



EUROCITIES DECLARATION ON CITIZENS ENGAGEMENT

We, EUROCITIES mayors, are firm believers in European cooperation. We have, together with all levels of government in the EU, a challenge to retain trust, legitimacy and relevance towards our citizens. There is an increasing mismatch between people's expectations and what can be done to tackle our most pressing challenges, causing an expanding distance between political institutions and citizens.

City leaders can provide a critical link with citizens. We know from our everyday experience that democracy requires participation, innovation and imagination. Cities have been experimenting and innovating with new forms of participatory democracy, to support traditional representative democracy. Cities can and must lead the way towards a more citizen focused European society. Representative democracy must be enhanced with participative mechanisms to respond to pressing public concerns such as climate change, social cohesion, housing and employment.

Our campaign 'Cities4Europe - Europe for citizens' promotes a Europe where people come first. This requires more mutual trust, active participation and a constant dialogue. It is essential to better involve citizens in decision making and implementation at all levels of government, and to reinforce the important role that local governments should play in a multilevel governance structure.

We, mayors and leaders of EUROCITIES, therefore commit to strengthening citizens engagement by:

- » **involving our citizens in a dialogue about our common future**
Continuously working closely with citizens and civil society is key to addressing our problems and to reinforcing trust in and ownership of public policies. We already see a strong civic and societal engagement locally, and our 'Cities4Europe - Europe for citizens' campaign showed how working directly with citizens can help in developing better urban and European solutions.
- » **inspiring all levels of government to build societies where people come first**
As the level of government closest to citizens, cities are testing new ways of working with them, including new forms of deliberative democracy. With national governments and the European Union in need of better tools for listening to and engaging with its citizens, cities must be at the forefront of participatory approaches and inspire all levels of government.
- » **making a positive impact on the way decisions are taken in Europe**
Working with cities is an opportunity for Europe to reconnect with its citizens and, therefore, to successfully tackle today's challenges. To make the most of our opportunities, we need to work together across all levels of government and with our citizens.

As local authorities, we are committed to developing a more positive future for Europe, and to providing a positive contribution towards the construction of a more citizen focused Europe.

