

ACR+ FEEDBACK ON THE EU AGENDA FOR CITIES

ASSOCIATION
OF CITIES
AND REGIONS
FOR SUSTAINABLE
RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT

From April to May 2025, the European Commission opened a [call for evidence](#) for its initiative "EU Agenda for Cities". This initiative will put forward an EU agenda for cities that takes stock of EU initiatives and instruments to streamline the current support for cities. It will strengthen the EU's ambition for cities by improving processes through which issues facing cities can be better integrated into future EU policymaking. The initiative will supplement related deliverables, such as the European affordable housing plan. ACR+ subsequently contributed the following feedback:

The Association of Cities and Regions for sustainable Resource management (ACR+) connects 48 local and regional authorities from 15 countries leading the transition to a collaborative circular economy. With expertise supporting cities and regional authorities to achieve sustainable resource management, ACR+ welcomes the call for evidence for an EU Agenda for Cities.

Cities are central to delivering EU policies. Beyond implementation, they serve as investors, innovators, consumers and producers. At the same time, cities do not stand alone. Regions provide the material resources and energy that power cities' contributions to EU priorities. Recognising the shared importance of both cities and regions, a territorial approach is needed to deliver goals including decarbonisation, competitiveness, and social cohesion. By positioning local and regional governments at the heart of the transition, supported by flexible regulations that accommodate diverse local needs, a bottom-up planning approach can leverage local skills, expertise, and resources to best support industry, businesses, and SMEs.

Furthermore, with respect to territorial hierarchies, local actors should be empowered to design and implement local solutions wherever such solutions are best positioned to secure lasting environmental, social, and economic sustainability. To achieve this, capacity building among local authorities and public servants is fundamental. Adopting a peer-to-peer approach toward capacity building like the EU Taix (Technical Assistance and Information Exchange) could harness and multiply the expertise of local actors from all 27 Member States via workshops, expert missions, and study visits.

No single city or municipality can tackle industrial or ecological challenges alone. Stronger cross-border cooperation between authorities can be strengthened by facilitating joint investment projects, reducing administrative barriers, and aligning regulatory frameworks. In turn, new interregional synergies can accelerate innovation, bridge skills gaps, and strengthen European cohesion – all while bolstering resilience and competitiveness.

Finally, cities must embrace the circular economy to achieve well-being for all with respect to planetary boundaries. The Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy has already enabled local authorities to become leaders in implementing ambitious European climate and energy objectives on their territory. The scope of this initiative should now be expanded to include circular economy, recognising its potential as a driver of European strategic resource autonomy, climate mitigation, competitiveness, and environmental protection.