Creating our futures

ECTP-CEU

European Council of Spatial Planners
Conseil européen des urbanistes

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Position paper on The New Leipzig Charter

The ECTP-CEU, the European community of spatial planners, welcomes the initiative of revising the 2007 Leipzig Charter and supports the efforts of writing a New Leipzig Charter. The ECTP-CEU has been participating actively in the revision process so far, considering it to be an important step, improving the quality of urban policies in the European Union.

In this final stage of the process, the ECTP-CEU, supporting the overall structure, setup and content of the Charter and the implementation document, wishes to add a few suggestions, collected amongst its national member organisations and assembled by the Leipzig Charter Working Group.

General remarks

1. The current Covid-19 crisis cannot be absent in the Charter. At the same time we understand and support the Charter reflecting universal values. We agree the position taken that the current text can be considered quite 'pandemic proof', e.a. highlighting the importance of common goods and quality of living, but we suggest to add a special paragraph, in the implementation document, dedicated on how to deal with the effects of the COVID-19. Especially relaunch policies providing an answer to the Covid-19 crisis, may endanger the vitality and compact patterns of the inner cities, cause additional land take, weaken public transport facilities and so on.

2. We propose having more cohesion in the EU directives regarding urban development and planning activities. Therefore, we suggest inserting the following sentence (line 407): *'We, the Ministers, especially invite the European Commission to conduct an assessment of the EU directives related to both environmental assessment procedures and services within the internal market with the objective to streamline with urban development policies and to abolish unnecessary burdens on the shoulders of local governments while conducting their planning procedures.'*

3. The small and medium sized cities are mentioned as important key players and active stakeholders. Specific attention needs to go to their technical and policy making support, related to the various European funds in general, the Urban agenda in particular. Related with this, but also in favour of the support of National Urban Agenda's, the ECTP-CEU encourages the setup of a strong European secretariat of the Urban Agenda. Strengthening spatial planning faces challenges of establishing a genuine planning culture.

4. We agree the equal rights statements of the 'just city' concept, but suggest to add a sentence indicating that these universal values need to be translated, taking account of the local cultural and social values, together with the local communities.

5. We propose to introduce a short paragraph in the Charter, which emphasizes the importance of developing a European planning culture, i.e. how planning policies and planning tools are translated into practice and qualitatively implemented by planning professionals, non-governmental organisations and communities all together.

Punctual text suggestions

6. Line 14. Not only "digital technologies are drastically transforming society", but bio-technologies are equally transforming drastically our society. As bio-technologies are very important for cities and regions, they should be added.
7. Line 84. It is important to write about risks, such as "economic risks", but it is necessary to include here other risks, such as: earthquakes, oil rig blow ret, fires, storms, pandemic or volcanoes. These risks are equally important.
8. Line 86-122: we propose using "..levels of urban development" or "levels of urban organisation" or other reasonable wording instead of 'levels of cities'.
9. Line 169. Circular economy is an important subject related to cities and regions, but it is only mentioned once as something for the future. The ECTP-CEU proposes to change the title from "The productive city" to "The circular productive city", and to add a phrase about the benefits of circular economy for cities and regions.
10. Lines 215 to 227 – Common goods include also security. Security, when citizen are questioned, is mentioned as one of the their main concerns. In this paragraph, security should be included as a main component of spatial planning.
11. Line 229 to 236 – Integrated approach. It is important to include that integrated approach includes 'short term and medium term approaches, considering long term objectives or strategies'. This integration is essential for resilience, for example.
12. Lines 288 to 302 – Cities need also:
    a. To exchange knowledge with Universities and Research Institutions;
    b. To protect citizens, mainly the ones with special needs;
    c. To provide security.
13. Line 308 – In the 'Active and strategic land policy and land use planning', a clear statement on the control of real estate prices need to be added. Especially the effect it has on negative gentrification.
14. *Line 332 – 'Active shaping of the digital transformation' – In some cases digital information conflicts with privacy. Some can be used in favour of objectives of totalitarian surveyance. It is very important to include a phrase saying:* *'Surveyance tools can be an intolerant intrusion in privacy. It is necessary to empower citizens in governing institutions, to control digital systems and its applications.'*
15. Line 435 – Include : 'Citizens and enterprises'.

Thank you for taking care of a qualitative urban development in Europe!

Joris Scheers

Secretary-general
Chair WG Leipzig Charter