party (Liste Sebastian Kurz – Die Neue Volkspartei, Österreichische Volkspartei) won 37.5% of the vote. The Social Democratic Party of Austria (Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs) came second, with 21.2% of the vote; the far-right Freedom Party of Austria (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs) was third, with 16.2% of the vote; and the Green Alternative (Die Grüne Alternative) received 13.9% of votes nationwide. In Vienna, however, the results were different: the Social Democrats came first, with 27.1% of the vote; the Austrian People's Party came second, with 24.6% of the vote; and the Green Alternative came third, with 20.6% of the vote (14 percentage points more than in previous general elections).²¹ The rural–city divide was even starker in the 2016 presidential elections. The country's president, Alexander Van der Bellen, won the photo-finish election²² thanks to the votes cast in the cities. In the first attempt at a second round, on 22 May, Van der Bellen won in 9 of Austria's 10 largest cities, while losing in almost all rural voting districts.²³ His majority was paper-thin: 31,000 votes.²⁴ In the re-run of the second round, on 4 December 2016, Van der Bellen's majority was bigger (348,000 votes), yet again built on support in the cities.²⁵

This is not an isolated case. In recent years, left-leaning, liberal or populist candidates have beaten their centre–right rivals in many of the metropolises, including Paris, Berlin, Lisbon, Hamburg, Rome and Amsterdam. The situation in Paris is particularly illustrative. It used to be a centre–right stronghold. The late Jacques Chirac, former president of the Republic, was mayor of Paris from 1977 to 1995, and it was not until 2001 that the French centre–right lost

²¹ Austria, Federal Ministry of the Interior, 'Nationalratswahl 2019'.

²² In the first round of the Austrian presidential election in 2016, held on 24 April, no candidate received a majority of the vote. Norbert Hofer of the Freedom Party of Austria received 35% and Alexander Van der Bellen (Greens) received 21%. In line with the law, the two front-runners went head-to-head in the second round. This was held on 23 May 2016, with Van der Bellen declared the winner. However, on 22 July 2016, the Constitutional Court of Austria ruled that the second round result was to be annulled, due to a number of voting irregularities. In consequence, the second round re-vote was scheduled for 2 October and then postponed until 4 December 2016.

²³ M. Steinmüller, 'Stadt, Land und eine West-Ost-Linie', *ORF.at*, 22 May 2016.

²⁴ *Der Standard*, 'Wahlkarten ausgezählt: Alexander Van der Bellen ist Bundespräsident', 23 May 2016.

²⁵ Austria, Federal Ministry of the Interior, 'Bundespräsidentenwahl 2016'.



its grip over the City of Light, a grip that has not yet been regained. As of 5 July 2020, out of 35 major European cities (including all EU member state capitals), no less than 23 were governed by mayors affiliated with left-leaning/progressive political groups. An additional six mayors were either liberal or liberal-leaning independents.²⁶ The context of national politics must be taken into account; however, the pattern is clear. At the same time, Christian Democratic and like-minded parties are holding their positions in rural areas—including the rural areas surrounding the cities. Take the 2020 general election in Ireland: the EPP's Fine Gael candidates scored well in County Mayo, winning two seats,²⁷ yet they scored poorly in the Dublin Central constituency (Fine Gael's candidate came third, behind the candidates for Sinn Féin and the Green Party).²⁸

Another example is that of Malmö, Sweden's second-largest city. In the 2018 general election in the Malmö Municipality constituency, the Moderate Party (Moderata samlingspartiet) received 19.48% of the vote, while their left-wing rivals from the Swedish Social Democratic Party (Sveriges socialdemokratiska arbetareparti) received 29.1%. The right-wing Swedish Democrats (Sverigedemokraterna) received 16.8% of the vote; the Green Party (Miljöpartiet de gröna) and the Liberals (Liberalerna) both scored close to 6%. Outside the city walls, things were different. In the Southern Skane constituency, the Moderate Party won (with 23.98% of the vote), closely followed by the nationalists (the Swedish Democrats, with 22.11% of the vote). The Social Democrats came third with only 21.83% of the vote.²⁹

In France, too, progressive candidates score better in Paris, while the centre–right political groups stand firm in rural areas. In the 2017 general election, the liberal Forward! (En Marche!) won 12 seats in Paris; the centre–right Republicans (Les Républicains) won only 3.³⁰ Less than 50 kilometres to the east, in the Seine-et-Marne department, the Republicans equalled Forward!, with both parties winning four seats.³¹ In Oise the Republicans won four seats, while

²⁶ Author's calculation. The list of cities includes Lisbon, Madrid, Paris, Dublin, Brussels, Amsterdam, Luxembourg, Rome, Vienna, Berlin, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Helsinki, Vilnius, Tallinn, Riga, Warsaw, Prague, Bratislava, Budapest, Ljubljana, Zagreb, Bucharest, Sofia, Athens, Nicosia, Valetta, Hamburg, Barcelona, Munich, Milan, Lyon, Marseille, Kraków and Cologne.

²⁷ *Independent*, 'County Mayo, Constituency Results'.

²⁸ *Independent*, 'Dublin Central, Constituency Results'.

²⁹ Sweden, Valmyndigheten [Electoral Authority], 'Val till riksdagen – Röster' [Elections to the Riksdag – Votes].

³⁰ *L'Express*, 'Résultats des élections législatives 2017 Paris'.

³¹ *L'Express*, 'Résultats des élections législatives 2017 Seine-et-Marne'.



Forward! came second with three seats.³² In the 2020 local elections in France (the second round took place on 28 June) the Green Party and its left-wing allies scored a historic success, winning in five major cities: Marseille, Lyon, Strasbourg, Bordeaux and Nancy.³³ As P. Kurth, former Christian Democratic Union (Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands) candidate for mayor of Cologne noted, ‘achieving political majorities in the countryside is different from in the city. Here the EPP and the affiliated parties have been weaker so far and have a corresponding need to catch up’.³⁴

This trend notwithstanding, EPP candidates have done well in some elections in big cities recently. In June 2019 42-year-old Kostas Bakoyannis—the candidate for New Democracy (Nea Dimokratia)—was elected mayor of Athens, beating his Coalition of the Radical Left (Syriza) opponent by 65.2% to 34.8% of the vote in the second round of the ballot.³⁵ In Stockholm, the EPP-affiliated Moderate Party has managed to take control of the city. In October 2018 the Moderate Party, led locally by Anna König Jerlmyr, formed a coalition with the Green Party,³⁶ paving the way for König Jerlmyr to become Stockholm’s mayor.

In Warsaw too, and other major Polish cities, EPP candidates have scored major victories, not least because in the particular Polish context they represent the most credible progressive alternative to the ruling national conservatives of Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość). In October 2018, Rafał Trzaskowski from Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska) beat the ruling party’s candidate Patryk Jaki in the race for the mayorship of Warsaw. Trzaskowski won the first round with a resounding 56.6% of the vote³⁷ (the media had predicted a tied second round). In the electoral campaign of 2018, the Civic Platform candidates in big cities employed a progressive narrative, depriving the left and rival civic movements of political oxygen. The case of Rafał Trzaskowski shows that addressing the middle-class malaise (as described in a recent Martens Centre research paper³⁸) and winning the younger generation’s vote increases the chances of electoral success.

³² *L’Express*, ‘Résultats des élections législatives 2017 Oise’.

³³ *BBC News*, ‘France Municipal Elections: Greens Score Gains in Second Round’, 29 June 2020.

³⁴ Interview with the author, 14 May 2020.

³⁵ T. Kokkinidis, ‘Kostas Bakoyannis Elected New Mayor of Athens’, *Greek Reporter*, 2 June 2019.

³⁶ *The Local*, ‘Centre–Right Alliance and Green Party to Lead Stockholm Council’, 12 October 2018.

³⁷ *Gazeta.pl*, ‘Oficjalne wyniki wyborów 2018 Warszawa. Trzaskowski zdobył 56,67 proc. Dla kogo Rada Miasta?’ [Official Results of Warsaw Elections in 2018, Trzaskowski Scores 56.67%. Who Will Control the City Council?], 24 October 2018.

³⁸ See E. Drea, *The Middle Class in Focus, Priorities for the 2019 Elections and Beyond*, Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies (March 2018).



However, the 2020 presidential elections reconfirmed the stark urban–rural divide in Poland. Rafał Trzaskowski, the challenger, lost to incumbent Andrzej Duda (Law and Justice) by a margin of two percentage points. Trzaskowski won in all major cities (67% of the vote in Warsaw), while Duda raked up the rural areas. In the village of Godziszów (Lubelskie voivodeship), the incumbent president scored a record 95% of the vote.³⁹

The pattern of cities voting for liberals/progressives and rural areas voting for conservatives can be seen outside Europe too. In the 2016 US presidential election, the gulf between urban and non-urban voters was more significant than it had been in nearly a century. As D. A. Graham wrote, ‘rural areas are becoming more conservative, and cities more liberal’.⁴⁰ Donald Trump won in Texas, but he lost to Hillary Clinton in four of the Lone Star state’s major cities.

The growing political tension between cities and rural areas may lead to deep political crises. Both parts of society (big-city dwellers and those living in small towns or villages) may consider the city–rural conflict an identity-building factor. The Brexit vote in June 2016 might have been a demonstration of such a phenomenon. London, Liverpool and Manchester massively voted to ‘Remain’, while rural parts of England voted massively to ‘Leave’. ‘It is hard to avoid the sense that the result was in part driven by a desire to deal a blow to the UK’s urban, cosmopolitan elite, who have profited from globalisation’, one commentator noted.⁴¹ The city–rural divide generates a worrying context of two societies living in one country. A self-exacerbating process occurs: cities vote differently from the surrounding parts of the country; in consequence, the sentiment of being different from the rest of the country grows.

Since EPP member parties are well suited to mending the political gap between the metropolis and the countryside due to their mixed rural–urban roots, it is high time that the EPP family retook the cities. The obvious question is how?

³⁹ S. Dudzik, ‘Wynik wyborów prezydenckich. Duda czy Trzaskowski?’ [Presidential Election Results. Duda or Trzaskowski?], *Biqdata.pl*, 13 July 2020.

⁴⁰ D. A. Graham, ‘Red State, Blue City’, *The Atlantic*, March 2017.

⁴¹ C. de Gruyter, ‘The Revenge of the Countryside’, European Council on Foreign Relations, 21 October 2016.



Towards a City Agenda: some recommendations

The EPP's political manifesto is focused on horizontal issues, such as jobs and growth, the digital society, the environment, energy, agriculture, inclusive communities and so on. All of these areas are important to both the EU and each member state, in both the short and long term. However, the absence of a city-focused perspective in the EPP manifesto is striking. Take the 2019 European Parliament election manifesto: the term 'cities' appears in it only twice, on a par with 'villages'. Rural areas (or rural communities) are mentioned six times. Neither the 2019 election manifesto nor the 2012 Political Platform offers any specific insight into how the EPP intends to resolve the particular problems that most (if not all) European cities share, in contrast with the EPP's well-thought-out recommendations for the development of Europe's rural areas.⁴²

There are some EPP papers in which cities appear as key. One of them is *Smart and Green Cities*—on which a resolution was adopted by the EPP Political Assembly in April 2016.⁴³ Another example is the 2015 EPP Congress resolution *Digital Europe 2.0—Moving Towards a Digital Society* (adopted in May 2015 in Madrid).⁴⁴ However, the former is relatively short and the latter only briefly mentions cities, without going into much detail. Altogether, out of more than one hundred resolutions, positions and documents adopted by various EPP bodies (congresses, political assemblies, ministers' meetings, etc.) in the years 2015–20, only a few address specifically city-related issues.⁴⁵

The EPP should consider developing a stand-alone city programme, a 'European City Agenda' that induces EPP member parties to build their city strategies. Three concrete steps towards the development of an EPP 'European Cities Agenda' seem appropriate.

In the first step, the EPP should reach for the low-hanging fruit and promote better mechanisms of knowledge sharing, starting with EPP-ruled cities. The potential of cooperation between mayors representing EPP member parties has not yet been fully exploited. In the absence of formalised city-to-city partnerships

⁴² EPP, 'Commitments'.

⁴³ EPP, *Smart and Green Cities* (2016).

⁴⁴ EPP, *Digital Europe 2.0 – Moving Towards a Digital Society* (2015).

⁴⁵ Author's calculation; EPP papers found at <https://www.epp.eu/our-commitments/papers/>.



within the EPP family, mayors rely on a framework of non-partisan structures such as Eurocities⁴⁶ and C40.⁴⁷

In the second step, the EPP should consider creating a permanent structure (sub-working group) within the structure of the Working Group II (Economic and Social Policy) that is devoted to city-related issues, composed of EPP-affiliated Members of the European Parliament, Members of Parliament, mayors, and other local government representatives and experts. Parties should also take steps to bolster the European Committee of Regions—the only treaty-based EU institution directly representing the voice (and the interests) of local communities.

In the third step, drawing on the sub-working group/CoR expertise, the EPP should create a comprehensive programme for European cities that identifies the current challenges common to most (if not all) big European cities.

How can the EPP win back city voters without alienating those in the countryside or smaller towns? The most promising way forward is to identify and address the key challenges that cities and their inhabitants face. The author believes that these issues require some sort of EU-level response, as their scale surpasses the capabilities of nation states to act. Independent, green or liberal mayors may identify the same challenges and propose similar solutions to the problems. Still, it is EPP-backed mayors who have a better chance of kick-starting the legislative process at the European level—thanks to the support of the EPP president of the European Commission and the EPP Group in the European Parliament. The EPP City Agenda should also remind member parties that ‘the efforts of different sectoral Government Departments working or having an impact on urban issues need to be better aligned’, as stated in the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Eurocities is a non-partisan, non-governmental network of 190 cities in 39 European countries, representing 130 million people. Established in 1986, the Brussels-based platform of cooperation focuses on knowledge-sharing and policy coordination among European cities. For further information, see <https://eurocities.eu/about-us/>.

⁴⁷ C40 is a global network of the world's biggest cities, focused solely on addressing the issues of climate change and air quality. C40 currently has 97 members, representing over 700 million citizens and one-quarter of the global economy. The non-governmental platform allows the exchange of information and collaboration. C40 member cities adopt common, self-binding goals with respect to climate-change action, enabling the implementation of the goals of the Paris Agreement at the local level. For more information, see <https://www.c40.org/about>.

⁴⁸ EU, *Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities* (2 May 2007). The Charter is a document of the EU member states, adopted in 2007 at the initiative of the German Presidency of the Council. The Charter identified common principles and strategies for urban development policy, to which the governments committed.



Although the specific contents of the Agenda would have to be developed in a bottom-up process of consultation, the following priority areas can already be recommended as promising starting points.

Support the creation of a new EU Cities Fund

The current EU urban policy correctly identifies the issues to be tackled. The problem is that the EU's Urban Agenda, officially launched in May 2016 with the Pact of Amsterdam,⁴⁹ lacks substance. The Pact identifies three official pillars of the EU Urban Agenda, all of them purposely timid and self-constrained. Take the second pillar—'Better funding'—as an example. It is supposed to help cities identify 'innovative and user-friendly sources of funding for urban areas'.⁵⁰ However, it 'will not create new or increased EU funding aimed at higher allocations for urban authorities'.⁵¹

Both the Cohesion Fund and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)—the two main tools of the Cohesion Policy—finance projects in cities, as Warsaw, the capital of Poland, can corroborate. Over the last 10 years, Warsaw has absorbed record amounts of EU support: it received over €1.2 billion for the construction of the M2 metro line alone.⁵² No less than 5% of the ERDF's resources are reserved for solving the specific economic, environmental and social problems of urban areas.⁵³

However, one important caveat must be noted. Most of the funding provided by the Cohesion Fund and ERDF is focused on particular countries and particular cities. Major cities such as Paris, Berlin, Amsterdam and Stockholm have limited access to European funding as their respective countries are not really covered by EU Cohesion Policy. Such cities have to rely on other EU-based financial

⁴⁹ European Commission, 'The Urban Agenda for the EU: European Cities Get Their Say in EU Policy Making', Press release, 30 May 2016. The EU Pact of Amsterdam was an initiative of the Dutch Presidency of the EU. Adopted in May 2016, the Pact of Amsterdam sets out the key elements of the EU's Urban Agenda. The Pact of Amsterdam did not create any new legal instruments. However, it kick-started the creation of 12 different 'partnerships' focusing on 12 challenges European cities face. As such, the Pact of Amsterdam is the government-endorsed embodiment of EU city policy. The Pact of Amsterdam was preceded by the Lille Action Programme (2000), the Rotterdam Urban Acquis (2004), the Bristol Accord (2005), the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities (2007), the Marseille Statement (2008), the Toledo Declaration (2010) and the Riga Declaration (2015).

⁵⁰ European Commission, 'Urban Agenda for the EU'.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² European Commission, 'Europe Finances Modern Urban Transport Network in Warsaw', 11 January 2018.

⁵³ ERDF, Information note.



instruments, with limited scope. Moreover, EU financing opportunities for cities are scattered across too many different programmes.

For example, the 15-year-old URBACT programme⁵⁴ is mostly limited to networking and the exchange of experiences to improve urban policies. Although it is a focal point for urban expertise and has built an impressive cache of urban-related knowledge (more than 8,000 publications, notes, papers, etc.), the scope of its on-the-ground intervention is modest. Another tool, the Urban Innovative Actions (UIA), provides financing for innovative pilot projects,⁵⁵ but its budget for 2014–20 was a paltry €372 million.

Even the European Commission and the European Investment Bank admit that ‘urban development has not been explicitly prioritised in Regional Development and Cohesion Policy during the 2020 programming period among the 11 Thematic Objectives defined in the Common Provisions Regulation’.⁵⁶ Even if some financial instruments are made available to cities in countries not eligible for the bulk of the ERDF/Cohesion Fund financing, the latter lacks grants—the single most sought-after tool to finance urban development.⁵⁷

It is interesting to compare the EU Urban Agenda with the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP). The CAP draws on the mammoth European Agricultural Guarantee Fund and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development. Moreover, all farmers receive EU-funded support; farmers in wealthy Western countries receive more in terms of direct payments than their poorer colleagues in Central Europe.⁵⁸ Of course, the fundamental role of the CAP stems from the origins

⁵⁴ URBACT is the European Territorial Cooperation programme assisting urban development in cities across Europe. An instrument of the Cohesion Policy, it is co-financed by the ERDF, the 27 member states, Norway and Switzerland. URBACT intervention is limited to transnational exchanges, capacity-building, capitalisation and dissemination. The URBACT budget for 2014–20 is €96.3 million.

⁵⁵ UIA is an initiative of the EU that finances pilot (not-yet-tested) solutions to address urban challenges. UIA is based on art. 8 of the ERDF. Established in 2015, UIA supports cities (or clusters of cities) of at least 50,000 inhabitants. UIA co-finances 80% of a chosen project’s activities (to a maximum of €5 million). For more about UIA, see: <https://www.uia-initiative.eu/en/about-us/what-urban-innovative-actions>.

⁵⁶ European Investment Bank, *Stocktaking Study on Financial Instruments by Sector. Final Report* (Brussels, Luxembourg: 2020), 82. The Common Provisions Regulation refers to European Parliament and Council Regulation (EU) no. 1303/2013 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) no. 1083/2006, OJ 347 (17 December 2013), 320.

⁵⁷ European Investment Bank, *Stocktaking Study on Financial Instruments by Sector*, 85.

⁵⁸ European Commission, ‘Future of the Common Agricultural Policy’. The ongoing reform of the CAP, a never-ending European story, has not yet reversed or changed this approach in a meaningful way (even if it has introduced the concept of capping payments at €100,000 per farm).



of the European project as such. This policy is one of the pillars of our Union, and it should remain so. However, if one recognises the growing role of cities, rural-centred and city-centred policies should be at least somewhat rebalanced in terms of the available funds and the funds' construction.

Therefore, the EPP should consider throwing its political weight behind a new type of financing instrument: a cities-only EU fund managed at the European level, parallel to the national funding envelopes of the Cohesion Policy. The fund should be bold enough to support bricks-and-mortar investments with substantial grants (as described in the following section, with support for affordable housing being the top priority) all across the EU. The creation of this dedicated fund could be the central point of the EPP City Agenda package of solutions.

So far, no such envelope scheme has been envisaged. In March 2019 the European Commission proposed a new funding framework for cities—the post-2020 European Urban Initiative. More ambitious than past initiatives (such as the UIA), the proposal was still limited. The Commission proposed that the €500 million in funding is shared across three strands: capacity-building (20% of the available budget), support for innovative actions (60%), and support for knowledge and education (20%).⁵⁹ However, at the time of writing, following the reorientation of the EU budget proposal due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the details of the European Urban Initiative have not yet been politically sealed.

Prepare cities to face climate change

Although 2020 has been overshadowed by the frightening reality of the COVID-19 pandemic (with most casualties in densely populated cities), the plague, scary as it is, might not be the biggest threat cities face in the long term. The author believes that climate change holds the top position on the list of perils. Not a single European city will be spared the impact: cities are and will be at the forefront of the coming climate chaos.⁶⁰ Deadly heatwaves and other extreme weather events will disrupt the functioning of cities. 'Perhaps the starkest warning of the mayhem to come was the European heatwave of 2003,

⁵⁹ European Commission, 'Explanatory Memo: European Urban Initiative-Post 2020: Article 104(5) CPR Proposal and Article 10 ERDF/CF Proposal', 18 March 2019.

⁶⁰ A. Dawson, *Extreme Cities. The Peril and Promise of Urban Life in the Age of Climate Change* (London: Verso, 2017), 5.



which killed an estimated 70,000 European city-dwellers'.⁶¹ As early as 2014, 87% of the disasters that struck cities across the globe were climate-related.⁶²

Cities are at both ends of the problem: they are vulnerable to climate chaos, but at the same time contribute the lion's share of carbon to the atmosphere. Therefore, the EPP member parties should encourage discussion on ways in which cities can contribute to adaptation and mitigation: urban planning and design, economies of scale, and the concentration of people, enterprises and innovation. Taking action to minimise emissions and climate hazards is cheaper in cities than elsewhere.⁶³

One of the paths to mitigating climate change is to rethink the entire transportation system. While the primary role of public transportation is no longer challenged, the jury is still out on what kind of service cities should provide, and the future for individual transit. The EPP should pool its local expertise to offer viable solutions. So far, cities across Europe differ in terms of the measures implemented, often profoundly. For example, in 2019, Amsterdam City Council decided that by 2030 all cars and motorcycles running on petrol or diesel will be banned from driving in the city—only emissions-free vehicles will be allowed. The City of Brussels introduced the Tempo 20 and Tempo 30 speed limits across the entire city centre in May 2020, limiting the maximum speed to 20km/h and 30km/h respectively.⁶⁴ Vienna has not only closed some of its streets to traffic, but has torn up the asphalt and transformed them into parks.⁶⁵ But in many European cities, such as Warsaw, the debate about redesigning the transportation model is only just beginning. Poland's capital has the highest rate of car use in Europe: in 2018, there were 750 cars registered for every 1,000 inhabitants; 1.3 million cars in total,⁶⁶ more than twice the rate in other European capitals. Moreover, one of the many unwelcome side-effects of the COVID-19 pandemic might be the return of private transportation (especially cars) as the preferred form of transport, causing old issues to reappear in full force. 'Car companies will use this pandemic to try to convince us that cars

⁶¹ Ibid., 125–6.

⁶² UN Habitat, *World Cities Report 2016*, 17.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ *Le Soir*, 'Pentagone à Bruxelles: une zone 20 avec piétons et cyclistes prioritaires', 20 April 2020; *FlandersToday*, 'Brussels Confirms New Speed Limits from 1 January', 20 July 2020.

⁶⁵ City of Vienna, 'Neuer Park im Volkert- und Alliiertenviertel' [New Parks in Volkert and Allies districts], 10 May 2020.

⁶⁶ Poland, Warsaw Statistical Office, *Statistical Yearbook of Warsaw* (2019), 259.



are safe and public transit is not’, Brent Toderian, former chief planner for Vancouver, has noted.⁶⁷

Address the housing crisis in cities

A growing number of people—primarily the younger generation—have recently experienced problems renting or buying a home. OECD data show that on average, families in developed countries pay considerably more to buy a flat than previous generations did. In 1985 a family of four would have to spend an equivalent of 6.8 years’ income to buy a 60 square metre flat in a country’s capital or financial centre. This is now the equivalent of 10.2 years’ income. In 2018, the real house price index grew faster than the GDP per capita index.⁶⁸ ‘At the root of that failure is a lack of building, especially near the thriving cities in which jobs are plentiful’, noted *The Economist*.⁶⁹ And where demand dwarfs supply, the rich are bound to push the poor out of the market. Most European cities have experienced a phenomenon called ‘gentrification’. The attractive areas, usually located close to the city centre and well connected, are taken over by the highest bidders, interested in a safe investment. Even the traditional middle class is no longer able to afford to live close to the city centre. According to the Housing Europe Observatory, the research branch of the European Federation of Public, Cooperative and Social Housing Bodies, in 2017, more than 10% of households in the EU spent over 40% of their disposable income on housing costs.⁷⁰

There is a correlation between the structure of the market and the scale of the problem. In Italy, Greece and the Slovak Republic—all of which have a relatively high homeownership rate—80% or more of 15- to 29-year-olds live with their parents. In Austria and Germany, the number of young people under 25 living with their parents is much smaller, closer to 60%. Why? In both of the latter countries, the structure of the market, as a result of long-term policies, is different from that in other European countries. The homeownership rate in Germany is only 44%, with 47% of the population living in privately rented houses or flats. In Austria too, the homeownership rate is well below 50%.⁷¹ Vienna is often cited as the European city where housing cost growth is the slowest.

⁶⁷ B. Toderian (@BrentToderian), Twitter post, 16 April 2020, 7.46pm.

⁶⁸ OECD, ‘Affordable Housing Database’.

⁶⁹ *Economist*, ‘The Horrible Housing Blunder’, 18 January 2020, 9.

⁷⁰ Housing Europe Observatory, *The State of Housing in the EU 2019* (Brussels, 1 October 2019).

⁷¹ OECD, ‘Affordable Housing Database’.



Of its 1.9 million inhabitants, 6 in 10 live in apartments owned by the municipality or by non-profit developers—something that helps to slow rent rises.⁷²

Where rentable property is lacking, rents go up. In Porto, Portugal's second-biggest city, rents went up by more than 80% between 2013 and 2018.⁷³ In Barcelona, rental costs have risen by 35% since 2010.⁷⁴ According to Eurostat, in 28 major European cities (out of the 35 surveyed) rents went up from 2018 to 2019.⁷⁵ Although the coronavirus pandemic has temporarily halted the rise of rental prices in Europe, the trend in recent years has only been upwards. According to estimates by McKinsey, by 2025 the number of households financially stretched by the costs of housing will have risen to nearly 440 million globally.⁷⁶

The surge in holiday rentals amplifies the problem of the insufficient supply of long-term rentals. It pushes property prices up and forces inhabitants (especially modestly paid public sector workers, e.g. teachers, firefighters) out of the market. In Amsterdam, in 2013, there were about 4,500 holiday rental listings. By 2017 the number had grown to 22,000. In Lisbon's historic district of Alfama, more than 55% of the apartments are now short-term rentals; the city of Kraków recorded a rise of 100% in short-term holiday rentals between 2014 and 2017.⁷⁷ Paris is another of the most-affected European cities. By mid-2019 there were 65,000 apartments in Paris listed on the Airbnb portal alone. The result: rising living costs that are pushing the lower middle class out of Paris. It is now estimated that 12,000 inhabitants leave the city annually.⁷⁸ Desperate to find a solution to the problem, in March 2020, 22 European cities called on the European Commission and other EU institutions to urgently implement new legislation to address this issue, which has spiralled out of control.⁷⁹ The EPP should seize the opportunity to make its mark on this matter.

What could the political response to the housing crisis look like? Berlin is probably the best example of how the problem should not be solved: the left-wing ruling coalition in the city council has imposed a rent cap which not only

⁷² France24, 'How Cities Around the Globe Fight Rising Rents', 18 June 2019.

⁷³ URBACT, 'Cities Implementing the Right to Housing', 9 March 2020.

⁷⁴ France24, 'How Cities Around the Globe Fight Rising Rents'.

⁷⁵ Eurostat, International Service for Remunerations and Pensions, '2019 Current Market Rents'.

⁷⁶ World Economic Forum, *Making Affordable Housing a Reality in Cities* (June 2019), 7.

⁷⁷ Eurocities, 'European Cities Call for Action on Short-Term Holiday Rentals', 4 March 2020.

⁷⁸ M. Meister, 'Paryż już nie dla paryżan. Kłopoty zbyt kosmopolitycznego miasta' [Paris Is No Longer for Parisians. Problems of a Too-Cosmopolitan City], *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 12 October 2019.

⁷⁹ Eurocities, '22 Cities Call for Stronger European Regulation of Holiday Rental Platforms', 4 March 2020.



freezes rents but retroactively cuts them in existing contracts.⁸⁰ The alternative is to rethink the existing planning rules, allow for more construction in cities, encourage denser development where there is good access to transport infrastructure and reconsider regulation that constrains private development—without infringing on the local government’s right to plan and decide.

Building more public housing on city-owned (or state-owned) ground, in attractive locations, is another option.⁸¹ To follow up on this, local governments need cash. Housing development requires huge up-front investment. If rents are to be moderate, to allow easier entry for the young or low earners from the public sector, the return on investment needs to be painfully long. The eventual intervention of European funds is the answer, although this will require a shift away from a well-established principle. As early as 2018, the High-Level Task Force on Investing in Social Infrastructure in Europe (jointly created by the European Long-Term Investors Association and the European Commission) called for EU Cohesion Policy to be focused more closely on social investment and infrastructure. It assessed the annual investment gap in socially affordable housing alone (EU total) at a staggering €57 billion.⁸²

Conclusion

Like it or not, the future is most likely going to be urban, and most of the problems we face are urban too. The COVID-19 pandemic has struck cities hard, but cities, in general, have proven resilient to sudden shocks. The essence of the city, the proximity of highly skilled, highly educated workers and an abundance of ideas and networks, is here to stay, as it is human nature that keeps people together. The pandemic has confirmed how vital local governments are: at the forefront of the fight against the virus, closest to the people. Local governments have organised and delivered assistance and implemented the administrative decisions (such as social distancing in public spaces) on the ground. They have handled online education and organised food banks for the most financially affected.

⁸⁰ T. Berg and C. Trenkel, ‘Germany: Berlin Rent Cap Act Finally Adopted But Uncertainties Remain’, *Mondaq.com*, 16 March 2020.

⁸¹ *Economist*, ‘End of an Era, Special Report Housing’, 9.

⁸² L. Fransen, G. del Bufalo and E. Reviglio, *Boosting Investment in Social Infrastructure in Europe. Report of the High-Level Task Force on Investing in Social Infrastructure in Europe* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2018), 41.



COVID-19 has only added to the long list of problems cities face. It is high time some of the woes were addressed on the European level. The EPP should take the political lead. Its City Agenda, when established, could advocate better city-level cooperation, based on the theoretical concept of cities acting as an additional, functional line of European integration. The existing example of the Pact of Free Cities may serve as inspiration.

Now is the time to act. European centre–right and like-minded parties should bear in mind that the voters in big cities have gradually become different from voters living elsewhere. Capturing their attention does not necessarily mean that the EPP (or any other pan-European party) should surrender any of its core beliefs. On the contrary, it should consider combining its political experience, its credibility as ‘the people’s party’, with city-focused policies.

The EPP should be bold in its ideas. It should not hesitate to challenge the old dogmas and to reinforce the principle of subsidiarity through the stronger participation of cities in EU decision-making and policies.

Bibliography

Austria, Federal Ministry of the Interior, ‘Bundespräsidentenwahl 2016’, accessed at <http://wahl16.bmi.gv.at/> on 7 October 2019.

Austria, Federal Ministry of the Interior, ‘Nationalratswahl 2019’, accessed at https://bmi.gv.at/412/Nationalratswahlen/Nationalratswahl_2019/start.aspx#bundeswahlvorschlaege on 4 October 2019.

Barber, B., *Gdyby burmistrzowie rządzili światem* [What If Mayors Ruled the World?] (Warsaw: Muza, 2014).

BBC News, ‘France Municipal Elections: Greens Score Gains in Second Round’, 29 June 2020, accessed at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-53213783> on 7 July 2020.

Berg, T. and Trenkel, C., ‘Germany: Berlin Rent Cap Act Finally Adopted But Uncertainties Remain’, *Mondaq.com*, 16 March 2020, accessed at <https://www.mondaq.com/germany/landlord-tenant--leases/903970/berlin-rent-cap-act-finally-adopted-but-uncertainties-remain> on 8 July 2020.



Bodalska, B., 'Wybory samorządowe: KO zwycięża w miastach, PiS w sejmikach' [Local Elections: KO Wins in Cities, PiS Wins in Regional Assemblies], *Euractiv.pl*, 22 October 2018, accessed at <https://www.euractiv.pl/section/demokracja/news/wybory-samorzadowe-po-zwycieza-w-miastach-a-pis-w-sejmikach/> on 14 April 2020.

Boffey, D., 'Amsterdam to Ban Petrol and Diesel Cars and Motorbikes by 2030', *The Guardian*, 3 May 2019, accessed at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/may/03/amsterdam-ban-petrol-diesel-cars-bikes-2030> on 4 October 2019.

Castells, M., *Société en réseaux, L'ère de l'information* (Paris: Fayard, 1998).

City of Vienna, 'Neuer Park im Volkert- und Alliiertenviertel', 10 May 2020, accessed at <https://www.wien.gv.at/bezirke/leopoldstadt/umwelt/trunnerpark.html> on 10 May 2020.

Dawson, A., *Extreme Cities. The Peril and Promise of Urban Life in the Age of Climate Change* (London: Verso, 2017).

De Gruyter, C., 'The Revenge of the Countryside', European Council on Foreign Relations, 21 October 2016, accessed at https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_the_revenge_of_the_countryside7156 on 3 May 2020.

Der Standard, 'Wahlkarten ausgezählt: Alexander Van der Bellen ist Bundespräsident', 23 May 2016, accessed at <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000037495444/der-sieger-der-bundespraesidentenwahl-heisst> on 7 October 2019.

Drea, E., *The Middle Class in Focus, Priorities for the 2019 Elections and Beyond*, Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies (March 2018), accessed at <https://martenscentre.eu/sites/default/files/publication-files/middle-classes-europe-2019-elections.pdf> on 5 July 2020.

Dudzik, S., 'Wynik wyborów prezydenckich. Duda czy Trzaskowski?' [Presidential Election Results. Duda or Trzaskowski?], *Biqdata.pl*, 13 July 2020, accessed at <https://biqdata.wyborcza.pl/biqdata/7,159116,26124392,wynik-wyborow-prezydenckich-duda-czy-trzaskowski-sprawdz.html> on 13 July 2020.

Economist, 'After Disaster', 13 June 2020.

Economist, 'End of an Era, Special Report Housing', 18 January 2020.



Economist, 'The Destiny of Density', 13 June 2020.

Economist, 'The Horrible Housing Blunder', 18 January 2020.

EPP, 'Commitments', accessed at <https://www.epp.eu/our-commitments/commitments/> on 18 April 2020.

EPP, *Digital Europe 2.0 – Moving Towards a Digital Society* (2015), accessed at <https://www.epp.eu/papers/digital-europe-2-0-moving-towards-a-digital-society-2/> on 18 April 2020.

EPP, *Smart and Green Cities* (2016), accessed at <https://www.epp.eu/papers/smart-and-green-cities/> on 18 April 2020.

ERDF, Information note, accessed at https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/funding/erdf/ on 8 October 2020.

EU, *Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities* (2 May 2007), accessed at https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/archive/themes/urban/leipzig_charter.pdf on 4 May 2020.

Eurocities, '22 Cities Call for Stronger European Regulation of Holiday Rental Platforms', 4 March 2020, accessed at <https://eurocities.eu/latest/22-cities-call-for-stronger-european-regulation-of-holiday-rental-platforms/> on 29 March 2020.

Eurocities, 'European Cities Call for Action on Short-Term Holiday Rentals', accessed at http://nws.eurocities.eu/MediaShell/media/EUROPEAN_CITIES_ALLIANCE_ON_SHORT_TERM_RENTALS_final.pdf on 29 March 2020.

European Commission, 'Europe Finances Modern Urban Transport Network in Warsaw', 11 January 2018, accessed at https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/newsroom/news/2018/01/01-11-2018-europe-finances-modern-urban-transport-network-in-warsaw on 23 April 2020.

European Commission, 'Explanatory Memo: European Urban Initiative-Post 2020: Article 104(5) CPR Proposal and Article 10 ERDF/CF Proposal', 18 March 2019, accessed at https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/publications/brochures/2019/explanatory-memo-european-urban-initiative-post-2020-article-104-5-cpr-proposal-and-article-10-erdf-cf-proposal on 14 July 2020.

European Commission, 'Future of the Common Agricultural Policy', accessed at <https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/key-policies/common-agricultural-policy/future-cap> on 23 April 2020.



European Commission, 'The Urban Agenda for the EU: European Cities Get Their Say in EU Policy Making', Press release, 30 May 2016, accessed at https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_16_1924#_ftnref1 on 3 May 2020.

European Commission, *The Urban Dimension of EU Policies – Key Features of an EU Urban Agenda*, Communication, COM (2014) 490 final, 18 July.

European Commission, 'Urban Agenda for the EU', accessed at <https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/urban-agenda-eu/what-urban-agenda-eu> on 21 April 2020.

European Investment Bank, *Stocktaking Study on Financial Instruments by Sector: Final Report* (Brussels: European Commission and European Investment Bank, 2020).

European Strategy and Policy Analysis System, *Global Trends to 2030. Challenges and Choices for Europe* (Brussels, April 2019).

Eurostat, International Service for Remunerations and Pensions, '2019 Current Market Rents', accessed at <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/civil-servants-remuneration/estate-agency-rent-surveys> on 10 May 2020.

FlandersToday, 'Brussels Confirms New Speed Limits from 1 January', 20 July 2020, accessed at <http://www.flanderstoday.eu/brussels-confirms-new-speed-limits-1-january> on 23 October 2020.

France24, 'How Cities Around the Globe Fight Rising Rents', 18 June 2019, accessed at <https://www.france24.com/en/20190618-how-cities-around-globe-fight-rising-rents> on 10 May 2020.

Fransen, L., del Bufalo, G. and Reviglio, E., *Boosting Investment in Social Infrastructure in Europe. Report of the High-Level Task Force on Investing in Social Infrastructure in Europe* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2018).

Gazeta.pl, 'Oficjalne wyniki wyborów 2018 Warszawa. Trzaskowski zdobył 56,67 proc. Dla kogo Rada Miasta?' [Official Results of Elections for Warsaw 2018, Trzaskowski Scores 56.67%. Who Will Control the City Council?], 24 October 2018, accessed at <https://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wiadomosci/7,114884,24080096,oficjalne-wyniki-wyborow-2018-warszawa-trzaskowski-zdobył.html> on 27 March 2020.

Graham, D. A., 'Red State, Blue City', *The Atlantic*, March 2017, accessed at <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/03/red-state-blue-city/513857/> on 3 May 2020.



Hernández-Morales, A., Oroschakoff, K. and Barigazzi, J., 'The Death of the City', *Politico*, 27 July 2020, accessed at <https://www.politico.eu/article/the-death-of-the-city-coronavirus-towns-cities-retail-transport-pollution-economic-crisis/> on 18 August 2020.

Housing Europe Observatory, *The State of Housing in the EU 2019* (Brussels, 1 October 2019), accessed at <http://www.housingeurope.eu/resource-1323/the-state-of-housing-in-the-eu-2019> on 23 April 2020.

Independent, 'Dublin Central, Constituency Results', accessed at <https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/election-2020/dublin-central/> on 22 February 2020.

Independent, 'Limerick City, Constituency Results', accessed at <https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/election-2020/limerick-city/> on 22 February 2020.

Independent, 'Mayo, Constituency Results', accessed at <https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/election-2020/mayo/> on 22 February 2020.

Kokkinidis, T., 'Kostas Bakoyannis Elected New Mayor of Athens', *Greek Reporter*, 2 June 2019, accessed at <https://greece.greekreporter.com/2019/06/02/kostas-bakoyannis-elected-new-mayor-of-athens/> on 27 March 2020.

Le Soir, 'Pentagone à Bruxelles: une zone 20 avec piétons et cyclistes prioritaires', 20 April 2020, accessed at <https://www.lesoir.be/295743/article/2020-04-20/pentagone-bruxelles-une-zone-20-avec-pietons-et-cyclistes-prioritaires> on 1 May 2020.

L'Express, 'Résultats des élections législatives 2017 Loiret', accessed at <https://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/politique/elections/legislatives-2017/resultats-elections/departement-loiret-45.html> on 14 April 2020.

L'Express, 'Résultats des élections législatives 2017 Oise', accessed at <https://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/politique/elections/legislatives-2017/resultats-elections/departement-oise-60.html> on 14 April 2020.

L'Express, 'Résultats des élections législatives 2017 Paris', accessed at <https://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/politique/elections/legislatives-2017/resultats-elections/departement-paris-75.html> on 14 April 2020.

L'Express, 'Résultats des élections législatives 2017 Seine-et-Marne', accessed at <https://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/politique/elections/legislatives-2017/resultats-elections/departement-seine-et-marne-77.html> on 14 April 2020.



Meister, M., 'Paryż już nie dla paryżan. Kłopoty zbyt kosmopolitycznego miasta' (Paris Is No Longer for Parisians. Problems of a Too-Cosmopolitan City), *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 12 October 2019, accessed at <http://wyborcza.pl/naszaeuropa/7,168189,25298647,paryz-juz-nie-dla-paryzan-klopoty-zbyt-kosmopolitycznego-miasta.html> on 15 October 2019.

OECD, 'Affordable Housing Database', accessed at <http://www.oecd.org/social/affordable-housing-database/> on 5 April 2020.

Poland, Warsaw Statistical Office, 'Regional accounts', accessed at <https://warszawa.stat.gov.pl/en/information-about-voivodship/capital-of-voivodship/regional-accounts/> on 15 October 2019.

Poland, Warsaw Statistical Office, *Statistical Yearbook of Warsaw* (2019).

PwC, *Raport o stanie polskich metropolii: Warszawa* [Report on the State of the Polish Metropolis: Warsaw] (Warsaw, 2019).

Steinmüller, M., 'Stadt, Land und eine West-Ost-Linie', *ORF.at*, 22 May 2016, accessed at <https://orf.at/v2/stories/2340510/2340508/> on 7 October 2019.

Strochlic, N. and Champine, R., 'How Some Cities "Flattened the Curve" During the 1918 Flu Pandemic', *National Geographic*, 27 March 2020, accessed at <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/2020/03/how-cities-flattened-curve-1918-spanish-flu-pandemic-coronavirus/> on 18 August 2020.

Sweden, Valmyndigheten [Electoral Authority], 'Val till riksdagen – Röster' [Elections to the Riksdag – Votes], accessed at <https://data.val.se/val/val2018/slutresultat/R/rike/index.html> on 7 October 2019.

Tait, R., "'I'm a Stranger in My Own City": Prague Takes on Airbnb to Dam Flood of Tourists", *The Guardian*, 1 February 2020, accessed at <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/feb/01/overwhelmed-prague-tries-to-limit-airbnb-to-curb-tourism> on 1 May 2020.

The Local, 'Centre-Right Alliance and Green Party to Lead Stockholm Council', 12 October 2018, accessed at <https://www.thelocal.se/20181012/centre-right-alliance-and-green-party-to-work-together-in-stockholm-council> on 10 May 2020.

Toderian, B. (@BrentToderian), Twitter post, 16 April 2020, 7.46 pm, accessed at <https://twitter.com/BrentToderian/status/1250858042637180928> on 16 April 2020.

UN Habitat, *World Cities Report 2016: Urbanization and Development – Emerging Futures* (2016).



URBACT, 'Cities Implementing the Right to Housing', 9 March 2020, accessed at <https://urbact.eu/cities-implementing-right-housing> on 23 April 2020.

World Economic Forum, *Making Affordable Housing a Reality in Cities* (June 2019), accessed at http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Making_Affordable_Housing_A_Reality_In_Cities_report.pdf on 9 May 2020.

Zalan, E., 'Central Europe Mayors Join in Direct EU Funds Plea', *EUobserver*, 13 February 2020, accessed at <https://euobserver.com/political/147435> on 3 March 2020.

Zielonka, J., *Is the EU Doomed?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014).



About the author

Konrad Niklewicz, Ph.D., is currently heading the City of Warsaw Marketing Department. Formerly director of the Civic Institute, he was a member of the European Commission's High-Level Expert Group on fake news. His research focuses on social affairs and communication. The author of many papers (including *Weeding Out Fake News: An Approach to Social Media Regulation*, Martens Centre, Brussels, 2017), he has served as undersecretary of state at the Ministry of Regional Development and as secretary to the Polish Prime Minister's Advisory Council. He has also been a visiting lecturer at the University of Warsaw. Before joining the public sector, Konrad Niklewicz worked as an editor and the Brussels correspondent for *Gazeta Wyborcza*.



Credits

The Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies is the political foundation and think tank of the European People's Party (EPP), dedicated to the promotion of Christian Democrat, conservative and like-minded political values.

Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies
Rue du Commerce 20
Brussels, BE 1000

For more information please visit: www.martenscentre.eu

Layout and cover design: Gëzim Lezha, Visual Communications Assistant, Martens Centre

External editing: Communicative English bvba

Typesetting: Victoria Agency

Printed in Belgium by Puntgaaf, Kortrijk.

This publication receives funding from the European Parliament.

© 2020 Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies

The European Parliament and the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies assume no responsibility for facts or opinions expressed in this publication or their subsequent use.

Sole responsibility lies with the author of this publication.

