



## Mayors' summit calls for greater involvement of cities in EU policy-making and European democracy

- » The final declaration calls for greater involvement by local authorities in European decision-making processes and new EU governance instruments designed specifically for cities
- » The summit, held within the framework of the Smart City World Congress 2023, brought together some thirty political representatives of the main European capitals and other cities in the Eurocities network.

The European Mayors' Summit 'Strengthening Democracy and the Role of Cities in the European Union' was held over two days, coinciding with the Smart City World Congress 2023.

Organised jointly by the city of Barcelona and the Eurocities network, and with the support of the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation, the summit brought together some thirty representatives of the main European capitals and other cities in the Eurocities network. Participants included the mayors of Athens, Paris, Ghent, Bilbao, Malaga, Murcia, Milan, Oulu, Tallinn and Tirana, and deputy mayors and councillors from Bologna, Brussels, Budapest, Helsinki, Oporto, Sant Boi, Turin and Vienna. The summit is part of Barcelona's European Capital of Democracy events.

The plenary session, held at the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, was chaired by mayor of Barcelona Jaume Collboni, accompanied by the Eurocities secretary general André Sobczak. The municipal representatives agreed on the objective of strengthening institutional relations between cities and the European Commission and European Parliament, reviewing existing collaborations and defining new EU governance instruments specifically designed for cities.

The summit closed with the joint signing of the **Declaration of European Cities for European Policy-Making and Democracy** which is addressed to the European Council and EU member states. The text, presented within the framework of the Smart City World Congress 2023 at the Fira de Barcelona, sets out the fundamental role of cities in effectively tackling major global challenges. The declaration stresses the need to increase the visibility, recognition and active participation of local authorities in European decision-making processes, ensuring that cities play a key role in the shaping and application of European policies.

During the presentation, mayor of Barcelona Jaume Collboni said, "city-regions that are growing in terms of population, economic activity and becoming more attractive both culturally and socially" were the driving force within Europe. In this context, the EU "needs to be more in touch with the public through cities, as they are the most accessible and efficient administrative bodies when it comes to channelling policies that have a direct impact". The mayor also said that the summit was an opportunity to reaffirm Barcelona's commitment "to the defence of democracy, rights and freedoms, social justice and the rule of law".



“Cities are essential allies in the future of the European project,” said André Sobczak, Eurocities Secretary General. “In recent years, we have taken action to tackle major challenges, supporting local people affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, and offering jobs, shelter and solidarity to refugees fleeing Russian’s war in Ukraine. We are also crucial to achieving the climate neutral objectives of the European Green Deal.

“As momentum builds towards next year’s European elections, the declaration signed by European mayors at today’s summit reaffirms cities’ commitment to work with our partners at EU level to strengthen European democracy, defend our common values and build a prosperous urban future. It also shows that cities have a key role to play in the design and implementation of EU policy, and in bridging the gap between the EU and local communities.”

The Declaration is a document open to new accessions and has so far been signed by Athens, Barcelona, Bilbao, Bologna, Brussels, Budapest, Espoo, Ghent, Helsinki, Malaga, Milan, Murcia, Oulu, Paris, Porto, Rome, Rotterdam, Sant Boi, Tallinn, Tirana, Turin and Vienna.

The document, structured around five points, calls on the governments of EU member states and EU institutions to:

- Strengthen democracy, promote decentralisation, guarantee local self-governance and the effective application of the principle of subsidiarity as defined in the Treaty on European Union, and at the same time strengthen partnership with local governments.
- Promote fiscal decentralisation and local financial sustainability, which is fundamental for empowering city governments.
- Boost the urban dimension of EU policies. The rapid development and growing importance of cities requires an approach to EU urban policies that involves the participation of cities, which is not as yet the case.
- Involve cities in the presidencies of the EU and in the make-up of the Council. The inclusion of cities in the design and application of political decision-making and policy priorities will not only improve effectiveness but will also strengthen democratic accountability.
- Reform the European Committee of the Regions to ensure greater participation by municipal and metropolitan administrations.

The results of the Mayors’ Summit have been forwarded to the Spanish presidency of the European Union, and it is expected that the Spanish government will take this declaration to the European Council in December.



## **The cities shaping Europe: the road to a strong urban future**

The European Mayors' Summit is taking place at a crucial time for cities throughout Europe. It is one of the strategic events that have been established to show that local leaders are essential allies in the future of the European project, at this key moment when European elections are due to be held next year.

The meeting in Barcelona was held in parallel to the Cities' Social Summit in Lyon. The two meetings follow on from a series of events launched in October, when Eurocities convened a meeting in the European Parliament with city leaders, MEPs and the upcoming Belgian presidency of the EU to set out and discuss shared challenges. At the meeting, held with the URBAN Intergroup of the European Parliament, the cities highlighted the importance of the European Green Deal, and called for greater recognition of the urban agenda in EU objectives.

Looking ahead, these key political discussions will complement Eurocities' own electoral campaign, to be launched at the end of 2023, and in January 2024, a high-level event will be held in Brussels on the future of urban policy, organised by the upcoming Belgian presidency of the EU. The meeting will be an opportunity to continue working on the key recommendations for European institutions from local city and metropolitan area leaders.

**[See the full text of the Declaration here](#)**