



PRESS RELEASE - 12 June 2020 - BRUSSELS

Mayors call for a new pact between the EU and cities

“If we get it right in cities, we will get it right for Europe”

Cities want to play an active role in Europe’s recovery after the corona pandemic. Mayors of major European cities offered a ‘new pact between the EU and city leadership’ to overcome the impacts of the crisis. In meetings with the European Commission’s Executive Vice President Frans Timmermans and Commissioners Paolo Gentiloni and Johannes Hahn on Friday, the mayors proposed to involve city governments more in the EU recovery programmes and demanded direct access for cities to European funding.

“Cities have been the hardest hit by the crisis”, the mayors formulate in a joint statement of the network Eurocities. Most EU recovery measures, though, were directed to member states. The mayors presented EU budget Commissioner Johannes Hahn with suggestions to “ensure that EU funding and finance are channelled to where it is most needed, cities.”

Johannes Hahn:

“The European Commission’s ambitious proposal for a revamped EU budget and the recovery plan can help the EU to tackle the pandemic and power the economic recovery. Without a doubt the success depends on the implementation at national and, in particular, at local level. Cities and local authorities are best placed to deliver this recovery. They are closer to the citizens, they know the problems and the solutions. It was great to discuss these issues today with Eurocities. I count on their support to push for a quick adoption and implementation of the EU budget and the recovery plan. And I look forward to continuing our discussion and the excellent co-operation.”

The mayors see the need “to close the gap of the last ten years of underinvestment at local level” and to make “substantial investment in local support for small and medium enterprises, employment, upskilling and reskilling”. In a meeting with Paolo Gentiloni, European Commissioner for economy, they urged a “strong urban focus” of the proposed InvestEU programme.

Paolo Gentiloni:

“In response to this unprecedented crisis, the European Commission has put forward a recovery plan unprecedented in its size and ambition. After this terrible pandemic, we have a unique opportunity not only to relaunch, but to rethink our economies: to accelerate the green and digital transitions; promote social and territorial cohesion; invest in both inclusion and innovation. We can only make a success of this

opportunity and make the most of this massive investment, if we work hand in hand with cities and towns across Europe.”

Cities are key for a green transition, the mayors emphasised in a meeting with Frans Timmermans, Executive Vice President of the European Commission for the European Green Deal. The mayors proposed a closer cooperation between the EU and cities: “We are the ideal partners for the EU to succeed in achieving the twin goal of digital transformation and climate neutrality.”

Frans Timmermans:

“Most people live in urban areas and so cities are key for a green transition towards a climate-neutral Europe. Cities often take the lead in setting climate targets. Therefore, I count cities as our natural allies to make the green deal a reality in Europe.”

“The crisis is putting the European project to the test”, the mayors write in their statement: “We have seen the instant reflex to respond with national measures, even closing borders. A structured and meaningful involvement of cities can support European unity and solidarity and prevent the relapse into national thinking. We call for a new pact between the EU and city leadership - if we get it right in cities, we will get it right for Europe.”

The president of the European Parliament, David Sassoli, welcomed the proposed new pact. “Cities have proved to be the backbone of our union,” Sassoli said in a video statement for the meeting on Friday. In the corona crisis, cities had “promoted practical initiatives to show solidarity and, above all, supporting the most vulnerable people,” he said - and, addressing the mayors directly: “I will work alongside you so that this new pact allows us to build, together, the future of the new Europe.”

The cities represented in the meetings with the commissioners were Barcelona, Birmingham, Espoo, Malmo, Mannheim, Florence, Ghent, Leipzig, Ljubljana, Nantes, Porto, Rotterdam, Stockholm, Tallinn, Vienna and Warsaw. The meetings have been hosted by the network Eurocities. representing over 140 of Europe's largest cities and over 45 partner cities, which between them govern 130 million citizens across 39 European countries.

[ENDS]

Notes to Editors

1. The mayors' statement, 'An EU recovery powered by cities' can be accessed here: <https://bit.ly/37q4nMY>
2. EUROCITIES is the political platform for major European cities www.eurocities.eu

Media contact:

Alex Godson: +32 495 298 594 // alex.godson@eurocities.eu