



The EUKN-OECD Week of National Urban Policies

How the New Leipzig Charter supports more just, green and productive National Urban Policies



Participant's guide

The EUKN and the OECD have decided to pool their experiences with NUPs, in Europe and globally, and to organise the EUKN-OECD Week of National Urban Policies on 28-30 June 2021.

The online event, with its four Policy Lab sessions, offers a unique opportunity to:

- Discuss the findings of the OECD's Global State of National Urban Policy 2021 report
- Discover more about NUPs in EUKN member and partner countries in a global-scale knowledge exchange
- Explore the position of NUPs in relation to key strategic agendas such as the New Urban Agenda, the Urban Agenda for the EU and the New Leipzig Charter

The objective of this paper is to prepare the participants for the event, providing information on its overall framing and on the specific sessions. Keep on reading to discover more about the key concepts, the guiding questions that will be put forward in the opening debate, as well as the NUPs that will be presented to explore the just, productive, and green dimension of cities.

The key concepts of the Week of National Urban Policies

National Urban Policies (NUPs) are defined as “a coherent set of decisions through a deliberate government-led process of co-ordinating and rallying various actors towards a common vision and goal that will promote more transformative, productive, inclusive and resilient urban development for the long term” (UN-Habitat/OECD, 2018). In the context of today's pressing societal challenges, NUPs can contribute a great deal to a green and just transition as embodied by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the European Green Deal. They do so by providing multi-level coordination platforms, by creating shared ideas and visions around urban matters, and by capacitating subnational levels and actors for adequate policy delivery.

The New Leipzig Charter (NLC) represents a milestone in the informal intergovernmental cooperation on urban matters in Europe. Ministers responsible for urban matters endorsed the NLC on 30 November 2020, chaired by the German Presidency of the Council of the EU. As a non-binding, strategic policy framework for sustainable urban development in Europe, the NLC puts forward the potential of urban transformation for addressing key societal challenges. Under the paradigmatic title **The transformative power of cities for the common good**, the Charter outlines a basic set of principles of good urban governance: urban policy for the common good, integrated approach, participation and co-creation, multi-level governance, and place-based approach. While reinforcing the 2007 Leipzig Charter quest for integrated urban development, the NLC puts forward three city dimensions: **the just, the green and the productive city** – complemented by the cross-cutting dimension of digitalisation. In all their simplicity, they represent powerful aspirations guiding urban policy.

The EUKN-OECD Week of NUPs takes place in special and challenging period. As stated by the **Global State of National Urban Policy 2021** report, “[t]he **COVID-19 pandemic** has profoundly affected the health, lives and work of urban dwellers, magnifying and exploiting, in turn, many persistent urban challenges. But it also triggered paradigm shifts in considerations of how to plan and design cities to deliver resilient and sustainable growth, inclusiveness, well-being and opportunities for all” (OECD/UN-Habitat/UNOPS, 2021).



A sneak peek into the opening session – guiding questions for the debate

- In what way can NUPs and the NLC provide mutual 'windows of opportunity' for each other?
- Are policy reforms and evolutions similar to the NLC observed in other parts of the world? What experience can be shared across global regions?
- Despite a common definition, NUPs show to be very diverse across countries, both within Europe and at the global scale. What do we know about this diversity and what does it mean for our discussion of NUPs globally?
- What are the main factors for success and, vice versa, the main challenges of NUP implementation?
- What will be long-term impacts of COVID-19 in urban policy? How can NUPs address these impacts?
- Taking a wild guess: what kinds of NUPs will exist in 2050?



The just dimension of NUPs

It is the “wicked” amalgamation of problems such as poverty, lack of accessibility to services of general interest as well as to adequate and affordable housing, (spatial) segregation, and skills gaps that makes the socio-economic element of urban policy so challenging. In this session, France, Slovenia and Germany will inspire us with their NUPs on how to achieve social cohesion in urban neighbourhoods, safeguard access to housing and services, and foster a focus on the common good in urban development.

Germany: Nationale Stadtentwicklungspolitik ('National Urban Development Policy')

The **Nationale Stadtentwicklungspolitik**, launched in 2007, is a joint initiative of the Federal Government, the regional-level federal states, and local municipalities. It fosters inter alia the just dimension with dedicated projects supporting the common good in urban development, with a thematic focus on migration and social cohesion in urban neighbourhoods. With the support available, cities have been appropriating these themes by developing impressive, often rather experimental, projects. The newest project calls focus on the “post-corona city” and on cooperative, common-good oriented approaches to urban development. The Urban Development Support Programmes, or **Städtebauförderung**, as part of the **Nationale Stadtentwicklungspolitik** have recently be remodelled and also address social cohesion in urban neighbourhoods.

France: Politique de la ville ('City Policy')

The French **Politique de la ville** is a policy specifically targeting deprived areas faced with socio-economic difficulties, so-called priority districts. It is characterised by a multi-partnership approach in the form city contracts that are signed by the State, inter-municipality bodies and the concerned municipalities. The city contracts are built on the three pillars social cohesion; living conditions and urban renewal; and employment and economic development. Recently, the COVID-19 health crisis has highlighted the economic, social and territorial disparities in the priority districts. This has resulted in a relaunch of the Interministerial Committee for the City (**Comité interministériel à la ville**) to define, support, coordinate, and monitor the actions organised under this policy.

Slovenia: Strategija prostorskega razvoja Slovenije ('Spatial Development Strategy of Slovenia') & Nacionalni stanovanjski program ('National Housing Programme') 2015-2025

Currently, Slovenia's Spatial Development Strategy (dating from 2004) is being updated. One of its main objectives is to create a high-quality urban environment, good access to services, and decent housing. As a dedicated effort on the latter, the National Housing Programme 2015-2025 aims to address people's housing needs, provide equal opportunities, and thus contribute to a higher quality of life. The programme specifically targets vulnerable groups such as young people and the elderly (who both experience issues to access adequate housing) by proposing a range of measures.



A sneak peek into the just session – guiding questions for the debate

The NLC calls for cities providing equal opportunities and environmental justice for all, regardless of gender, socioeconomic status, age and origin – leaving no one behind. A strong statement. How are cities coping and what do they need to fulfil or at least approximate this goal?



The productive dimension of NUPs

As put forward by the NLC, the productive dimension is key to unlock cities' transformative power and implement sustainable urban development. At the same time, the nuances inherent to the idea of a productive city are manifold and worth to be explored. A sound financial base is essential to strengthening social cohesion. Mixed-use neighbourhoods are a result of a diversified economy, where cities provide fertile environments for innovation while incentivising local and regional production. A productive city is therefore a place offering good quality of life to its inhabitants and counterbalancing the effects of demographic change.

To be just, economic development must be pursued in a balanced way across the territory. Adequate social, technical and logistical infrastructures are key to enhance interconnection among cities of all sizes, spreading the benefits from increased productivity across the country. In this regard, it is important to underline the positive impacts that digitalisation could bring – ranging from the development of digital infrastructures increasing connectivity, to the shift towards a more digital, service-oriented, and low-carbon economy.

In the productive session, Czechia and Poland will present their recent NUP updates and invite participants to share their thoughts on how to create strong and resilient cities, ensuring a high quality of life for inhabitants.

Czechia: Towards an updated NUP with the Smart Czechia Concept

The Ministry for Regional Development has just started the renewal process of the Czech NUP, the 'Principles of Urban Policy' from 2015, with the aim of increasing its resonance with the NLC principles. Even before the launch of this renewal project, the Czech Ministry has been developing initiatives to support sustainable urban development, including the Smart Czechia Concept. This document was developed in response to the Covid-19 outbreak and the subsequent economic crisis. It provides guidelines on how to design and implement smart solutions, strengthening Czechia's role on the international economic stage while ensuring the well-being of its citizens.

Poland: Assumptions for the update of the National Urban Policy (Krajowa Polityka Miejska) 2023

Like Czechia, the Polish Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy has recently started the renewal process of their NUP, the 'National Urban Policy 2023'. Being in an advanced stage of the process, the Ministry has compiled a document outlining challenges, goals, and key principles for the development and implementation of the future NUP. According to this, the NUP 2030 will be built along the lines of the NLC and promote, among others, the idea of a productive city to face economic polarisation, an issue linked to demographic change and a lack of adequate infrastructures.

A sneak peek into the productive session – guiding questions for the debate

How can we advance productive cities while deviating from the challenges of economic polarisation and unbalanced territorial development? How can we increase competitiveness of cities via inclusive digital transformations?





The green dimension of NUPs

In the NLC, the green city is a city empowered to fight and adapt to climate change, able to provide high-quality, inclusive urban environments for its people, while protecting biodiversity and restoring ecosystems. But how so?

Empowering cities to transform takes a village, or better, a nation. The NLC underlines the fundamental role played by national governments in ensuring cities can find local solutions to global challenges. Addressing the compounded impacts of the pandemic demands unprecedented bold action, and, building back better – greener – cities is part of it. The OECD Green Recovery Database shows that green measures only play a small role in current recovery packages.

To varying degrees, the heartened operationalisation of greener policies and actions, and their recognition as an indispensable element of recovery, has been bolstered by covid. As underlined by the recent **Global State of National Urban Policy 2021** report, NUPs around the world are more prominently integrating climate action in urban areas via **adaptation** (i.e. by strengthening urban climate resilience) as well as **mitigation** (i.e. by promoting a low-carbon urban transition). In this session, Portugal and Italy will present how the urban crisis can be turned into an opportunity to advance bold green actions and the fight against climate change.

Portugal: Iniciativa Nacional Cidades Circulares ('National Initiative for Circular Cities') (InC2)

InC2 aims to empower local authorities and their communities in the transition to the Circular Economy in Portugal. It creates regional networks of cities including **unusual suspects** – smaller municipalities and island regions – which usually “slip through the net” of EU or national funding schemes. Through local circular economy transitions, InC2 urbanises the implementation of national strategic frameworks that define the country's vision to adapt to climate change and achieve net-zero emissions.

Italy: Programma Operativo Città Metropolitane ('National Operational Programme Metropolitan Cities') (PON METRO) 2021-2027

PON METRO 2021-2027, with the REACT-EU programme, fosters territories' capacities towards an ecological transition, sustaining green infrastructures, circular economy, digital and resilient recovery, ensuring alignment with priorities such as social innovation and cultural activities. It channels EU funds (ERDF & ESF Plus) into an integrated urban strategy, building upon its predecessor, PON METRO 2014-2020, to strengthen the role of 14 metropolitan areas in addressing the “green challenge” of the 2021-2027 programming period. Towards this end, PON METRO 2021-2027 acts in the framework of the Green and Circular National Strategies, empowering cities to rehabilitate urban environments via green, inclusive and innovative measures putting into action the principle of the circular economy. Last but not least, PON METRO acts as a national platform of exchanges and mutual learning among cities and with relevant thematic entities.

A sneak peek into the green session – guiding questions for the debate

Combatting climate change and achieving high environmental quality might well be the trickiest and most politicised challenges of our time. The NLC provides an entire catalogue of actions for the green urban transition. After months of the pandemic dominating media outlets and people's minds: how do we get back on track with cities' contributions to a carbon-neutral future?



About the organisers

European Urban
Knowledge Network



The **European Urban Knowledge Network (EUKN)** is the only independent Member State driven network in the field of urban policy, research and practice.

Knowledge co-creation and dissemination are two key elements of the support to members of the network. Understanding the production and promulgation of strategic urban knowledge as a process that adapts and responds to the changing political, socio-economic and environmental context of the urban realm, the EUKN offers a variety of activities such as Policy Labs. In the past years, the EUKN has been working closely on and with the Leipzig Charter – both the “original” Charter of 2007 and the NLC of 2020. In 2012, it edited a large compilation of the state of integrated urban development in Europe in the publication **Ten Years after the Leipzig Charter**. In the run-up to the German Presidency of the Council of the EU in 2020, the EUKN supported the co-creative process towards the NLC.



The **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)** is an international organisation that works to build better policies for better lives.

Building on 20 years of urban policy work, the OECD Principles on Urban Policy were adopted by all OECD countries in March 2019, as a framework to guide national and subnational policymakers in building smart, sustainable and inclusive cities, in shared responsibility with public, private and non-profit sectors. Currently, the OECD is developing the implementation toolkit including a self-assessment and measurement framework and urban repository. The 11 principles are organised around the “three-S” framework – Scale, Strategy, and Stakeholders.

The **Global State of National Urban Policy 2021 – Achieving Sustainable Development Goals and Delivering Climate Action**, to be published on 25 June 2021, serves as a critical source of information and analysis for policymakers and urban professionals, as it establishes the foundation for understanding how and in what forms NUPs have been developed, implemented and monitored globally. It builds and expands on the earlier methodology, and seeks to compare key NUP trends, characteristics and evolution since 2018. The report is an outcome of the 2019–20 Workplan of the National Urban Policy Programme (NUPP), which aims to strengthen knowledge and capacity in countries to develop, implement and monitor NUP in an effective, efficient and inclusive way. Launched in 2016 at the Habitat III Conference in Quito, Ecuador, NUPP is a global platform jointly led by the OECD, UN-Habitat and Cities Alliance to share experiences in NUP and support countries, building on the expertise of the three organisations and Programme partners.

References & further reading

OECD work on National Urban Policies, including the new **Global State of National Urban Policy 2021** report (OECD/UN-Habitat/UNOPS, 2021), accessible as of 25 June 2021: <https://www.oecd.org/cfe/national-urban-policies.htm>

UN-Habitat/OECD **Global State of National Urban Policy 2018**: https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/urban-rural-and-regional-development/global-state-of-national-urban-policy_9789264290747-en

OECD Principles on Urban Policy: <https://www.oecd.org/cfe/urban-principles.htm>

OECD Green Recovery Database: <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/the-oecd-green-recovery-database-47ae0f0d/>

All about the New Leipzig Charter: <https://www.eukn.eu/eu-presidencies/new-leipzig-charter-news>

Ten years after the Leipzig Charter – the enduring relevance of integrated urban development in Europe: <https://www.bbsr.bund.de/BBSR/EN/publications/SpecialPublication/2017/10-years-after-leipzig-charta.html>

