

EU Policy Agenda for Cities

A framework to deliver accessible, affordable, and sustainable urban mobility

The POLIS network represents a diverse membership, with cities and regions from across the EU, of different sizes and economic capacities, and different political backgrounds. Still, POLIS members agree on the **essential role of cities in creating local impact and ensuring Europe remains agile and united in a rapidly changing global landscape**. The EU Policy Agenda for Cities should provide the framework for cities to fulfil their role as the level of government that is closest to its citizens and businesses. The new EU Policy Agenda for Cities is therefore very welcome and seen as an opportunity to highlight cities' key role in making European ambitions real.

Cities (big and small) implementing urban mobility policies are part of a local ecosystem that stretches beyond city borders (cf. chapter 1). They are instrumental in the EU's transition to a more competitive, innovative, green, and digital economy (chapter 2) and in implementing the related EU policies (chapter 3). To that end, they need capable and skilled staff (chapter 4), as well as access to funding (chapter 5). The urban mobility topic also requires and deserves a specific, tailored, and dedicated approach (see section 6) as part of the comprehensive urban territorial agenda.

This new Policy Agenda for Cities presents an opportunity for cities to be recognised as **invaluable and crucial partners in European governance**, not least for the implementation of the EU's Smart and Sustainable Mobility Strategy. Cities and regions implement no less than 70% of all European policies, and in the field of transport are of ever-growing importance, being essential components of the TEN-T (urban nodes), managers of public space, as well as procurers, regulators, and providers of mobility services.

As the main implementing bodies, municipalities and regions connected to urban governance, therefore deserve a seat at the table. Cities and their representative networks should be provided with better opportunities to participate in expert groups of the European Commission and be taken into consideration more when drafting new EU legislation. It would be welcome for DG REGIO to lead by example through a dedicated Cities Directorate and urban teams that ensure coherent EU-level support across different DGs.

Proposed Actions:

- Cities and regions are formally recognised in the EU policy definition and implementation;
- DG REGIO establishes a cities' directorate, and a specific Urban Mobility team is set up within DG MOVE.

1. Resilience supported by the entire urban governance system

The EU Policy Agenda for Cities will not only be about cities. Different public sector organisations surrounding urban issues should be involved.

We want resilient cities. We have to prepare our cities and regions for and protect their mobility systems from an increase in disruptive and systemic shocks, such as the adverse impacts of climate change (flooding, heatwaves, etc.), or other crises such as pandemics, cyber-attacks, and terrorism. Resilient multi-modal urban mobility systems require reinforced multilevel governance. **Effective alignment of responsibilities and resources across all levels of government, while respecting their respective roles and responsibilities, is essential.**

This should be accompanied by a stronger partnership principle for all strategic investments and reforms. This is particularly relevant in the context of the ongoing preparations and future negotiations for the next multi-annual financial framework. **The partnership principle is the tool to mobilise the entire ecosystem of economic and social stakeholders together with governments at every level.** 432 Urban Nodes on the TEN-T are already optimising this approach, which, however, is currently not captured under the partnership principle. This should be further developed and supported in the Urban Agenda.

Proposed Actions:

- Include resilience as a key factor in the EU Policy Agenda for Cities, with Urban Mobility as a specific sectoral policy field;
- Alignment of responsibilities within the EU Policy Agenda for Cities, accompanied by a stronger partnership principle and supporting the implementation of the TEN-T Regulation's Urban Nodes requirements.

2. Local competitiveness supporting EU competitiveness

POLIS understands and welcomes the renewed interest in **competitiveness** for Europe. However, EU instruments that aim to improve competitiveness require **co-creation and**



coordination with the local and regional public sector. As **major procurers**, European cities and regions make a real difference for many homegrown industries and service providers. There are plenty of public investment needs in automotive, infrastructure, and energy applications for transport. Cities and regions are committed to developing agile regulatory frameworks that enhance policy-responsive innovation, establish substantial, results-driven and innovative public procurement mechanisms, and enable private sector innovation.

At the local level, collaboration in the field of mobility takes place through knowledge hubs, campuses, and regulatory sandboxes. These ecosystems facilitate cooperation among government, businesses, knowledge institutions, and society, ranging from practice-oriented education to scientific research, and deployment in partnership with the business community. This role should also be clearly outlined in the EU Policy Agenda, and **the EU should ensure that the upcoming 'EU Competitiveness Fund' not only has a strong local and regional approach but also remains accessible to cities and regions of all sizes.** Concrete funding opportunities ('calls') in the Competitiveness Fund should be linked to concrete local challenges, such as urban mobility.

Proposed Actions:

- The EU Policy Agenda for Cities should be mainstreamed in the EU Competitiveness Fund;
- Cities and regions are to be eligible for the Competitiveness Fund;
- Urban Mobility is recognised as a specific thematic field in the Competitiveness Fund and its instruments.

3. Supporting compliance

The Urban Agenda timeline coincides with **key milestones in EU legislation affecting urban mobility**, such as the TEN-T regulation, AFIR, the ITS-Directive etc. **The Urban Agenda should provide instruments that help cities and regions with the implementation of these important and impactful policies**, through financing, technical assistance, monitoring, and evaluation. The Urban Agenda can provide support for political, organisational, and practical challenges related to the implementation of this legislation and can inform updates of the legislation in question.

POLIS members stand firm in their commitment to implement the EU acquis in the mobility domain: they lead by example, capitalising on our network for peer support, fast adoption of best practices and scaling new solutions. We focus in particular on accelerating deployment within the following EU policy fields:



- **TEN-T Urban Nodes:** help our members achieve the requirements for Urban Nodes concerning SUMP, and intermodal infrastructures for passengers and freight;
- **Zero Emission/Zero Pollution:** support the acceleration to clean mobility by reaching the targets set under the Fit-for-55 legislation, the Alternative Fuel Infrastructure Regulation, and the Clean Vehicles Directive;
- **Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) and Data:** implement the revised ITS Directive and associated Delegated Regulations, support CCAM deployment, and enhance the digital skills of transport authorities;
- **Social Climate Fund:** ensure local and regional authorities' involvement in the development and funding of efficient, effective, and structural measures to curb transport poverty;
- **European Cycling Declaration:** turn the ambition of the declaration into action and secure the necessary funds for cities and regions to accelerate the roll-out of dedicated cycling policies and infrastructure.

Local authorities should always be able to continue carrying out their work and tasks towards compliance with the EU legislation, even when the national government cannot meet the legislative requirements or when national interests do not align with EU or local needs.

Proposed action:

- The creation of a dedicated TSI (Technical Support Instrument) for cities, with a focus on compliance with EU legislation, including a substantial focus on Urban Mobility.

4. Capable professionals to master and deploy innovation

Urban Mobility is a key sector for innovation: POLIS cities and regions embrace innovations that are policy-responsive and help to address the aforementioned challenges and ambitions. This requires the active **governance of innovation** to make it policy-responsive, but also the **innovation of governance** frameworks to make them more agile and enabling for new solutions.

The urban mobility transition that cities and regions have put in motion requires **new skills and a high number of informed and trained staff**. The war on talent rages in the public and private sectors. There are great examples of how people working in 'old' industries are reskilled and find a future in new mobility industries. Local and regional

authorities are close to people, companies, schools, and universities: they can act as crucial agents of change. The Policy Agenda for Cities should address the creation of these skills and capacities. Innovation can only be secured if we have the hands to work with it.

Peer learning is very important for cities, given that many share similar challenges. They use EU money more efficiently if they can work together on solutions and learn from each other's best practices. Capacity building must be responsive, tailored, and embedded in cities' actual projects. The **Urban Innovative Actions** can be an essential building block for this.

Proposed actions:

- A unified, accessible EU capacity-building framework, recognising sectoral specificities, such as those for urban mobility;
- Support for staff recruitment and training;
- Enhanced opportunities for peer learning and knowledge exchange, e.g. embedded in a capacity-building strand within the successor of the European Urban Initiative, or within trusted communities like CIVITAS.

5. Funding and financing: Providing cities with effective access to EU and private funding to improve urban mobility

The future EU Policy Agenda for Cities should **ensure that cities are involved in the design and implementation of funding programmes from the start**. Moreover, it should make sure that the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) provides cities of all sizes with effective access to funds. As primary recipients and implementers of EU policy and laws, **direct access to EU funding for cities and regions needs to be reinforced so that they can meet the objectives of the European Green Deal and the Clean Industrial Deal**.

Furthermore, **meaningful consultation processes and the involvement of local-level stakeholders should be a non-negotiable condition** for the EU's approval of any national plans on the use of EU funds. Every 'Single National Plan' should have a **mandatory urban chapter**. Future R&I partnerships and Joint Undertakings should include relevant city-level activities and, when appropriate, include local and regional stakeholders in their governance. **Continued access to European funding programmes**, in general, will empower cities and regions to foster more effective, competitive economic development and invest in innovation infrastructure, specifically for sectors with a high impact on decarbonisation, digitalisation and competitiveness, such as urban mobility.

Cities are key partners in European projects and can provide sites for experimentation and place-based innovation tailored to local needs. Their role should not be underestimated or neglected. Not only do **cities need to remain key partners in European funding programmes**, but this agenda should also be an opportunity to ensure that submission and reporting procedures during the lifetime of an EU project remain accessible to all cities. Harmonising and streamlining reporting requirements to reduce the administrative burden and improve data accessibility needs to be encouraged. This is particularly true for small and medium-sized cities, which often have a more limited capacity to implement EU projects.

Given the pressing nature of urban issues, we expect that the new Agenda will be put into operation through a **dedicated funding programme for cities, earmarking of urban funding in other EU funding instruments, and a facility to increase private funding for urban innovation**. The creation of a dedicated urban investment platform at the European level would be a welcome tool to strengthen and facilitate public investments. The urban mobility sector is ready for this approach.

On another note, it is key that the new EU Policy Agenda for Cities highlights the key role of supporting investment instruments provided by the European Investment Bank, such as ELENA, currently used for increasing the bankability of transport projects. These kinds of instruments can help to improve investment projects.

Proposed Actions:

- Include mandatory specific chapters in the Single National Plans for Urban and Urban Mobility issues, designed in co-operation and co-decision with local and regional authorities;
- Include relevant city-level activities in future R&I partnerships and Joint Undertakings;
- Secure cities and regions as eligible partners in R&I projects;
- Create an Urban Investment Platform to attract private investors;
- Formally recognise cities and regions in EU policy definition and implementation;
- Provide enhanced Technical Assistance for financing, such as ELENA.

6. Expert communities working within a comprehensive urban agenda

Now that a new phase in EU policy delivery is taking shape, and implementation has become the next frontier, **we are ready to co-design tailored financial and technical support mechanisms to make the transition happen and to develop and embrace**

adequate solutions through new ways of public-private cooperation. We do that **embedded in a comprehensive, holistic vision for Europe's cities, but with the strong conviction that for our topic, we need sector-specific, tailored solutions, built on urban mobility expertise.** This can be supported by a general transition approach, but cannot be fully replaced by it. We would like to highlight that the urban mobility sector needs specific recognition, treatment, and 'space' in the policy agenda for cities. The POLIS network is a partner for EU institutions to further develop and strengthen this community. We continue to work with public and private sector stakeholders and changemakers from research through innovation to market.

Proposed Action:

- EU Policy agenda for cities implemented by a community that recognises specific, tailored, and dedicated expert topics like urban mobility as part of the comprehensive urban territorial agenda.