SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND INEQUALITIES IN EUROPEAN CITIES:

Challenges and Responses
EUROCITIES is committed to working towards a sustainable future in which all citizens can enjoy a good quality of life. We aspire to a Europe where cities are inclusive, prosperous, creative, and sustainable, with democratic and effective governance and where all citizens can fully participate in all aspects of urban life – politically, culturally, socially and economically. All EUROCITIES members are committed to tackling the causes of social exclusion, eradicating all forms of discrimination and ensuring equal opportunities for all.

The objectives of the 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion are twofold: to demonstrate that all people have a right to live in dignity and take part in society; and that eradicating poverty for a more cohesive society benefits all. The public and private sectors share responsibility to combat poverty and social exclusion, however commitment from all levels of society is needed to achieve this goal. To be able to act, we need to be clear about the origins of poverty and exclusion, we need to understand its various dimensions and faces, and we need to learn from each other's experience what works and what does not.

EUROCITIES members will contribute to the objectives of the 2010 European Year campaign and engage in debate with governments, stakeholders and civil society about how we can best work together to tackle poverty and exclusion. To this end, we will hold a number of thematic seminars in which we will assess how some of the most pressing challenges can be addressed. We will also develop recommendations to national and European policy makers about how to include more efficient and effective local actions in their frameworks and policies.

This report serves as a background text to our activities throughout the year 2010. It explores the different dimensions of poverty, exclusion and inequality in our cities. It also highlights good practices and approaches already in place in some cities to address these issues. The report is based on the research undertaken by a group of around thirty cities from across Europe who took the lead in developing our activities for the 2010 European Year. I would like to thank them for their courage and efforts over the past months. I hope that the readers are inspired by this report to take action towards achieving our common goal of building inclusive cities for an inclusive society.

Jozias Van Aartsen
Mayor of The Hague
President of EUROCITIES
Cities are the engines of economic growth and social innovation, however many of them are faced with persistent social problems and challenges, often concentrated in specific neighbourhoods. In this report, we explore various dimensions of exclusion and inequalities and highlight the specifically urban characteristics of the problems presented including:

- cities often record higher unemployment rates than their respective national averages. Moreover, these rates tend to differ considerably between neighbourhoods;
- many cities record higher child poverty rates than their national averages. Again, these rates vary significantly between neighbourhoods;
- the average life expectancy of people living in cities is approximately two years lower than for those living outside urban areas. Disparities in health are often even more striking within cities and between neighbourhoods;
- inhabitants of deprived urban areas are less likely to have access to and use the Internet and other Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) compared to people living in well-off areas;
- social participation and attendance at cultural activities may be difficult for some inhabitants due to cost or other barriers. Cultural events can be a powerful instrument in promoting social inclusion and managing diversity;
- public transport is, in some cities, neither affordable nor available for inhabitants that live on low incomes or in peripheral areas, thus limiting their possibilities to fully participate in the city’s social, cultural and economic life;
- people on low incomes are disproportionately affected by rising energy prices – particularly if they live in houses that are not energy efficient and they are without the financial means to make the necessary improvements;
- housing exclusion is a common problem in most European cities. It is caused by a range of individual and structural factors that call for well coordinated responses to prevent homelessness and to move people into decent living conditions.

Several of these problems often occur together, with one factor causing or aggravating another. They also have a clear spatial element and tend to be concentrated in certain urban areas.

The role of local public administrations in tackling social exclusion and inequalities differs between countries, according to the degree of decentralisation of state powers. In some countries, cities play a leading role, while in others their resources and responsibilities are rather limited.

In all European welfare states, key instruments in tackling poverty are the provision of social assistance and adequate income to those who cannot work, as well as guidance and support to get into the labour market for those who can work. Typically, local authorities are involved in the provision of social assistance in some way. In addition, they have developed numerous complementary tools to tackle inequalities and achieve social inclusion and cohesion. These include:

- social planning and the provision of social infrastructure, such as child care, playgrounds, schools, cultural and recreational facilities, and public health;
- supporting the local economy to facilitate enterprise development and job creation;
- creating a supporting environment for increasing the quality of education, by offering extra support to children and providing opportunities to learn from an early age;
- promoting employment, especially of parents and the long-term unemployed, through providing links between businesses and jobseekers;
- improving access to goods and services, including cultural activities and public transport, by making them more affordable and accessible;
- improving the affordability and quality of housing. This includes making these more energy efficient;
- providing better access to ICT and developing citizens’ digital skills through training programmes;
- launching awareness raising campaigns to improve the quality of life of residents, for example, in the field of energy saving or promoting healthy lifestyles;
- using area-based approaches targeted at deprived neighbourhoods and focusing on multiple dimensions of poverty and exclusion;
- local strategies against discrimination and racism.

As responsibilities and competences in these areas are spread across a broad range of stakeholders, cities maintain partnerships with relevant public and private organisations and agencies as well as with community organisations and NGOs so as to ensure delivery of services.
European cities are drivers of economic development, growth and innovation. Despite their prosperity, they are frequently centers of poverty and social exclusion, with certain urban areas suffering from recurring high levels of unemployment and poverty, low academic achievement, long-term welfare dependency, poor health, poor housing conditions and low quality public facilities.

Poverty and social exclusion are complex and multidimensional phenomena and several interlinked problems often occur concurrently. Social exclusion can be experienced in different ways and can affect individuals, groups and specific geographical areas. It goes beyond low income and expenditure and includes people’s experience of being prevented from fully participating in society\(^1\). Similarly, the concept of social inclusion defines the process through which socially excluded people have the opportunities, skills and resources to fully participate in economic, social and cultural life.

Given the multidimensional nature of social exclusion, the main challenge is to identify integrated and coordinated responses. Firstly, there is the need to coordinate and integrate policies and programmes not only across the city, but also with other levels of government. Then there is the need to involve a variety of stakeholders, such as NGOs, citizens’ associations and the private sector. Furthermore, it is important to encourage city authorities to develop a highly personalised approach that helps people facing multiple problems.

Coordination between different levels of government is becoming ever more crucial given the growing complexity of social problems due to demographic change and migration, individualisation and cultural diversity.

Although welfare programmes are set at the national level, the causes of poverty and social exclusion depend significantly on structural factors, upon which local governments have a limited power of influence. Cities are where poverty is experienced. Cities can be the ideal place to develop new approaches to prevent, alleviate and even tackle poverty and exclusion in an integrated and coordinated way. City authorities, due to their proximity with their inhabitants, have a good understanding of the problems of social exclusion faced by people and have developed innovative tools and approaches to deal with social problems. Cities are also well placed to coordinate the work of local actors and stakeholders.

The economic crisis has further exacerbated the problems of poverty and social exclusion. Cities face a double challenge: dealing with the rising number of people at risk of social exclusion and unemployment while managing budget restraints due to diminishing tax revenues and lower transfers from central government. Again, improving coordination between different policy areas, both at local and national levels, should help to increase the efficiency of public intervention and lead to the creation of synergies between different sectors.

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This report was prepared in cooperation with social policy experts from around thirty cities of the EUROCITIES network. It investigates poverty and social exclusion in a number of key policy areas:

- unemployment;
- child poverty;
- health;
- housing;
- Information and Communication Technologies;
- culture;
- urban mobility;
- disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods.

These policy areas have been identified by the EU as key priorities and are also considered as highly relevant by the EUROCITIES network.

Each policy area is presented together with a brief analysis of the issues associated with the topic, followed by examples of cities responses to deal with the problems. A final section presents a number of key issues for further consideration. The topics mentioned here are only a selection of the numerous issues that can be addressed. However, the idea is to refer to them as guiding points during future debates, and in particular, within the context of the 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion.

During the 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion, EUROCITIES will organise a series of thematic events across Europe to discuss these policy areas. On the basis of these discussions, EUROCITIES will prepare policy recommendations for the EU institutions, as well as national and local governments, proposing strategies and programmes to prevent and combat poverty and social exclusion.
1.1 The issues

Until recently, the EU27 experienced modest but gradual employment growth and a reduction in unemployment. Between 2000 and 2008, the employment rate in the EU27 grew from 62.2% to 65.9%, and unemployment decreased from 8.7% to 7.2%. These figures mask profound differences between Member States as well as differences between the rates of unemployment and employment at the city level, which may differ significantly from the national statistics. Similarly, in cities, the levels of unemployment and employment tend to be significantly different between neighbourhoods.

Employment and unemployment rates in cities differ from national statistics. In general, employment rates in cities are below the national average (in 2001, only 28% of the cities that were surveyed in the Urban Audit had employment rates higher than the national average). Likewise, many cities have higher unemployment rates than their respective national averages. Across all the cities which participated in the 2001 Urban Audit, unemployment rates ranged from 3% to 31%.

In cities, unemployment rates differ significantly from one neighbourhood to another. To give a few examples:

- In Brussels (BE), the difference between the neighbourhoods with the lowest (9.5%) and highest (31%) unemployment rates was 21.5 percentage points. The overall unemployment rate for the city was 20.4% in 2007;
- In Newcastle (UK), the unemployment rate in the worst affected neighbourhood is about ten percentage points higher than the city average (17.3% versus 7.4%);
- In Barcelona, the unemployment rate in the worst affected district is 14.4% which is 2.4 percentage points higher than the city average and 6.1 percentage points higher that the least affected area.

Generally it is found that areas that are particularly affected by long-term unemployment are working class areas with social housing estates.

Unemployment rates are higher among some socio-demographic groups such as young people, women and people with disabilities. These rates are also higher amongst migrants.

- The youth unemployment rate (18.3%) is twice as high as the overall unemployment rate (8.2%) in the EU27. For young people, experiencing even short-term unemployment is likely to have detrimental effects on their future career and wage levels. Youth unemployment is not only considerably higher among low-skilled people, especially early school leavers (18-24 year olds not in education, employment or training), but also among young people whose skills do not match with the demands of the labour market. Youth unemployment rates tend to be even higher in cities. The Urban Audit data for 2001 shows that youth unemployment was particularly high in Central and Eastern Europe and in French cities.
- In most EU Member States, the unemployment rate among people with a migrant background is at least twice as high as the national unemployment rate. One of the most significant reasons for this is the low skill levels amongst migrants. Furthermore, their skills...
are often insufficiently documented or their qualifications are not accepted by employers\(^\text{14}\). Despite EU and national legislation against discrimination in the labour market, there are still significant obstacles to labour market integration for immigrants\(^\text{15}\). Another important factor impacting on the integration of migrants in the labour market is gender, with migrant women facing a considerable disadvantage in accessing and securing employment\(^\text{16}\).

The financial and economic crisis of 2008-09 resulted in a decrease in employment in the EU.

Consequently, the employment rate in the EU27 fell by 1.9% in the second quarter of 2009 compared to the same quarter in 2008. The unemployment rate for the EU27 increased from 7% in 2008 to 9.5% in 2009\(^\text{17}\). The impact of the crisis on some countries was much more dramatic: between 2008 and 2009 the unemployment rate rose from 6.4% to 16.7% in Lithuania and from 7.4% to 17.4% in Latvia.

The recession has hit young people particularly hard. In the first quarter of 2009, the youth unemployment rate stood at 18.3%, an increase of 3.7% compared with the same period in 2008\(^\text{18}\).

Although the European economy has recently shown signs of improvement, this may not translate into rapid employment growth. A recent forecast for the OECD countries stressed that the average unemployment rate across the EU27 could reach 10% in 2010\(^\text{19}\).

1.2 Cities responses

Traditionally, employment policies have been mainly carried out by regional and national level organisations such as job centres and employment agencies. However, over the last years, welfare state reforms have attempted to improve the links between social protection and employment policies by strengthening incentives to work. Through this process, city administrations have become more involved in national and regional employment policies. In the Netherlands, the 2004 Act on Employment and Social Assistance gave Dutch city authorities responsibility for local job centres, together with a financial incentive to reduce the number of welfare claimants. In other countries, city administrations take a role in coordinating the range of regional and national agencies and organisations involved at the local level. In the UK, the Department of Work and Pensions is currently piloting a “City Strategy” aimed at finding local tailor-made solutions to unemployment, under the coordination of city administrations.

Cities do not develop macro economic policies but they have a clear role to play in creating conditions to help local businesses to flourish and create new jobs, for instance through facilitating access to affordable office space or creating tax incentives.

Cities can act as brokers between jobseekers and businesses, through local partnerships and jobcentres, providing information and advice on training, job opportunities and career guidance. Job matching and assistance to employers in finding the right employees are activities that can be complemented by specific, tailored measures targeted at specific groups of people or specific urban areas (this is the case of Preston Employment Partnerships in the UK and Jobbtorget in Stockholm and Malmo, Sweden). Some projects focus on community development, especially in areas with high rates of long-term unemployment (such as Local Activation Centres in Katowice, Poland). In addition, cities support cooperation between various agencies with a view to improving people’s employability, particularly those faced with multiple obstacles in getting back to work (such as Newcastle’s “Futures in Newcastle” (UK) and “ExiT Feijenoord” in Rotterdam (NL)\(^\text{20}\)).

Cities can facilitate the development of skills and the recognition of qualifications, especially those gained abroad. Some have developed innovative policies to help the accreditation of skills, with particular regard to migrants who hold qualifications and certificates that are not understood or accepted by local employers. For example, one-stop-agencies have been created in some

\(^{14}\) ECOTEC (2007), European Inventory and Validation in Informal and Non-formal learning.
\(^{16}\) Rubin et al. (2008) Migrant Women in the EU labour force.
\(^{19}\) OECD Employment Outlook 2009.
\(^{20}\) For more information on all city practices mentioned in this paper, please see www.inclusivocities.eu.
cities to facilitate the validation of qualifications and to provide information on training opportunities to migrants. In some cases, however, such initiatives are hampered by national institutions, as well as by complicated procedures. The European Qualifications Framework (EQF)\(^{21}\) may facilitate the translation and mutual recognition of migrants’ skills, including those from outside the EU, at least in the mid-term.

### 1.3 Key points for further consideration

There are at least three points that should be discussed when considering how to deal with unemployment at city level.

Firstly, there is a need to strike a balance between the approach that prioritises getting people into the labour market (the so-called “work first” approach) and the more long-term and comprehensive approach which focuses on addressing the multiple obstacles to employment. While it is important to provide the unemployed with paid work, it is also important to realise that the long-term unemployed are more likely to face multiple problems such as health, housing and access to ICT. Addressing these takes time and requires careful coordination between various services, as well as a person-centred approach.

Secondly, the problem of unemployment in urban areas often has a clear spatial dimension. Unemployment is higher in certain neighbourhoods and these same neighbourhoods frequently experience other social problems such as low levels of local activities, community engagement, associations and local support groups and community centres.

Thirdly, given the current economic slowdown and reduced budgetary resources in many countries, it is crucial to strike a balance between supporting the recently unemployed and those who have been out of work for a longer time. While it is important to make sure that the recently unemployed do not lose contact with the labour market (for example by participating in life-long learning programmes), this should not be at the expense of those who have been out of work for a longer time.

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\(^{21}\) The EQF relates different countries’ national qualifications systems to a common European reference framework. For more information see: www.ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc44_en.htm.
Child poverty

2.1. The issues
In most EU countries, children are at greater risk of poverty than the overall population. According to Eurostat in 2005, 19% of children aged 0-17 in the EU27 were at risk of poverty, compared to 16% of the entire population. The economic crisis is likely to have aggravated this situation. Several factors are associated with a higher risk of child poverty:

- joblessness: children living in households where no one works are at higher risk of poverty;
- large family size: across the EU27, there is a 25% chance that a child living in a large family is at risk of poverty;
- lone parent households: in 2005, the poverty rate for children living in lone parent households was almost twice as high as the average for all children (34% versus 19%) in the EU25;
- migrant background: in most EU countries, children of migrant origin (where at least one of the parents was born in a country other than the family lives) are at a much higher risk of poverty than children whose parents were both born in the country of residence.

Child poverty has a clear urban dimension, with many cities having higher levels of child poverty than the national averages. Cities participating in the project ‘European Cities Against Child Poverty’ observed that child poverty rates were higher in cities compared to the national average. For example, in London (UK), the rate of children living in poverty was 41% in 2006-07 compared to 30% nationally.

There are considerable differences in child poverty rates between neighbourhoods in the same city. Children living in poverty are most likely to live in the inner city or former working class neighbourhoods. In French urban areas, the majority of children living in poverty are in city centres rather than in suburban areas (62% versus 51%). In London (UK), 48% of deprived children live in the inner city.

Underprivileged children often live in areas characterised by multiple problems. Children that live in deprived neighbourhoods and in poor quality housing are more exposed to environmental pollution, violence and anti-social behaviour, are less healthy and perform worse at school than other children. Children in large families, especially those from migrant backgrounds, often live in overcrowded conditions, as it is often difficult for large families to find adequate living space. They also tend to succumb to more chronic diseases.

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22. European Commission (2008a), Child poverty and well-being in the EU.
25. European Commission (2008a), Child poverty and well-being in the EU.
26. European Cities Against Child Poverty is a transnational exchange project funded by PROGRESS, more information at www.againstchildpoverty.com.
2.2 Cities responses

Child poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon and no single policy fully addresses all elements of it. The socio-economic situation of families and the environment in which children live needs to be improved. Although cities have limited influence over social protection systems, they have an important role to play in mitigating and preventing child poverty. A number of measures have been identified at city level.

City administrations can help alleviate child poverty by:

- providing information and delivering services to families and children in an integrated way (one-stop shops such as “Sure Start Centres” in the UK);
- providing affordable childcare;
- awareness raising and healthy lifestyle promotion campaigns (“Doornakkers Gezond” campaign in Eindhoven (NL));
- providing children with increased learning opportunities (by organising extracurricular activities and making space available for learning activities);
- investing in playgrounds, green spaces and sports facilities (the regeneration programme for the Magdolna district in Budapest (HU));
- planning strategies for tackling child poverty by coordinating different city departments and by cooperating with the private sector (“Newcastle Child Poverty Strategy”, UK);
- promoting safer neighbourhoods;
- improving the take-up of benefits available by training social services frontline staff as well as implementing information programmes (“Welfare Rights Service” in Newcastle, UK)32;
- reducing noise and pollution in areas where disadvantaged children live.

2.3 Key points for further consideration

Combating child poverty requires integrated efforts and coordination between different policy areas at various levels of government as well as involvement from other stakeholders.

One emerging issue is whether the focus of activities should be on combating or preventing child poverty. Under the first approach, implemented actions tend to cover family support and employment programmes for the parents. Under a preventive approach, the implemented actions are wider in scope and include for the provision of social and health services for mothers-to-be and new parents, pre-natal and post-natal care and educational programmes.

Another emerging issue is how to stop the ‘poverty path’ between generations. On this issue, consideration should be given to the role of education, especially pre-school education, in minimising the impact of low socio-economic backgrounds on children later in life. Although education policy (i.e. setting the curriculum) is established at national level, responsibility for childcare and early schooling is usually with local authorities.

32. For more information see the Welfare Rights website: www.newcastle.gov.uk/welfarerights. On the role of local authorities in increasing benefit take up, see also “Take Up The Challenge. The role of local services in increasing take up of benefits and tax credits to reduce child poverty, A Report by the Take Up Taskforce”, 2009 available at: www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/.
Health inequalities

3.1 The issues

There is a clear social dimension to health: financially disadvantaged people experience poorer health and have a lower life expectancy than the rest of the population\textsuperscript{36}. Health inequalities are not only problematic from a social justice perspective, they are also extremely costly for society.

Significant disparities in health exist between people who live in cities and those who do not. In 2001, in the 258 EU cities covered by the Urban Audit, the average life expectancy for urban citizens was two years lower than for the EU27 average, which was 79 years for women and 73 years for men\textsuperscript{37}.

Differences in life expectancy within cities are even more striking. In major UK cities, such as Newcastle, Bristol, Southampton or Leeds, the difference in life expectancy between the richest and poorest neighbourhoods, ranges from 4.2 to 5.5 years for women and from 7 to 10.1 years for men\textsuperscript{35}; in Helsinki (FI), the life expectancy gap can be up to five years, depending on socio-economic status\textsuperscript{36}; in Warsaw (PL), this gap can be as high as 14.1 years for women and 16.1 years for men\textsuperscript{37}.

Education has an impact on people’s health. In Helsinki, the difference in life expectancy between those with higher and lower levels of education is 7.8 years for men and 4.2 for women\textsuperscript{38}. In Brussels (BE), a 25-year old male with a higher education diploma can live in good health up to 20 years longer than a man with a primary school qualification. For women, this difference is 18 years\textsuperscript{39}. In Rotterdam (NL), the share of people with diabetes is 2.2% amongst the holders of a Bachelor’s or Master’s degree compared to 11.2% of those with a primary school degree\textsuperscript{40}.

There is some evidence to suggest that people with a migrant background tend to suffer from poorer health compared to the native population. The main reason for this is lower socio-economic status rather than cultural differences\textsuperscript{41}:

- in the UK, people with a migrant background have a lower life expectancy than the rest of the population\textsuperscript{32};
- in Sweden, the rates of self-reported poor health are 2-3 times higher amongst those who were born abroad than among those born in Sweden. In Stockholm, the occurrence of diabetes is twice as high among persons born outside Sweden than among persons born in Sweden. The rate of mental illness among foreigners is 70% higher (adjusted for age, gender and socio-economic status)\textsuperscript{42};
- in the Netherlands, people with a migrant background report poorer health than non-migrants\textsuperscript{44}. In Eindhoven (NL), migrants from a non-Western background tend to suffer more from mental illnesses than other groups\textsuperscript{45}.

Across Europe, the financial losses related to health inequalities through reduced labour productivity were estimated to be 1.4% of GDP (€141bn) in 2004. Health inequalities also have a considerable impact on social security and health care systems with losses of 15% and 20% respectively in the EU as a whole\textsuperscript{46}. Investing in improving the health of the whole population can bring considerable savings to public spending and increase overall productivity.

\textsuperscript{34} European Commission (2007a) State of European Cities Report.
\textsuperscript{35} Association of Public Health Observatories, UK Health Profiles 2009.
\textsuperscript{36} Helsinki Health Department (2007) Health for the residents of Helsinki, Health Centre Annual Report.
\textsuperscript{37} Data for 2004-2007 gathered by the National Institute for Public Health (Poland) for the Warsaw City Health Department.
\textsuperscript{38} Helsinki Health Department (2007) Health for the residents of Helsinki, Health Centre Annual Report.
\textsuperscript{39} Baromètre social, Rapport bruxellois sur l’état de la pauvreté 2008, Observatoire de la Santé et du Social.
\textsuperscript{40} Contribution from Rotterdam City Council.
\textsuperscript{41} Tinhög et all (2007), To what extent may the association between immigrant status and mental illness be explained by economic factors? Social Psychiatry.
3.2 Cities responses
Cities hold direct responsibility for sectors that have a major impact on health, such as housing, social services, public health and the environment.
There are three important areas of city activity related to reducing social exclusion and inequalities in health:
- improving access to health services: cities organise information campaigns on available services or bring services closer to communities (this is the approach taken by Ghent (BE) which has primary health care units in all neighbourhoods);
- influencing the lifestyle factors that contribute to health inequalities: cities invest in improving access to healthcare. Other important measures include awareness raising campaigns on healthy eating, prevention programmes to reduce risky behaviour (such as reducing the consumption of alcohol, smoking or drugs) or promoting physical activity (for example, the programme “Doornakkers Gezond” in Eindhoven (NL) was set up to promote physical education at schools and improve access to and affordability of sports facilities, especially for disadvantaged families);
- reducing the negative effects of environmental pollution on health: cities invest not only in sanitation, but also in green spaces, playgrounds and sports facilities, especially in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Further measures include investment in housing improvements, (through improving energy efficiency - see chapter on housing) and improving air quality (through city planning, promoting environmentally friendly transport and smoke-free public spaces).

3.3 Key points for further consideration
Poor health is a result of a complex interplay of factors, including low socio-economic status, living environment, lifestyle and working conditions.
One of the emerging issues is how to mainstream health policy and health-related considerations in other policy areas such as transport, housing, employment and education, as well as within the voluntary and community sectors.
A second issue to be further considered is how to strike the balance between universal access to healthcare and targeted actions at specific urban neighbourhoods. Universal access sets out the right of everyone to access health care, however, this right is not always exercised due to poor accessibility of the services or insufficient knowledge by the user. City administrations are often active in identifying the groups or city areas with poor access to health services and in preparing strategies for improving the take up of health services.
4 Digital exclusion

4.1 The issues

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) applications play an important role in daily life such as managing social relationships, accessing services and information. However, lack of opportunities and inability to use ICT can increase the risk of disadvantaged people being left further behind as technology continues to develop.

In cities, there are disparities in access to and take-up of broadband between neighbourhoods. One of the reasons for these is insufficient Internet coverage or connection speed in some urban areas, especially those with income levels below the national average. A further reason is cost and the lack of affordable Internet connection. A recent report on the use of the Internet in France pointed out that there are different patterns for Internet take-up and use between wealthier and poorer neighbourhoods. Geographical disparities in ICT take-up are also due to people’s skill levels. Across the EU, it is estimated that 40% of the population have no digital skills. This proportion rises considerably in older age groups, people outside the labour force, those with a low level of education and those living in regions that lag behind economically.

Gender also affects the use of ICT, with lower usage rates reported for women. According to the “Digital Literacy Review” carried out by the European Commission, a low level of digital literacy is likely to lead to a digital divide in relation to the quality of technology available for citizens and the levels of confidence in using online applications. This divide is likely to amplify existing social divides and create new forms of social exclusion, with some groups of people and neighbourhoods not having access to the latest technologies.

The digital divide is a significant problem for several reasons. Firstly, many services and information sources such as job announcements are now advertised almost exclusively online. For people looking for employment, this means that a large proportion of job announcements are not available to them, simply because they lack the technology of skills to access them. Secondly, some services, such as banking and bill payment tend to be cheaper when done online, meaning that people on low incomes with no access to ICT cannot benefit from the cost reduction. Thirdly, in the context of lifelong learning policies, many educational courses and materials are developed and accessible online. For people who find it difficult to return to education or engage in training due to illness, family responsibilities or lack of motivation, the shortage of ICT training can further hinder their full socio and economic integration into society.

4.2 Cities responses

The promotion of digital equality can help mitigate the effects of social disadvantage and can prevent social exclusion.

Two main types of city intervention have been identified:
- Improving access to ICT in cities and especially in deprived areas. City administrations provide public access points where ICT can be used. These public access points are often situated in libraries, public buildings and in the offices of social organisations and community groups. They provide a space where people can access information on services available in the community, carry out job searches and use on-line services such as banking. This approach has been taken by Valencia (ES) (the “Valencia Ya” project) and by the Belgian city of Ghent (Digitaal Talent);
- Improving digital skills through ICT courses in schools or community centres. In some cases, in order to increase the attractiveness of ICT training and to reach out to different socio-economic groups, ICT training has been linked to other subjects, such as health or language. This approach has been taken by Birmingham in the UK (Healthy Way to Learn IT; Keeping IT in the Family).

49. Deursen, A. and Dijk J. (2009), Interacting with computers, Using the Internet: skill-related problems in users’ online behavior, Department of Media, Communication and Organisation, University of Twente.
52. Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) UK (2008), Understanding digital exclusion: Research Report, Report carried out by FreshMinds.
4.3 Key points for further consideration

Investment in ICT infrastructure can dramatically improve ICT accessibility, especially in deprived neighbourhoods. An important point to be considered is the identification of effective ways to improve the digital skills of citizens, especially in deprived areas and amongst specific groups at risk of new forms of social exclusion (such as the elderly) or those at risk of being further excluded from society (for example low skilled, unemployed people).

Further relevant issues include how city administrators can capitalise on new opportunities and how to best take advantage of the possibilities offered by ICT to improve the quality of access to services (for example reaching out the ‘hard to reach’ members of society). Cities can also improve the delivery of ICT services and create new methods to engage citizens.
5.1 The issues
Cultural events, as well as leisure and sporting activities, are a vital aspect of urban life. Participation in these activities offers city residents opportunities to participate in society, with positive effects on wellbeing and self-development. Systematic exclusion from cultural activities can reinforce feelings of social exclusion, marginalisation and distance from mainstream society.

There are a variety of reasons why disadvantaged groups tend to access cultural events less than other members of society. The key factor is the associated costs of participation, such as entrance fees and transport. Secondly, information about cultural activities is unevenly spread across society and some groups are not reached by mainstream media and advertisements. A third reason is accessibility, something very relevant for people with disabilities, but also for those who live in peripheral areas, poorly connected by public transport and without a car. Another factor is the type of cultural activities on offer: the activities might appeal only to a section of the community, and might have been designed without taking into consideration or consulting more disadvantaged groups. For example, a recent study in the UK has found that in larger cities, cultural events tend to be attended more by external visitors and commuters than locals from a disadvantaged background.

Cultural policies are also increasingly recognised as having a significant role to play in urban regeneration and in delivering social objectives through integrating traditional social policies, reaching out to disadvantaged communities, managing diversity, developing creative industries and offering new employment opportunities. More specifically, people’s full potential and self-confidence can be boosted through participation in cultural activities. Culture is related directly to community identities and can help build social cohesion as well as a positive sense of belonging. Participation in artistic initiatives helps to equip people with ‘soft skills’, such as team work, communication, responsibility-taking and problem solving, therefore increasing their employability. Furthermore, cultural activities are associated with creative industries, such as music, media, leisure and entertainment, and can help young people in particular to find employment in these sectors.

However, a culture-led approach to social inclusion is not fully developed in all Member States and there is room for improving coordination and integration between the cultural and the social sectors.

5.2 Cities responses
In many cities, local governments have some responsibilities for culture policy. Cities can implement a number of activities to increase access to cultural activities and to foster social inclusion through culture.

To increase participation in cultural activities, London’s permanent exhibitions in all public museums are free of charge (UK), while in Helsinki (FI), entrance to the national museum is free on Fridays. Many cities, such as Leipzig (DE) or The Hague (NL) offer discounts on cultural, leisure and sports activities for young people and people on low incomes. Some cities organise cultural events which are free of charge, such as European Heritage Days or culture nights. Furthermore, considerations for disabled-people’s needs are increasingly becoming part of planning and designing cultural events, although the adaptation of the built environment and infrastructure still presents a challenge.

To capitalise on the benefits of culture in promoting social inclusion, many European cities have hosted multicultural events, enabling ethnic minorities to express their cultural identities and indigenous people to understand and engage with people from other cultural background. Belfast’s Mela Festival (UK), the Berlin Carnival of Cultures (DE) and the Warsaw Cross-Culture Festival (PL) are all examples of cities promoting their multicultural make-up. In Birmingham (UK), culture is seen as a means for building cohesive communities and reaching out to peripheral neighbourhoods.
5.3 Key points for further consideration

Culture is a vital element which can support traditional ways of promoting social inclusion and social cohesion. Discussions on this policy area should address the following key issues:

- identifying ways to ensure the full participation of groups at high risk of exclusion into cultural activities, such as disabled people, low-income people, immigrants;
- investigating the contribution that a culture-led approach can make to the social agenda;
- exploring ways to better integrate culture into activities for the promotion of social inclusion, community development and people’s engagement, including how to encourage social workers and artists to work together.
6.1 The issues

Being mobile is a precondition for full participation in society, as places such as schools, offices, shops, sports and leisure facilities are often dispersed across cities. Local public transport fulfils a crucial role in providing affordable and sustainable mobility. However, these can be costly, low quality and do not always serve the entire urban area. A number of factors in urban mobility can lead to worsening social exclusion:

- for people on low incomes public transport in some cities is often too expensive and thus unaffordable;
- some residential areas are not well serviced by public transport. This problem is particularly evident in areas of decline, where depopulation leads to falling demand and fewer – or more expensive - services, reinforcing the exclusion of the remaining population;
- for safety reasons, some groups, such as women and the elderly, may feel concerned over using public transport at certain times such as late at night;\(^\text{59}\);
- suburbanisation and disperse patterns of development (such as out-of-town shopping centres and office buildings) require adequate public transport systems. Without these, the risk is to exclude those without a private car from fully benefitting while increasing car-dependency which can lead to unsustainable traffic congestion and pollution\(^\text{60}\).

6.2 Cities responses

Over the past number of years, many cities have started to improve public transport networks, expanding into areas where car ownership is low or where there is a high proportion of older people or people on low incomes. One example is “Grand Paris”, which aims at extending the public transport zone further into the suburbs of Paris (FR).

Through the development of more comprehensive urban mobility plans, cities can also address issues of exclusion. These plans take into account other policy areas such as health, education and housing with the view to tackling or preventing exclusion. Many cities promote the use of combined means of transport by investing in cycle and walking paths, making cities more pedestrian and bicycle friendly. An example is London’s “Streets of Gold” programme (UK), designed to make the city more pedestrian friendly. Cities are also investing in rental bikes and encouraging car sharing schemes. Promotion of walking and cycling is often related to health policies in cities, especially schools (for example, in tackling problems such as childhood obesity).

Some cities have introduced special pricing policies, such as financial incentives for certain target groups (for example, pensioners, low income groups etc). For example, in Gdansk (PL), free tickets for public transport are provided to those seeking employment. Similar initiatives have been implemented in Vienna (AT), Leipzig (DE) and Budapest (HU).

Equally important are plans aimed at bringing services, including shopping facilities, closer to communities. Cities can encourage small retail outlets in specific neighbourhoods through tax breaks and favourable land permissions. Cities can also strategically and carefully plan the location of local services in under-served communities.

6.3 Key points for further consideration

To reduce inequalities and exclusion in public transport, a number of issues should be further considered such as:

- finding ways to improve coordination between local transport authorities and other local departments in order to prepare more comprehensive mobility plans. These plans should include the needs assessment of different urban neighbourhoods and the impact that transport has on them (especially in relation to access to services);
- identifying ways to make public transport more affordable, especially for those on low incomes, as well as improving the quality and safety of public transport, particularly for vulnerable groups;
- increasing the number of barrier-free vehicles, such as wheelchair accessible buses and trams, with the view to making public transport more attractive.

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Housing exclusion and homelessness

7.1 The issues

Adequate housing has a fundamental impact on life chances and quality of life. Housing exclusion ranges from poor quality housing, including a lack of basic sanitary facilities, heating and insulation, to the deprivation of personal accommodation (such as eviction or living in temporary accommodation), to homelessness, the most extreme form of housing exclusion. In discussing housing, two main issues have to be addressed: accessibility and quality. Access to housing covers housing costs, availability of affordable housing, the emergence of new groups at risk of housing exclusion and the increase in demand for new types of housing, as well as homelessness. Quality covers issues such as substandard housing, fuel poverty and health risks.

Access to housing

One of the main causes of housing exclusion is the high cost of this as a proportion of the household budget. For example, in 2005, housing costs represented on average 33% of the total household budget, with lower income households spending 37% of their income on accommodation.

A second problem, which is closely interlinked with the first, is the lack of availability of housing, in particular, affordable housing. In the French region of Isère, there is only enough social housing to meet 40% of demand. In Ghent (BE), the waiting time for social housing is now 2.5 years. Some groups are also likely to have more difficulty in accessing housing (for example sedentary Roma).

Increased migration and the economic downturn, coupled with rising unemployment have led to the emergence of new groups at risk of housing exclusion such as newly arrived migrants, young people, families and people on middle incomes who are priced out of the market.

In addition, socio-demographic changes such as the ageing population and family break-ups have also lead to demand for new types of housing such as one-person flats. The number of single-person households already makes up more than 50% of households in cities such as Munich (DE), Amsterdam (NL) and London (UK).

Homelessness is the most radical form of housing exclusion. Its causes are manifold, touching upon several interrelated aspects of social exclusion, such as unemployment, mental health problems, substance abuse and family breakdown. Over the last few years, the profile of homeless people has changed, with an increase in women, migrants and other vulnerable people with precarious work situations becoming homeless.

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68. FEANTSA (2008b) The Role of housing in pathways into and out of homelessness.
7.2 Cities responses

Cities responses to housing exclusion can be grouped under three main headings: improving access to affordable housing; improving the quality of housing; and provision of services to the homeless.

➤ Improving access to affordable housing

This can be done through pricing policies, setting quotas for affordable housing and rent control. In Amsterdam (NL), Helsinki (FI) and Vienna (AT) the price for social housing is fixed at a level that is below the market value. In German cities, ‘social housing grants’ are given to private developers, who in return have to rent their accommodation for a fixed period at a price that reflects the real costs of the housing and not its market value.

Cities such as Dublin (IE), London (UK) and Madrid (ES) have introduced targets to take affordable housing into account when planning and building new developments. In each of these cities, 50% of new housing developments must be affordable housing. Such policies are helped by public land ownership.

Legal restrictions and controls in pricing and renting private housing are also used. In Amsterdam (NL), rent regulations mean that there is a ceiling, while most European cities have legislation regulating the annual increase of rents. These measures prevent a sharp increase in housing rents however, they do not have an impact on facilitating access to housing.

➤ Quality of housing

Housing exclusion can also mean inadequate living conditions. The conditions of the dwelling and the amount of available living space per person greatly affect quality of life.

According to the 2004 Urban Audit, in many cities, there are houses that lack basic amenities such as hot or running water, flush toilets, bath/shower and a central sewerage connection. The highest proportion of substandard housing was to be found in Ljubljana (19%) (SI), Lodz (17%) (PL), Copenhagen (15%) (DK) and Katowice (13%) (PL). Based on its own monitoring, Ghent (BE) classifies 15% of its housing stock as inadequate.

Inadequate housing is sometimes concentrated in specific neighbourhoods. In Budapest’s Magdolna district (HU), 21% of houses do not have basic amenities and 40% are overcrowded. The data from Ghent also suggest that in some neighbourhoods, the rate of uninhabitable housing is very high.

A problem related to substandard housing is fuel poverty. Fuel poverty refers to a “household’s difficulty or even inability to adequately heat its dwelling at a fair price.” It is estimated that about 10 – 25% of the European population is affected by this. People on low incomes are hardest hit due to rising energy prices.

In London (UK), 10% of households are considered as fuel poor. Often, people affected by fuel poverty live in substandard housing (without proper insulation for example), with a high loss of heat and energy.

Substandard housing also increases health risks. The LARES-survey (Large Analysis and Review of European housing and health Status) shows that mould growth, noise pollution and sleep disturbance is much more frequent in the housing of lower income groups.

73. EPEE (2009a) Diagnosis of Causes and Consequences of Fuel Poverty in Belgium, France, Italy, Spain, and United Kingdom.
74. EPEE (2009a) Diagnosis of Causes and Consequences of Fuel Poverty in Belgium, France, Italy, Spain, and United Kingdom.
77. More than 3,000 residents of eight European cities were interviewed for LARES on health risks related to their dwelling. The survey was conducted in Forli (IT), Vilnius (LT), Ferreira do Alentejo (PO), Bonn (DE), Geneva (CH), Angers (FR), Bratislava (SI), and Budapest (HU) in 2002/2003.
Improving the quality of housing

This type of intervention aims at improving the housing situation as well as the health and well-being of people. Urban regeneration programmes and home improvement subsidies have typically been used to improve housing quality.

Cities also invest in improving insulation to increase the energy efficiency of housing. Newcastle (UK) provides free or discounted insulation and heating along with energy efficiency advice for low-income households.80

Many cities promote campaigns to raise people’s awareness on how to save energy (for example encouraging people to switch off the ‘standby’ mode of household appliances or to use energy saving light bulbs). In Frankfurt (DE), unemployed people have been trained to become energy advisors and help low-income households save energy. In Leeds (UK), free energy efficiency advice is provided to city inhabitants, while in Utrecht (NL), Turkish and Moroccan women have been trained in waste recycling and energy saving measures.83 These women then advise others on how to save energy in the home.

City administrations also cooperate with landlords to improve housing conditions. The city of Rotterdam (NL) signed an agreement with housing associations to improve the housing conditions of migrant workers, fight overcrowding and the exploitation of vulnerable people.

Services for homeless people

To prevent and tackle homelessness, cities coordinate and integrate social and health services with housing agencies. There are two main approaches: the so-called ‘integrated chain’ approach and the ‘housing first’ approach.

In the “integrated chain approach”, cities put in place and coordinate a range of services, with the view to eventual independent living. This approach has been developed in Barcelona (ES) (“Municipal Care for the homeless” programme), Munich (DE) (Department for homelessness support ZEW), Stockholm (SE), Vienna (AT) and other cities.84

In the “housing first” approach, long-term housing is provided as soon as possible to homeless people, with support services coming after the person is settled in a stable housing environment. This approach is used in cities such as Dublin (IE), Oslo (NO) and Helsinki (FI).

7.3 Key points for further consideration

There are several points that should be discussed by practitioners.

Firstly, with changing patterns of household size and the arrival of large groups of migrants in some cities, the question is how to ensure close monitoring of the changing housing needs and housing situations (for example to prevent newcomers, especially immigrants, from paying artificially high prices for low quality and often over-crowded housing).

The second issue relates to how to strengthen the link between housing improvements and sustainability at the local level and how to maximise possible synergies with other policy areas (i.e. creating ‘green jobs’). This requires a coordinated approach between different city departments as well as with the private sector.

Finally, the discussion should address how to work with private landlords to prevent homelessness, ensure affordable housing, and to facilitate necessary technical improvements to building.

81. CARITEM Energiesparservice: www.stromspar-check.de.
82. Fuelsavers www.leeds.gov.uk/fuelsavers.
83. €nergy Profit: www.utrecht.nl/milieu.
84. See the examples in EUROCITIES (2009b) City strategies against homelessness – the integrated chain approach.
Social segregation and disadvantaged neighbourhoods

8.1 The issues

Since the late 1990s, a new type of area-based approach to social inclusion has been developed in many European countries. The background for this policy development is the growing geographical concentration of disadvantaged people in many cities, a factor that represents an additional obstacle to the people who live there. Contrary to programmes for physical renewal, these new policies address the social situation in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in an integrated way. Conversely to people-based approaches to social inclusion (such as the provision of unemployment benefits), area-based policies have clearly delimited neighbourhoods as units of intervention. In other words, these policies are neither applied to specific individuals nor to the whole city territory.

Typically, residential segregation along socio-economic lines was strongest in North-Western Europe. However, in other parts of Europe, segregation is increasing for various social and economic reasons (such as the impact of de-industrialisation on local labour markets, migration, etc.). In eastern European cities, urban segregation occurs at a much lower scale due to a wider social mix in large housing estates, and tends to affect labour migrants from Africa, Asia and South America as well as Roma.

The main challenge of deprived neighbourhoods is that they are faced with a concentration and combination of economic, social and environmental problems, cumulating in the local population experiencing an additional level of exclusion.

A further problem affecting disadvantaged areas is the quality of the built environment and public infrastructure, with the quality of housing conditions, public spaces, public services and schools often being below the national or city average. This is further aggravated by a lack of basic facilities as services and retailers relocate due to the low purchasing power of the area.

People living in deprived areas tend to suffer from multiple disadvantages ranging from a lack of opportunities (stemming from poor-quality schools and few local businesses), to low aspiration levels (due to a lack of positive role models), to reduced mobility and low levels of political participation. This is further aggravated by private services relocating because of the low purchasing power of the area. A negative image is often associated with these areas, often through media reports focusing on criminality and social problems. As a consequence, local inhabitants are often stigmatised to the point that it is more difficult for them to find a job.

8.2 Cities responses

As a response to the concentration of challenges in urban neighbourhoods, area-based policies and programmes have been developed in European cities. For example, area-based programmes are in place in Belgium ("Politique des Grandes Villes", since 1999), Germany ("Soziale Stadt", since 1999), France ("Politique de la ville", since 1981), Hungary ("Integrated Urban Development Strategy", since 2008), the Netherlands ("Grote Steden Beleid", since 1995), Sweden ("stortadspolitiken", since 1999) and in the UK ("New Deal for Communities", since 1998).

The key characteristic of area-based programmes is that they aim to promote inclusion and cohesion in disadvantaged areas in an integrated way. They share a number of other common features:

- horizontal coordination between different sectors in local administrations, who work together and pool sectoral budgets to achieve objectives that have been defined together;
- vertical coordination between programming at European, national and regional levels and the local administration. The implementation of the programme on the ground fully reflects this;
- an integrated strategy that defines goals, objectives and instruments for horizontal and vertical cooperation and provides a framework for their regular evaluation;
- a multi-actor approach which brings city governments together with citizens, entrepreneurs and civil society with the common goal of developing the neighbourhood;

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a focus on residents’ empowerment and participation in setting the objectives, evaluating the programmes, proposing projects or deciding on how parts of the budget are spent;

- a relatively low budget compared to people-based policies or physical regeneration programmes that subsidise private investments and often demand co-financing;

- data collection at a small scale level to support the selection and monitoring of programme areas.

Area-based approaches have proven to be effective in initiating positive outcomes in some areas. Area-based programmes often serve as “laboratories” in which new forms of interventions and governance have been developed and tested, such as resident participation, cross-sectoral cooperation and planning within a strategic framework.

The scope of area-based programmes is limited by the geographic boundaries of programme areas. This raises concerns that problems are simply displaced, rather than solved (i.e. disadvantaged people moving out of the areas that are undergoing a regeneration process). Sometimes the effectiveness of the programme is limited by that fact that the real causes of problems are situated outside the neighbourhood. It has been argued that it is difficult to break long-lasting cycles of deprivation with these comparatively small programmes which operate with small budgets and in relatively short time-frames.

Combining an area-based approach with a people-based approach remains a challenge in many cities, not least because the relevant funding instruments are often incompatible. Nevertheless, to achieve real integrated local development, both must be implemented together.

8.3 Key points for further consideration

Area-based policies aim to integrate different policies (e.g. social mix, housing renewal, local economic development, environment). Discussions on area-based approaches should address the following key issues:

- identifying the factors (e.g. governance systems, types of interventions and approaches, ways to involve the local community) that are likely to increase the efficiency of area-based programmes and to support the delivery of better results in deprived areas;

- finding ways to better coordinate area-based and people-based policies (e.g. employment benefits and other welfare state provisions), also integrating and creating synergies between the related funding streams;

- identifying follow-up strategies to area-based programmes to make their achievements sustainable (by mainstreaming successful approaches) and available to other cities neighbourhood (by sharing the lessons learnt).
Conclusion

Poverty and social exclusion are complex and multifaceted phenomena. They have different dimensions which are often interrelated and mutually-reinforcing. Typically, they refer to a situation in which several interlinked problems occur in combination. The multidimensionality of poverty and social exclusion can be experienced at a personal level, with a person being at the same time unemployed, living in poor-quality housing, having low skills and poor health conditions, as well as at the community level, with an entire neighbourhood experiencing low levels of economic activity and social participation, insufficient services, inadequate housing and a lack of cultural and recreational facilities.

Cities do not have control over many of the deep-rooted causes of poverty and social exclusion, as these are set out at the national and international level (i.e. global macro-economic trends). Cities have limited control over the structure of welfare policies, which are typically set at national level. However, cities can play an important role in alleviating, preventing and tackling social exclusion and poverty by taking flexible and innovative solutions at local level. Cities can do this by promoting better policy coordination between city departments dealing with different issues, building partnerships with NGOs, the private sector, local communities and citizens and improving cooperation with other levels of government, including the national level. Some cities are already moving towards tailor-made approaches, offering more integrated and personalised services and support (i.e. bringing services closer to communities and the creation of one-stop-shop type centres). At the neighbourhood level, there are already some good examples of cities trying to better integrate education, employment, health and housing policies into their social policy strategies.

An approach to integrated local development that effectively combines the physical and social dimensions of urban development and is based on long-term integrated and coordinated strategies can help create innovative solutions and synergies between social, economic, environmental and physical policies. Such an integrated approach can help address the multidimensional challenge of poverty and exclusion in our cities.

To conclude, the key message of this paper is that poverty and social exclusion are cross-cutting issues, affecting several policy areas and requiring well integrated and coordinated policy responses. The 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion is a real opportunity for stakeholders to reflect on the social exclusion dimension of the policy area they are dealing with, as well as to find better mechanisms to improve policy coordination and integration.
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This report was brought to you by:

Simon Guentner, EUROCITIES Senior Policy Officer - Social Affairs;
Silvia Ganzerla, EUROCITIES Senior Policy Officer - Social Affairs;
Anna Drozd, EUROCITIES Programme Officer - Social Inclusion PROGRESS;
Dirk Gebhardt, EUROCITIES Programme Officer - Migration and Integration; and
Caroline Greene, EUROCITIES Communications Officer - Inclusive Cities.

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