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Synopsis report on the results of the Communication on the EU Agenda for Cities consultation activities, accompanying the document "Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - An EU Agenda for Cities: Driving Growth and Prosperity"

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COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT
STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION - SYNOPSIS REPORT

**Synopsis report on the results of the Communication on the EU Agenda for Cities
consultation activities**

Accompanying the document

**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

An EU Agenda for Cities: Driving Growth and Prosperity

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1. Consultation strategy and overview of all consultation activities

This staff working document presents a summary of the call for evidence and other consultation activities related to the EU Agenda for Cities, as set out in the consultation strategy for the initiative. It also provides an overview of bilateral meetings convened between the European Commission and external stakeholders. Stakeholders also submitted position papers, reports and documents directly to the European Commission.

The consultation period lasted from 13 January to 15 October 2025, and the call for evidence was carried out from 14 April to 26 May 2025, via the ‘Have your say’ website of the European Commission in all official EU languages. As input into the preparation of the EU Agenda for Cities, the consultations aimed at gathering information and feedback from relevant stakeholders representing national, regional and local authorities, individual EU citizens, non-governmental sectoral and umbrella organisations, research and innovation policy community, international organisations, and public and private financial institutions. Targeted consultation activities were also carried out with the competent authorities of the EU Member States responsible for urban development e.g. through different intergovernmental meetings of the Urban Development Group and Directors-General for Urban Matters, as well as with non-governmental organisations, international organisations and associations (e.g. ICLEI, Eurocities, Energy Cities etc.). In March-April 2025, the European Commission carried out a Eurobarometer survey titled ‘Public opinion on urban challenges and investment in cities’ to gather evidence from the opinions of city dwellers to feed the EU Agenda for Cities. In addition, an Implementation dialogue was held with mayors and deputy mayors on 24 June 2025 as well as a high-level stakeholder dialogue on 18 June 2025 as part of the 6th edition of the Cities Forum.

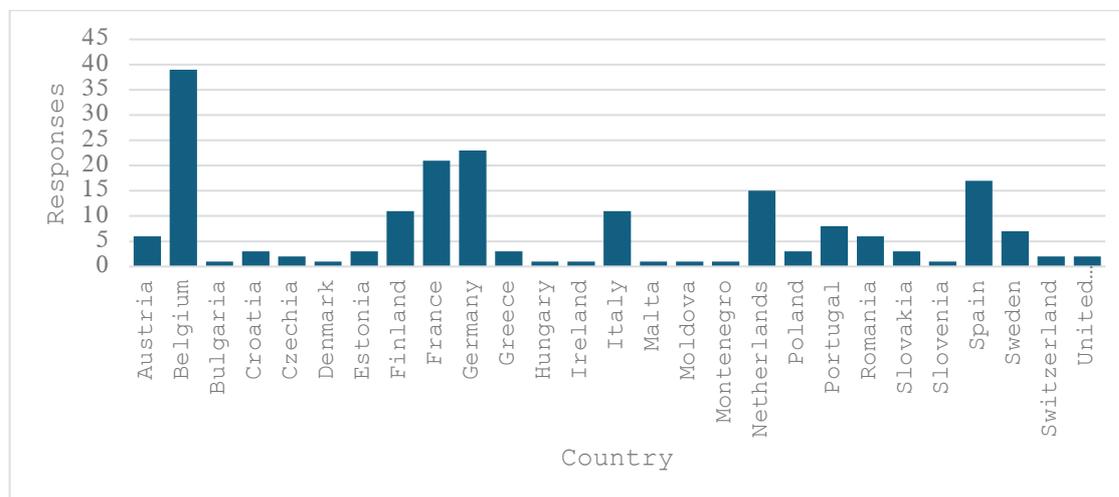
The report to the European Parliament and Council on the implementation of the European Urban Initiative in 2022-2024, and other reports related to the support of the European Union to local authorities were also taken into consideration. Relevant input from the other EU institutions and bodies was also considered. This included Council Conclusions, European Parliament reports, and opinions of the European Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee.

2. Feedback to the stakeholder consultation process

2.1. Call for evidence

A total of 193 responses were received from 27 countries, among which 23 EU Member States and 4 non-EU countries (Moldova, Montenegro, Switzerland and United-Kingdom). Data were reviewed and processed in line with the Better Regulation Toolbox. Concerning the country of origin of the respondents, 39 respondents indicated Belgium, followed by Germany (23), France (21), Spain (17) and the Netherlands (15) (Figure 1). Figures 2 and 3 below provide information about all respondents by the type of stakeholder represented and the scope of public authorities represented.

Figure 1. Number of replies to the call for evidence by country



Public authorities provided approximately 39% of the replies; non-governmental organisations another 16%; EU citizens 12%, business associations 7%; companies/business organisations 5%; academic and research institutions 3%; environmental organisations 2% and consumer organisations 1%. Approximately 17% of respondents self-identified as other (e.g. urban initiatives from the EU, city associations or networks, thematic partnerships of the Urban Agenda for the EU, associations of urban planners).

For stakeholders identifying as a public authority, the majority were local authorities (73%) and regional authorities (16%). National authorities represented 9% of the contributions, together with international organisations (1%).

Figure 2. Responses to the call for evidence by type of stakeholder

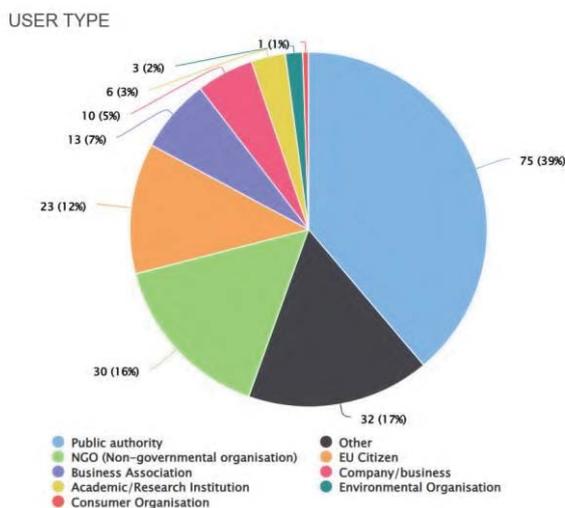
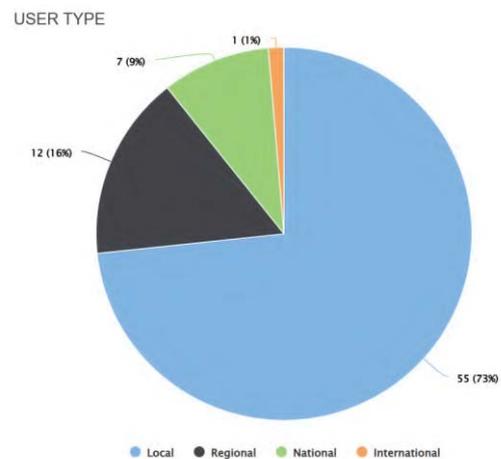


Figure 3. Scope of the public authorities' responses to the call for evidence



For stakeholders identifying as an organisation (approximately 31% of the responses, all categories excluding EU citizens), the majority were large-sized (44%) and small-sized organisations (28%). Medium-sized organisations made up 15% of the responses and 12% came from micro-organisations.

A total of 87 documents (e.g. position papers) were submitted as part of the call for evidence to the European Commission. There were no discarded feedback responses to the call for evidence, and the feedback received was thus in line with the content of the call for evidence. This summary covers the complete set of papers received, coming from a range of the above-described stakeholders from EU Member States and the stakeholders with a pan-EU focus. Contributions submitted to the call for evidence are published on the Have your say portal¹. Position papers were analysed in alignment with the content of the call for evidence. It concerns EU support for administrative capacity and financing needs of cities and how to liaise with cities to learn from their experience of implementing EU policies and legislation, as well as from their concerns about future EU proposals with the goal of avoiding the creation of contradictory effects on the ground.

2.2. Targeted consultations

During the consultation process, the European Commission – Executive Vice-President Fitto and the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy - engaged with various stakeholders in order to carry out dialogues and consultation meetings, as well as to participate in relevant events to collect the views of stakeholders for the EU Agenda for Cities.

¹ Contributions received in the context of the call for evidence published on the 'Have Your Say' web portal cannot be regarded as the official position of the Commission and its services and thus does not bind the Commission nor that the contributions can be considered as a representative sample of the EU population.

Further information is provided below on the consultation meetings of the Directorate-General for Regional Policy forming part of the consultation strategy.

Meeting	Main target group/participants	Timing
Consultation meeting	Board of Energy cities	5 February 2025
Consultation meeting	Brussels Capital Region (BE)	7 February 2025
Participation in the meeting organised by the EUKN and the Polish Presidency of the European Council	Roundtable convened between the EUKN, the Polish Presidency of the European Council and representatives from Member States	18 February 2025
Participation in the event organised by the German Association for Housing, Urban and Spatial Development and the Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Affairs	Local and regional authorities, representatives from national ministries and other organisations, EU city networks, EU institutions	19 February 2025
Consultation meeting	Association of Polish cities Związek Miast Polskich – ZMP (PL)	20 February 2025
Consultation meeting	MetroHUB Centre at Politecnico di Milano (IT)	4 March 2025
Consultation meeting	German Association of Cities (DE)	5 March 2025
Participation in the Intelligent Cities Challenge Mayors' Business Forum	City leaders, business representatives and European policymakers	6 March 2025
Consultation meeting	Eurocities	11 March 2025
Urban Development Group meeting	Intergovernmental cooperation body on urban matters including EU Member States, umbrella associations representing local authorities, the Committee of the Regions, and relevant urban programmes from the EU	13 March 2025
Participation in the European Urban Forum	The European Urban Forum is one of the official intergroups nominated for the current European Parliamentary term convening Members of the European Parliament and wider public, including representatives from local authorities	18 March 2025
European Parliament meeting	Regional Minister for Housing and Urban Agenda of Basque Country Government (ES) and MEPs	19 March 2025
Consultation meeting	Mayors from the Metropolitan Arc of Barcelona (ES)	19 March 2025
Plenary meeting of the Expert Group on Urban Mobility	Representatives from national authorities, networks and associations of representing local authorities	25 March 2025

Consultation meeting	Delegation from the city of Oulu / the regional council of Northern Ostrobothnia / the university of Oulu (FI)	26 March 2025
Consultation meeting	ICLEI Europe mayors and deputy mayors	27 March 2025
Consultation meeting	European Office of the German County Association (DE)	4 April 2025
Consultation meeting	Representatives from the cities of Helsinki, Vantaa, Espoo and Oulu (FI)	14 April 2025
Directors-General for Urban Matters meeting	Intergovernmental cooperation body on urban matters including EU Member States, umbrella associations representing local authorities, the Committee of the Regions, and relevant urban programmes from the EU	25 April 2025
Consultation meeting	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)	25 April 2025
Consultation meeting	Representative from the German Permanent Representation to the EU (DE)	29 April 2025
Consultation meeting	German stakeholders from the urban community, urban development officers and representation of the Federal State (DE)	12 May 2025
Expert Group meeting on Territorial Cohesion and Urban Matters	Representatives from EU Member States	15 May 2025
Consultation meeting	Vice Mayor of Tallinn (EE)	28 May 2025
Urban Development Group meeting	Intergovernmental cooperation body on urban matters including EU Member States, umbrella associations representing local authorities, the Committee of the Regions, and relevant urban programmes from the EU	3 June 2025
Consultation meeting	Representatives from the cities of Helsinki, Vantaa, Espoo and Oulu (FI)	3 June 2025
Participation in the event of the Innovative Small- and Medium-sized Cities	The annual event of this network gathers local authority representatives across the EU-27	11 June 2025
Consultation meeting	Meeting with the International Association of Public Transport (UITP)	12 June 2025
Participation in the meeting organised by Lille Metropole and	Representatives from the Lille Metropolitan Region representing local authorities with the participation of the Brussels Capital Region	13 June 2025
Cities forum	Urban stakeholders from local, regional and national levels; umbrella and sectorial associations representing local authorities	17-19 June 2025
Consultation meeting	Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)	14 July 2025
Consultation meeting	Vice mayors from Delft, Rotterdam and Utrecht	16 July 2025

Consultation meeting	Representatives from ICLEI	3 September 2025
Consultation meeting	Representatives from Eurocities	8 September 2025
High level session – Shaping Europe’s urban future at the EURegions Week	Stakeholders from all levels of governments, umbrella and sectorial associations representing local authorities	14 October 2025

These consultation meetings consisted of bilateral meetings but also participation in events allowing for the collection of views and reactions from different stakeholders on the aims and scope of the EU Agenda for Cities. Stakeholders consulted included representatives from the local (either European umbrella associations or sectoral ones), regional, and national levels, as well as representatives from the European Parliament, the European Committee of the Regions and the EU financial institutions. These stakeholders also represented different geographical areas of the European Union and urban realities.

Cities forum 2025

The 6th edition of the Cities forum, held from 17 to 19 June in Kraków, Poland, was the most significant milestone in the consultation process with stakeholders. This hybrid event acted as a platform to discuss both the implementation of Cohesion policy investments in sustainable urban development and other EU policy initiatives for cities, and to collect views on the future EU Agenda for Cities. The latter was achieved through session discussions, interactive features (questions and surveys posed to the audience), as well as through an expression wall (i.e. a physical wall for posting ideas on sticky notes). Each session was designed to feed the reflection on the EU Agenda for Cities whether on thematic policy areas or operational and implementation aspects. In total, over 250 contributions were gathered, 765 participants joined the event onsite, among which 532 city representatives from 36 countries, and the online programme benefitted from 1,831 online participants’ views.

Implementation dialogue on Sustainable Urban Development of Cohesion policy

An Implementation dialogue hosted by Executive Vice-President Fitto was held on 24 June 2025² in Brussels, Belgium, with the participation of Mayors, Deputy Mayors, and other elected representatives of local authorities. Organised against the backdrop of preparing the EU Agenda for Cities, this dialogue set the ground for working more closely with local authorities on implementation bottlenecks deriving from the Cohesion policy regulatory framework in the area of sustainable urban development, and for liaising closer with cities and supporting them to deliver results.

Bilateral consultation meetings with EU Member States

A dialogue with EU Member States on the preparation of the EU Agenda for Cities was ensured through the organisation of an expert group meeting on territorial cohesion and urban matters which took place on 15 May 2025. It was complemented by three meetings of the intergovernmental cooperation bodies on urban matters that dedicated an agenda point to this subject (on 13 March, 25 April and 3 June 2025). Feedback from Member States was also collected and shared with the European Commission through a questionnaire between 16 and 26 May 2025.

Inputs by the European Parliament and EU advisory bodies

On 28 January 2025, the European Parliament REGI committee hosted an exchange of views on the Eurocities policy statement “A strong Cohesion policy promoting urban transformation”, with the Mayor of Utrecht, Sharon Dijksma.

The European Committee of the Regions adopted the opinions “Metropolitan regions and functional urban areas as socio-economic drivers of sustainable investment in the 2021-2027 Cohesion policy framework” on 14 May 2025 and “Fostering the potential and synergies of the EU Green Deal initiatives for regions and cities” on 5 July 2023.

² [Inforegio - Implementation dialogue on sustainable urban development of Cohesion policy](#)

On 17 July 2025, the European Economic and Social Committee adopted the opinion “Affordable housing: Cohesion policy, Urban Agenda and civil society - Affordable housing: What can cohesion policy, the Urban Agenda and civil society do to ensure housing is affordable for everyone?”.

Eurobarometer survey on cities

The survey results of the Eurobarometer were published on 18 June 2025³. They reveal issues about which urban populations are increasingly concerned: over half (51%) of city residents consider the ‘lack of affordable housing’ an urgent and immediate problem, followed by ‘unemployment or lack of job opportunities’ (33%), ‘lack of quality public services’ (32%) and ‘poverty or homelessness’ (32%). Significant differences emerge across areas: while affordable housing remains the top concern in both cities and towns, the urgency is more acutely felt in cities (51%) than in towns and suburbs (37%) or rural areas (28%). Conversely, rural respondents cite the lack of quality public services (36%) as their top concern. When asked about areas in need of improvement, city dwellers point to the quality of public services (42%) and safety in public spaces (36%) as priorities. Availability of affordable public transport and economic development and business opportunities are also key, each mentioned by 29% of respondents.

Position papers

The Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy has also received 8 documents (e.g. position papers) outside the call for evidence. These documents were considered as part of the overall analysis of position papers received by the Commission services in this consultation period. Further information is provided below.

Organisation and subject of the policy paper	Date
Eurocities – Working paper on the EU policy agenda for cities	21 January 2025
Local alliance – Position paper on the future Multiannual Financial Framework	28 January 2025
Bologna – Reflection paper, Towards territorial missions in ESIF post-2027	19 February 2025
Eurocities – A competitive Europe starts in cities	20 February 2025
Mayors for housing - Key Requests	1 March 2025
ICLEI’s position on the role of cities and regions’ role in the EU’s competitiveness agenda	27 March 2025
Contribution from the European Urban Initiative	23 May 2025
Eurocities – Empowering cities through Cohesion	10 July 2025

2.3. Methodology and tools used for data processing

To analyse the content received through the European Commission’s call for evidence, all text submissions and uploaded documents were first exported from the consultation platform into a structured dataset. The total number of replies was counted, and responses were classified based on whether they included additional documents. The textual content was pre-processed to ensure consistency. Three duplicates of the contributions were accounted for and removed. Respondents were then categorised by stakeholder type—such as NGOs, businesses, public authorities, and individual citizens—and their countries of origin were identified to assess geographic representation.

Additional contributions received through the consultation meetings, events and other types of inputs shared as part of the consultation process were analysed jointly with the material collected through the call for evidence process.

³ [Public opinion on urban challenges and investment in cities - June 2025 - Eurobarometer survey.](#)

A thematic analysis was conducted using language processing techniques to identify recurring topics and concerns. Frequently mentioned keywords and phrases were extracted to support the identification of dominant themes. Uploaded documents and responses were processed using text mining and artificial intelligence tools to extract relevant information. Summarisation and cross-tabulation techniques were applied to explore the main themes and messages from the contributions, depending on the different stakeholder groups and countries.

3. Analysis of inputs - Summary of the feedback received

Results of the overall consultation activities have been considered jointly for the purpose of this summary. They reveal in particular the consistency and alignment of the feedback received from each type of consultation and allow to identify four main types of considerations within the qualitative and interpretative analysis.

3.1. Feedback on EU support for cities and other urban areas in the area of administrative capacity

The feedback received emphasised the need for enhanced technical assistance and capacity-building mechanisms tailored to cities of all sizes. Smaller municipalities face challenges due to limited human resources and administrative capacity, which hinders their ability to engage with EU programmes and implement complex policies. Evidence collected provide concrete recommendations which include establishing one-stop-shops for guidance, simplifying administrative procedures, and creating long-term support structures such as help desks and peer learning platforms.

Stakeholders also called for better data access and integration to support evidence-based decision-making and monitoring of climate and sustainability goals. This connects to the upcoming EU Data Strategy that will promote the use of data spaces as decentralised, trust-based systems to facilitate secure data sharing among organisations while allowing them to maintain control over their data. There is a strong demand for training programmes, digital tools, and strategic planning support to help cities align with EU objectives and improve local governance.

During the Cities forum, in the area of administrative capacity building, cities and other urban stakeholders expressed a need for resources to enhance digital infrastructure and develop smart city technologies. Contributions also stressed the importance of training city officials and staff to improve efficiency and service delivery. Effective data collection and management systems were identified as crucial for decision-making and planning processes.

3.2. Feedback on financing needs for cities and other urban areas

A recurring theme in the feedback received is the fragmentation of current EU funding mechanisms. Urban stakeholders and networks advocated for direct, predictable, and flexible funding streams, especially for small and medium-sized municipalities. Many called for earmarking a significant portion of EU funds for city-led initiatives, expanding existing programmes, and creating dedicated urban investment platforms.

Stakeholders stressed the importance of reducing co-financing burdens, streamlining access processes, and aligning funding with local planning cycles. Innovative financing models, such as blended finance and public-private partnerships, were proposed to support long-term urban transformation. Within contributions, a call was made for better coordination among funding instruments and simplification of access procedures to ensure equitable participation of cities of all sizes.

During the Cities forum, urban stakeholders highlighted the urgent need for increased funding to develop, secure, and maintain infrastructure encompassing roads, public transport and utilities. A significant call was made for financial support for projects focused on sustainability, including renewable energy and green spaces. Several contributions emphasised the necessity for investment in affordable housing solutions to accommodate growing urban populations.

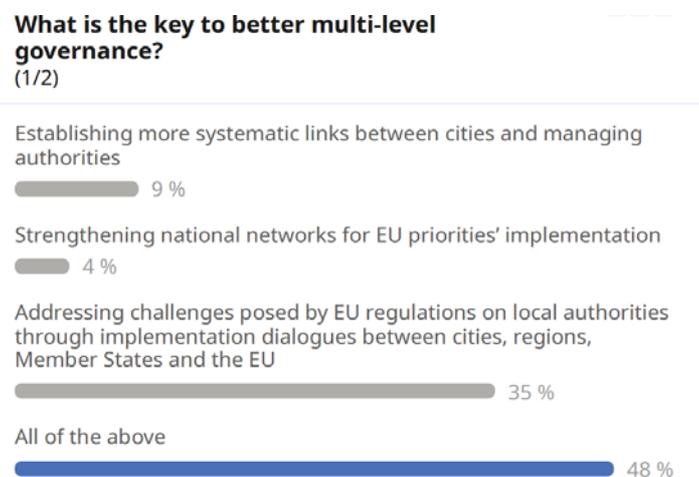
3.3. Feedback on the involvement of local authorities in the policymaking and legislative process

Effective governance is seen as a cornerstone for successful urban policy. Stakeholders emphasised the need for structured collaboration between local, regional, national, and EU levels. This includes mechanisms that allow cities to participate meaningfully in shaping and implementing EU policies. Contributions from local authorities and NGOs representing cities argued in particular for a better recognition of cities as strategic partners in the design and implementation of EU policies, calling for a shift from consultation to co-creation.

Decentralisation of decision-making abilities is also a recurring theme, with cities seeking more autonomy notably for resource allocation. Empowering cities to act independently within EU frameworks is seen as essential for responsive and effective governance. Stakeholders from the local level proposed the establishment of permanent platforms for dialogue between cities and EU institutions, to facilitate feedback, policy alignment and shared priority-setting, ensuring that urban realities are better reflected in the EU policy and legislation. Local stakeholders and representatives also required to be entrusted with policy ownership, including the ability to select and manage projects, monitor outcomes, and report on progress.

During the Cities forum, participants called for strengthened cooperation between different levels of government to ensure coherent policy implementation and resource allocation. Emphasis was placed on increasing citizen participation in governance to ensure transparency and responsiveness to public needs. A recognised need was expressed for aligning local governance policies with national and international frameworks to address urban challenges comprehensively. In this regard, the survey outcomes of the overall audience pointed to the need to address challenges posed by EU regulations on local authorities through implementation dialogues between cities, regions, Member States and the EU (35% of replies), in combination with other measures (cf. Figure 4).

Figure 4. Results of the survey question from the Cities forum 2025 on improving multilevel governance



3.4. Feedback on thematic policy areas

Several key policy areas were emphasised as part of the feedback received, pointing to the need for EU action to deliver on policy goals and targets. Areas identified in contributions prove to be aligned with the policy areas identified in the Mission letter to Executive Vice-President Fitto when referring to the scope of the EU Agenda for Cities.

Housing was identified as a critical area, with strong demand for EU support in affordable housing, including funding for social housing and circular construction. Evidence provided in the feedback received points to the rising inequalities and housing crises faced in urban areas across Europe. The European Commission is asked to consider further social equity in all urban policies, supporting inclusive neighbourhood development, affordable housing and access to essential services. Contributions emphasised the need to direct funding toward integrated solutions that empower

vulnerable communities. Social inclusion and health were also emphasised, with proposals for funding inclusive urban development, neighborhood revitalisation and urban health initiatives. Housing was particularly emphasised in contributions from Spain, Portugal and Germany. Housing was also mentioned mostly in contributions from public authorities, companies, business associations and other stakeholders.

In the area of climate and energy, cities called for expanded support for Climate City Contracts of the EU Mission on Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities, energy-efficient renovations and nature-based solutions. The Commission is specifically invited to prioritise the latter as well as circular infrastructures and green urban planning. Urban stakeholders' contributions highlight the urgency of climate mitigation and adaptation. Cities should be supported in implementing Climate City Contracts and in integrating biodiversity and ecosystem services into urban development. Climate action is evoked mostly in contributions from Austria, Belgium, Germany, Finland, France, Denmark, Italy, Slovenia, Sweden, Estonia, Czechia, Croatia, Greece, Ireland and Portugal. Additionally, contributions from urban stakeholders stressed the importance of integrated food policies and sustainable urban greening strategies to enhance resilience, security and quality of life in cities. Integrated urban planning and citizens participation are recurring subjects in contributions from NGOs, EU citizens, public authorities, business associations and other stakeholders.

Digitalisation was another key area, with digital transformation identified as a central element to urban innovation. Stakeholders called for investment in secure digital infrastructure, interoperable public services and smart city initiatives. The European Commission was asked to further promote data sovereignty as strategic infrastructure, enabling cities to harness artificial intelligence and digital tools for systemic innovation in accordance with the Network and Information Security (NIS2) Directive.

In the area of urban mobility and sustainable transport, mobility reform is highlighted as a cornerstone of urban sustainability. Contributors urged the European Commission to support multimodal transport systems, shared mobility and low-emission zones, and to integrate last-mile delivery solutions. According to the feedback received, EU policy should facilitate regulatory harmonisation and infrastructure investment to enable cities to lead the transition to clean and connected mobility. Urban mobility was particularly evoked in contributions from France, Estonia and Ireland. Among the types of stakeholders which contributed, this topic was mostly brought up by NGOs, companies, business associations, public authorities and other organisations.

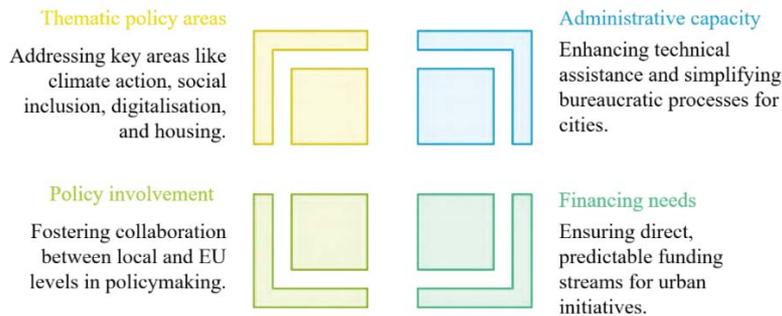
In addition, the contributors advocated for a shift from fragmented projects to mission-driven approaches that align local actions with EU strategic goals. The European Commission is invited to promote integrated urban missions — such as climate neutrality, social inclusion and digital transformation — anchored in place-based realities and supported by coherent funding and governance frameworks. This approach is particularly present in contributions from Belgium, Finland and Italy.

During the Cities forum, contributions in relation to specific policy areas were gathered in particular regarding economic prosperity and competitiveness, climate action, social inclusion, mobility, housing, culture and digitalisation. Some additional areas of consideration were identified compared to the content of the call for evidence feedback as follows:

In the area of economic prosperity and competitiveness, some contributions focused on creating policies that foster innovation and support the growth of startups, including supporting incubators and accelerators within urban areas. A call for initiatives was made that aimed at job creation, particularly in emerging sectors such as green technologies and information technology, alongside vocational training programmes to equip workers with necessary skills. Emphasis was placed on developing inclusive economic policies that promote equal opportunities and reduce socioeconomic disparities among people living in cities. Contributors also highlighted the importance of embedding sustainability into urban planning, including the development of eco-friendly buildings and the preservation of natural habitats within city environments. The need for effective resource management policies was recognised that encourage recycling, waste reduction and efficient energy use. In the area of urban mobility, participants underscored the importance of creating seamless connections between different modes of transport, such as buses, trains, and cycling paths, to enhance mobility and accessibility. Contributions highlighted the need for urban planning and policies that prioritises the electrification of public

transport, pedestrian safety and comfort. Participants discussed the necessity of developing comprehensive emergency preparedness plans to swiftly respond to health crises, natural disasters and other unforeseen events. A significant emphasis was placed on strengthening public health systems, including the expansion of healthcare facilities and improving access to essential services for all city residents.

Figure 5. Main issues addressed in the contributions received on the EU Agenda for Cities.



4. Highlights on the contributions from local and regional authorities

Local and regional authorities largely contributed to this consultation process by providing evidence and recommendations and by sharing their challenges and needs concerning the delivery of EU policies and legislation at sub-national level. Across Europe, local and regional authorities consistently emphasised the critical role cities and metropolitan areas play in implementing EU priorities, particularly in areas such as climate action, digital transformation, social inclusion and competitiveness. Their combined feedback, collected through the different consultation activities, highlights several recurring themes:

- Recognition and inclusion in EU policymaking

Local and regional authorities are key implementers of EU policies and legislation. Authorities called for a formal recognition of cities as strategic partners in the EU governance, with structured and permanent dialogue mechanisms (e.g., organisation of annual Mayors’ Summits, Urban sounding boards). A strong demand was made for urban impact assessments and multilevel governance frameworks that include cities from the outset in the policy design.

- Direct and simplified access to EU funding

Local authorities in particular requested direct access to EU funds, including earmarked allocations (e.g. 15% of cohesion policy funds) for city-led initiatives. The complexity and fragmentation of funding instruments are major barriers; the establishment of one-stop-shops and streamlined procedures were widely proposed. Authorities advocated for flexible financing tools (grants, loans, guarantees) and performance-based funding models tailored to urban realities.

- Strengthening capacity and technical support

Many cities, especially small and medium-sized ones, face limited administrative and technical capacity. A recurring call was made for coordinated capacity-building programmes, including peer learning, technical assistance and simplified access to EU support. Proposals included creating a Technical Support Instrument (TSI) for cities and expanding initiatives like URBACT and the European Urban Initiative (EUI).

- Integrated and place-based approaches

Local and regional authorities stressed the need for mission-oriented and place-based strategies that align EU goals with local priorities, and some requested dedicated urban chapters. Successful models like the Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI) of Cohesion policy and Climate City Contracts of the

EU Mission on Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities were cited as examples for scaling up. Cities advocated for cross-sectoral collaboration and territorial flexibility, especially in functional urban areas and metropolitan regions.

- Bridging urban-rural and territorial gaps

Local authorities stressed in particular their role in territorial cohesion, connecting urban and rural areas through infrastructure, services and innovation. A concern about intra-regional inequalities was raised, with calls to refocus Cohesion policy on urban poverty and housing shortages. This topic came out particularly from local and regional stakeholders compared to other types.

- Governance reform and institutional support

Local and regional authorities pointed to the need to ensure coherent support from the EU level. Strengthening local autonomy and reducing bureaucratic burdens were seen as essential improvements for effective policy implementation.

5. Conclusion

The consultation activities summarised in this synopsis report provide a non-exhaustive overview of the outcomes of the call for evidence and other consultation activities carried out in the context of preparing the EU Agenda for Cities. The stakeholders had a wide range of opportunities to share their views, concerns and ideas for action that were thoroughly considered by the European Commission.

The consultation process unveiled significant insights critical for shaping the future of EU cities. Stakeholders consistently highlighted the need for streamlined EU funding mechanisms and direct support for small and medium-sized cities to foster sustainable urban development. A strong call was made for recognising cities as strategic partners in EU policy design, advocating for a transition from mere consultation of cities to co-creation with cities. The emphasis placed on enhancing and securing digital infrastructure, integrating smart city technologies and training city officials illustrates the urgency to bolster local governance and service delivery. Additionally, stakeholders underscored the necessity for cohesive urban policies that prioritise climate adaptation and mitigation, nature-based solutions, and renewable energy investments. Concerns about fragmented funding and complex access procedures underscore the demand for simplified, flexible and predictable EU funding streams for cities. These collective insights emphasise the importance of aligning local actions with EU strategic goals, laying a robust foundation for urban transformation.

The table below provides a summary of the key considerations extracted from all the consultation activities.

Theme	Key considerations from the feedback received
Funding	Stakeholders consistently emphasised the need for necessary and improved funding mechanisms and financial instruments tailored to cities. This includes simplified access to EU funds, long-term investment strategies and direct support for urban transformation projects. Cities require predictable, flexible and accessible funding to implement climate, digital, and social initiatives effectively.
Governance	Effective governance and multi-level coordination are seen as essential for policy implementation. Stakeholders stressed the importance of involving cities in EU policymaking, fostering partnerships across governance levels and enabling cities to act as co-creators of policy. Structured engagement and decentralisation are key recommendations.
Innovation	Innovation is viewed as a driver of urban transformation and its resilience. Cities seek support and improved security for digital infrastructure, smart city initiatives and experimentation with new technologies. Stakeholders advocated for mission-oriented approaches and stronger links between research, innovation and deployment to scale up successful solutions and foster competitiveness.

Housing	Housing affordability and quality are identified as urgent issues. Stakeholders called for inclusive housing policies, energy-efficient renovations and mechanisms to counteract property price speculation and gentrification in cities. The EU is encouraged to support cities in addressing housing shortages and promoting sustainable urban regeneration.
Cohesion	Social cohesion and inclusion are emphasised as foundational to urban development. Contributions highlighted the need for reducing inequalities, supporting vulnerable populations and fostering inclusive public services, and for addressing intra-regional disparities and promote balanced territorial development.
Climate	Climate action is a central concern, with cities positioned as key actors in achieving climate neutrality. Contributions called for support for nature-based solutions, circular economy practices and integrated planning to mitigate and adapt to climate change.
Green urban development	Green urban development is a recurring theme, encompassing environmental sustainability, biodiversity and access to green spaces. Stakeholders advocated for investments in green infrastructure, nature-based solutions and ecological restoration to enhance resilience and quality of life in cities.
Mobility	Mobility and transport infrastructure are frequently mentioned, with calls for investment in sustainable public transport, multimodal hubs and active mobility solutions. Contributors emphasised the role of mobility in reducing emissions, improving connectivity and supporting inclusive urban development.

All input received from stakeholders was analysed and considered in the preparation of the EU Agenda for Cities.