

# Cohesion policy – the driving force in implementing the EU agenda for cities

2026/2027(INI) - 20/10/2026 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 601 votes to 20, with 36 abstentions, a resolution on cohesion policy, the driving force in implementing the EU agenda for cities.

The inhabitants of cities and other urban areas represent around three quarters of the EU's population and local authorities are responsible for implementing approximately 70% of EU legislation.

## *Cities, key players in the EU and pillars of cohesion policy*

Cities and functional urban areas are at the forefront of addressing the EU's main challenges. Members therefore believe they must **participate** fully and structurally not only in the implementation but also in the co-creation of European policies. They require a **more robust European framework** that reflects the interconnected nature of urban challenges.

Given that local and regional authorities are best placed to know territorial needs, Members called for them to be fully **involved in determining investment priorities** and in designing cohesion policy-funded programmes and the national and regional partnership plans 2028-2034.

The resolution underlined that economic, social, and territorial cohesion is **a key horizontal component of sustainable urban development**. It stressed the need to reduce social, gender, and health inequalities, as well as regional disparities, and to provide high-quality and accessible public services. Furthermore, European cities are on the front line of the **climate crisis** and are facing more frequent and extreme heatwaves. The Commission is called upon to promote **urban greening plans**, including the restoration of trees and nature, climate change resilience, and sustainable planning, and to include them among the priorities of the Union's urban agenda.

The resolution also emphasised the role of cities in improving **public safety** and crisis preparedness and called for effective urban security policies. It requests that investments in urban civil preparedness be eligible under cohesion policy instruments. A new EU drugs strategy is also needed to strengthen and enhance security in cities.

Members stressed that cohesion policy can make a significant contribution to addressing **housing** challenges in cities by supporting investment in sustainable housing. The Commission, Member States, and local authorities are urged to explore the establishment of **dedicated financing mechanisms** and public-private partnerships to increase the supply of affordable, quality housing. The principle of the '**right to stay**' in cities and demographic decline also necessitate integrated territorial policies to support young families, promote active ageing, talent retention, intergenerational solidarity and the attraction of skilled workers from urban and peri-urban areas.

Parliament therefore called for the **promotion of specific and appropriate investments** in the following areas:

- integrated, smart and sustainable **transport** and mobility systems, including technologically neutral safe and accessible public transport, cycling infrastructure, walking networks, multimodal transport hubs, and transport services including those for people with disabilities;

- integrated and sustainable **urban water management** and smart monitoring systems, and flood and drought prevention plans;
- measures in cities to improve **environmental quality**, including by addressing human exposure in urban environments;
- **education**, affordable childcare, schools, child-friendly public spaces and after-school services;
- **healthcare**, mental health services, healthcare infrastructure, healthy and age-friendly urban planning and equitable access to primary healthcare;
- **social care**, inclusive and accessible community-based public services, social inclusion initiatives, gender equality and empowerment of women-related services, ensuring equal access for people with disabilities and reduced mobility, and housing;
- active **employment** policies; upskilling, reskilling and training.

### ***Future challenges: an EU agenda that responds to the needs of cities***

Parliament called on the Commission and the to strengthen the **partnership** principle, multilevel governance and the role of the place-based approach in future EU policy, ensuring a **structured role** for local and regional authorities and the involvement of stakeholders active in urban areas in shaping, scheduling and implementing EU policies.

The resolution stressed the need to **strengthen the administrative capacity of cities and to simplify access to EU funding**. Moreover, the future legislative framework should provide clear provisions on the support available to cities including the EU Facility. It should also provide for effective access to relevant instruments and the inclusion of targeted simplification measures for small municipalities.

Members consider that the future EU agenda for cities should become a **strategic political framework** guiding the EU's urban dimension. They called for a **permanent European debate** on the future of urban and territorial development models and urged the Commission to develop, in close collaboration with cities and networks of cities, the future **EU Cities platform** as a genuine, user-friendly and innovative EU one-stop shop.

Parliament stressed that the **future MFF** must ensure adequate, predictable and ring-fenced resources for sustainable urban development, based on economic and social criteria. It supports increasing the minimum allocation, other than for technical assistance, for integrated territorial and sustainable urban development strategies under the ERDF post-2027 **from the current 8% to 13%**. It stressed the need to provide adequate support to disadvantaged areas.