

Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2021/2075(INI)	Procedure completed
Challenges for urban areas in the post-COVID-19 era		
Subject 4.70.04 Urban policy, cities, town and country planning		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	 Regional Development	 CSEH Katalin	22/04/2021
		Shadow rapporteur	
		 MOTREANU Dan-Ştefan	
		 GONZÁLEZ Mónica Silvana	
		 NIENASS Niklas	
		 MICHELS Martina	
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
	 Employment and Social Affairs	Chair on behalf of committee	11/11/2021
		 ĐURIŠ NICHOLSONOVÁ Lucia	
	 Transport and Tourism		05/07/2021
		 GHEORGHE Vlad	
European Commission	Commission DG Regional and Urban Policy	Commissioner FERREIRA Elisa	

Key events			
10/06/2021	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
06/12/2021	Vote in committee		

16/12/2021	Committee report tabled for plenary	A9-0352/2021	Summary
14/02/2022	Debate in Parliament		
15/02/2022	Results of vote in Parliament		
15/02/2022	Decision by Parliament	T9-0022/2022	Summary

Technical information

Procedure reference	2021/2075(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 54
Other legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 159
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	REGI/9/06213

Documentation gateway

Committee draft report		PE696.398	06/09/2021	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE697.652	08/10/2021	EP	
Committee opinion	TRAN	PE696.438	16/11/2021	EP	
Specific opinion	EMPL	PE700.422	23/11/2021	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A9-0352/2021	16/12/2021	EP	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T9-0022/2022	15/02/2022	EP	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2022)192	13/06/2022	EC	

Challenges for urban areas in the post-COVID-19 era

The Committee on Regional Development adopted an own-initiative report by Katalin CSEH (Renew Europe, HU) on the challenges for urban areas in the post-COVID-19 era.

The report stated that 72 % of people in the EU live in cities and towns. Cities continue to be on the front line of the COVID-19 crisis, with dwindling economic activity, high rates of infection, low rates of vaccination and often inadequate resources.

Members stressed the crucial and unique role of local and regional authorities in tackling issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Challenges

Cities and towns must be directly involved in the recovery from COVID-19. Recovery efforts must strive to address long-standing vulnerabilities and go beyond addressing the health impacts of COVID-19 to tackle the persistent inequalities. The pandemic has had gendered impacts that cities, towns and functional urban areas will need to take into account. Quarantines and social distancing requirements have put women at an increased risk of gender-based violence, while at the same time, women's access to support networks, social services and sexual and reproductive health facilities has been curtailed.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the culture and sport sectors as well as the transport of food and medicines and the provision of health services.

Inclusive cities

The report underlined that the COVID-19 pandemic has accentuated the trend of depopulation in underdeveloped urban areas, which often lack sufficient own revenues to provide residents with quality public services. In this regard, Member States are called on to develop positive action measures that promote the inclusion of marginalised communities such as people with disabilities, more isolated older people, homeless people, migrants and refugees and ethnic minorities such as Roma. Members called for funding needs to be directed at a local level, including those of urban areas, especially metropolitan areas, as well as at a regional, national and EU level.

For urban economies to recover without leaving anyone behind, investments and reforms should lead to stable and high-quality jobs, reinforced public infrastructure and services, enhanced social dialogue and support for inclusion and integration of disadvantaged groups, including by strengthening social protection and welfare systems.

EU support framework

Members emphasised the need for an EU framework to support local and national strategies to fight homelessness and ensure equal access to decent housing for all by promoting an integrated approach combining housing support with social care, health services and active inclusion. The Commission, the Member States and local and regional authorities are called on to establish specific strategies and appropriate measures to overcome obstacles to the right to housing such as discrimination, financialisation, speculation, touristification, abusive lending practices and forced evictions. Increased investment is called for in social, public, energy-efficient, adequate and affordable housing, and in tackling homelessness and housing exclusion in the EU. The Commission should urgently ensure that EU funding and EIB financing become more accessible to local and regional social and public affordable housing providers.

Sustainable cities

Members considered that the COVID-19 crisis has shown the need for new urban planning and mobility solutions in order to make urban areas more resilient and adaptable to mobility demand and that the crisis should be taken as an opportunity to reduce transport congestion and greenhouse emissions. They stressed the importance of sustainable urban development, including sustainable and affordable public transport, for the economic, social and territorial cohesion of the Union and the quality of life of its population and for reaching its climate neutrality goals by 2050 at the latest.

The Commission's intention to engage with cities and the Member States to ensure that all large cities and urban nodes in the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) draw up sustainable urban mobility plans (SUMP) by 2030 was welcomed by Members.

The report noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has led to the expansion of the home delivery sector, which has led to the emergence of new types of platform work and business models in urban areas. Members recognised the need for recommendations on the safety of delivery personnel and on training in the digital tools they use, such as applications and interactive platforms.

Innovative cities

The report emphasised that digitalisation has helped to address some of the immediate challenges arising from the pandemic, particularly during lockdown periods, and that among the many inequalities exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the digital divide is a serious one. Whilst recalling that digitalisation and digital connectivity must be a priority for local communities in their recovery, Members called on the Commission to ensure full compliance with the Union acquis, in particular as regards workers and social rights.

Tailor-made policy initiatives

Members underlined the need to adapt to the new reality in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic and to reflect on a new model for the EU's urban areas. They insisted that regional and local authorities have a key role to play in all stages of EU decision-making: planning, preparation and implementation. It called for more direct EU funding to be made available to local and regional authorities in order to improve efficiency, ensure consistency and reduce administrative burdens.

The report called for the European Urban Initiative to be given a greater budget and scope, while ensuring that cities in the outermost regions have effective and facilitated access to it. It called on the Council and Member States to allocate up to 15 % for urban areas to address post-COVID challenges.

Challenges for urban areas in the post-COVID-19 era

The European Parliament adopted by 524 votes to 33, with 143 abstentions, a resolution on the challenges for urban areas in the post-COVID-19 era.

Members recalled that 72% of people in the EU live in cities and towns and that these must be directly involved in the post-COVID-19 recovery. Efforts should not only focus on the health consequences of COVID-19, but also address persistent inequalities in access to essential resources such as healthcare, education and digitalisation, increased risks of gender-based violence, job losses that are greater in large cities than elsewhere, as well as the lack of green areas and transport infrastructure.

To the list of existing challenges, we can add the climate emergency and demographic challenges. The world's urban population is expected to grow to three billion people by 2050. Two-thirds of the world's population will live in cities, consuming 75% of the world's natural resources, producing 50% of the world's waste and more than 60% of greenhouse gas emissions.

Inclusive cities

Recognising the social, economic, territorial, cultural and historical diversity of urban areas across the EU, Parliament stressed the need to address challenges such as segregation and poverty.

Member States are called on to develop positive action measures that promote the inclusion of marginalised communities such as people with disabilities, more isolated older people, homeless people, migrants and refugees and ethnic minorities such as Roma. Members called for funding needs to be directed at a local level, including those of urban areas, especially metropolitan areas, as well as at a regional, national and EU level.

For urban economies to recover without leaving anyone behind, investments and reforms should lead to stable and high-quality jobs, reinforced public infrastructure and services, enhanced social dialogue and support for inclusion and integration of disadvantaged groups, including by strengthening social protection and welfare systems.

Parliament emphasised the need for an EU framework to support local and national strategies to fight homelessness and ensure equal access to decent housing for all by promoting an integrated approach combining housing support with social care, health services and active inclusion. The Commission and the Member States are called on to further increase investment in social, public, energy-efficient, adequate and affordable housing, and in tackling homelessness and housing exclusion in the EU.

Members encourage EU cities to develop, implement, and evaluate comprehensive approaches to prevent and respond to sexual harassment and gender-based violence in public spaces. They also called on the Member States to actively involve urban authorities in devising programmes that meet the needs of young people in cities.

Sustainable cities

Parliament stressed the importance of sustainable urban development, including sustainable and affordable public transport, for the economic, social and territorial cohesion of the Union and the quality of life of its population and for reaching its climate neutrality goals by 2050 at the latest. It called for the prioritisation and support of circular economy frameworks, investments in renewable energy, sustainable and affordable urban and suburban mobility (in particular cycle path networks), alternative transport infrastructure in and around urban areas, proper maintenance of existing infrastructure and rapid investment in green infrastructure, parks, outdoor green and recreational facilities.

The resolution stressed the need to promote and develop sustainable public transport systems in urban areas and to prioritise digital infrastructure that benefits all passengers, including people with reduced mobility.

The Commission should ensure that access to EU funding programmes for urban mobility, in particular under the ERDF, the Cohesion Fund and the Connecting Europe Facility, is conditional on the existence or development of sustainable urban mobility plans (SUMPs).

Members noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has led to the expansion of the home delivery sector, which has led to the emergence of new types of platform work and business models in urban areas. They also recognised the need for recommendations on the safety of delivery personnel and on training in the digital tools they use, such as applications and interactive platforms.

Parliament called on the Commission to use its anticipated recommendation on speed to make 30 km/h the maximum default speed in residential areas and areas with a high number of pedestrians and cyclists, with the possibility for higher limits on main arterial roads and appropriate protection for vulnerable road users.

Innovative and learning cities

The pandemic has accelerated digitisation, with technology becoming imperative for teleworking, home-schooling, e-commerce, e-health, digital democracy and online entertainment.

While recalling that digitisation and digital connectivity must be a priority for local communities in their recovery efforts, Members called on the Commission to monitor these developments and ensure full compliance with the EU acquis, in particular as regards workers and social rights. They also highlighted the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on education and stressed the need to ensure inclusion and access to education and to support the cultural and sports sectors.

Tailor-made policy initiatives

Members underlined the need to adapt to the new reality in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic and to reflect on a new model for the EUs urban areas. They insisted that regional and local authorities have a key role to play in all stages of EU decision-making: planning, preparation and implementation. It called for more direct EU funding to be made available to local and regional authorities in order to improve efficiency, ensure consistency and reduce administrative burdens.

The resolution called for the European Urban Initiative to be given a greater budget and scope, while ensuring that cities in the outermost regions have effective and facilitated access to it. It called on the Council and Member States to allocate up to 15 % for urban areas to address post-COVID challenges.