“A human scale city is a resilient city.”

“Sustainable cities have to put people at the centre.”

“Take every opportunity you get to give space back to the people.”

HOW CAN YOUR CITY GET TO...
A HUMAN SCALE?
OPENING STATEMENTS

European Commission - DG ENV

Europe is one of the most urbanised places in the world, and how we design and develop our cities has a major impact on our future. Cities should, ideally, be a place of advanced social progress, providing high quality of life and welfare for all. They should be a platform for democracy, cultural dialogue and a place of green, ecological and environmental regeneration. Many European cities, like the members of the European Green Capital Network (EGCN), provide their residents with great urban areas to live in.

Previous EGCN toolkits have covered how your city can become future-proof, 100% renewable, the next European Green Capital, and reach its waste reduction goals. This toolkit brings back a lot of those topics and illustrates that a city can only be sustainable if it provides quality of life for all. A people-centred approach is essential in creating the city we so often envision in our future - a human scale city. In times of crisis, like the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for such a city becomes even more evident.

We must leave no one behind and focus on creating cities with a high degree of social cohesion. For this reason, a just transition is one of the pillars of the European Green Deal, and the Just Transition Mechanism mobilises at least €150 billion for that purpose. Today’s major public health and economic crises have only served to reinforce Europe’s common resolve to build back greener and to transform Europe’s economy for a sustainable future.

In Vitoria-Gasteiz, we’ve been committed to the Agenda 21 for several decades, as well as to the SDGs, especially SDG 11, which envisions inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities. For this reason, we have adopted policies that aim to improve and revitalise public spaces and green areas, reducing urban sprawl and increasing urban stability and citizen health and welfare. Particularly important among these policies are the Green Urban Infrastructure Strategy and the Sustainable Mobility and Public Space Plan. A critical development in mobility has been the introduction of the “superblock” as a basic spatial unit for the reorganisation of the city’s mobility networks, which makes urban mobility people-centred. Other measures, such as encouraging cycling and conditioning urban paths, are also helping to reduce the use of private cars.

More vegetation and an array of nature-based solutions (NBSs) are being introduced in the urban space. The city is becoming more natural, leading to an increase in ecosystem services and improving its habitability and resilience against climate change. This EGCN workshop came at a crucial moment, in April 2020, when Vitoria-Gasteiz was due to host the European Green Capital Network (EGCN) workshop on “Human Scale Cities”. However, the COVID-19 pandemic forced us to adapt, and turn the physical meeting into a virtual one. The challenges arising from the pandemic have even more strongly shown us how important it is for a city to be “human scale”. Such a city is designed and managed by focussing on people, and putting them – their health, safety and well-being – above other considerations.

In Vitoria-Gasteiz, we are committed to the European Green Deal and its 2030 Agenda. Our city is a platform for democracy, cultural dialogue and welfare for all. They should, ideally, be a place of advanced social progress, providing high quality of life and welfare for all. They should be a platform for democracy, cultural dialogue and a place of green, ecological and environmental regeneration. Many European cities, like the members of the European Green Capital Network (EGCN), provide their residents with great urban areas to live in.

Florika Fink-Hooijer
Director General for Environment
European Commission

Vitoria-Gasteiz
Deputy Mayor
Vitoria-Gasteiz City Council

Opening statements
Why is now the time to act?
Transformation pathways
Crisis and the human scale city
This is not the end
Imprint

This toolkit covers the following indicator areas for the European Green Capital Award:
- Air Quality
- Noise
- Waste
- Water
- Nature and Biodiversity
- Sustainable Land Use and Soil
- Green Growth and Eco-innovation
- Climate Change: Mitigation
- Climate Change: Adaptation
- Sustainable Urban Mobility
- Energy Performance
- Governance

Cover image: Quintas Fotógrafos
WHY IS NOW THE TIME TO ACT?

Urban areas are growing at ever greater speeds, and their environmental impacts are increasing accordingly. The larger a city grows, the more green spaces turn into grey infrastructure. For instance, additional roads are being built to compensate for increased distance from city centers. As a result, a city’s arteries become congested, also leading to other forms of problems, such as air pollution and noise.

As we pause to contemplate this vision, we need to ask ourselves: is this really the type of city that we want? Fortunately, for many of us, the answer is no!

The “human scale city” is a far more sustainable vision. It reconnects us to the historical European city, which was pedestrian-oriented and combined density with abundant public spaces and nature-rich areas. Human scale cities are also well-connected with their surrounding, often rural areas.

A human scale city offers low-carbon mobility options and alternatives to urban sprawl. The “15-minute city” pioneered by Paris’s Mayor, Anne Hidalgo, is a vision of the human scale city built around four key components:

1. **livable density**, seeking to offer inhabitants a quasi-immediate proximity to social, cultural, economic and environmental amenities.
2. **eye-level city**, one built for pedestrians and cyclists, with high-quality public places. In this type of city, life happens out in the open and people are connecting and socialising, rather than remaining tucked away in high-rise city blocks and privatised spaces.
3. **diversity**, which was pedestrian-oriented and combined density with abundant public spaces and nature-rich areas. Human scale cities are also well-connected with their surrounding, often rural areas.
4. **livable density**, seeking to offer inhabitants a quasi-immediate proximity to social, cultural, economic and environmental amenities.

The last two components are all about **diversity**. Human scale cities come in many shades – not just grey but also green and blue. Parks, rivers and other natural spaces must also be equitably distributed across the city’s neighbourhoods. Finally, a human scale city is a city for all, taking into account the needs of all inhabitants in the city’s planning – from children to the elderly and newly arrived migrants to differently abled persons.

Ultimately, a genuinely human scale city emerges from the interconnection of these elements that yield a high quality of life for all inhabitants.

Europe is in a moment of societal transition, and the cities that we plan now will have long-lasting effects. It is therefore crucial that we develop clear and positive visions that underpin the wellbeing of urban citizens and their environment.

TRANSFORMATION STORIES

**Umeå: Gender and urban space**

Umeå has a long history of working on gender equality, and has had a committee dedicated to working on the topic since the mid-1990s. One of the biggest challenges the city faces is influencing behavioural change, especially in relation to mobility. Every five years, Umeå conducts a travel habit survey among residents. The results clearly show that women are using sustainable modes of transport in far greater numbers than men.

For this reason, getting men to use more sustainable modes of transport is one of the easiest ways to reduce emissions in the transportation sector.

Compared to other cities, relatively few women in Umeå are concerned about safety on public transport. However, the city is interested in studying whether or not the bus driver is a key factor here, providing a sense of security which might disappear with the introduction of autonomous vehicles. However, there are, of course, public spaces in Umeå where women feel unsafe. In these areas, the city is trying to focus on places women cannot easily avoid, like bus stops or certain travel routes. For example, Umeå completely redesigned a passageway under the railway station, so that everyone, women in particular, would feel safer walking there.

It is now a wide, well-lit space with rounded corners. A key component of this project is the inclusion of artwork and quotes on the walls, which are chosen to reflect women’s thoughts on safety. For example, one quote is: “Walking is freedom. Men walk with confidence while women walk with uncertainty.”

Compared to other cities, relatively few women in Umeå are concerned about safety on public transport. However, the city is interested in studying whether or not the bus driver is a key factor here, providing a sense of security which might disappear with the introduction of autonomous vehicles. However, there are, of course, public spaces in Umeå where women feel unsafe. In these areas, the city is trying to focus on places women cannot easily avoid, like bus stops or certain travel routes. For example, Umeå completely redesigned a passageway under the railway station, so that everyone, women in particular, would feel safer walking there. For this reason, getting men to use more sustainable modes of transport is one of the easiest ways to reduce emissions in the transportation sector.

**Copenhagen: Architecture for people**

Similar to many other cities, Copenhagen faces the challenge of providing housing for a growing population, while also protecting green spaces and implementing climate adaptation measures. Part of Copenhagen’s strategy to deal with this is its “architecture for people” policy. The policy is designed to protect the needs of people and their needs should be put (back) at the centre of architecture, and that a human scale should be considered. The policy covers three themes: architecture should be built on the distinct character of Copenhagen, be built for Copenhagen life and be designed responsibly. Therefore, architecture should be engaging, livable and enhance quality of life also with the help of adaptation measures. High quality architecture is also linked to affordable housing, and all new housing developments in urban development areas are required to have at least 25% affordable housing. The city sees this policy as a tool which, in combination with other directives, can help move Copenhagen to a more sustainable future.

**Hamburg: The Elbe Boulevard**

Hamburg, like many other coastal cities, is being forced to adapt to rising sea levels. One example of how this can be achieved, while also improving urban space, is the Elbe Boulevard project – a new flood protection facility. The former flood protection structure had plain, steep walls which needed to be heightened from 7.2m to 8.9m. Rather than simply increasing the height of the wall, the city used the opportunity to completely rebuild the structure, leading to the creation of the 1.3km-long Elbe Boulevard. White staircases now flank a wide promenade made from black basalt. The Elbe Boulevard is not closed off but open on both sides and connects the harbour ferry terminal with the HafenCity, the surrounding neighbourhood, and the famous concert hall, Elbphilharmonie. The structure now includes places to sit, restaurants and cafes as well as underground parking. The result is an open space in the city centre that is a popular destination for locals and tourists alike.

The Elbe Boulevard opened in 2019 and cost €136 million to complete.
There are numerous green spaces in Vitoria-Gasteiz, both within the city and around it. In addition, there are many natural systems, including rivers, streams, mountains and forests. 98% of residents live within 3km of the Green Belt, a large-scale project connecting green space surrounding the entire city. It is at maximum a 45 minute walk, or a 15 minute bicycle trip from the centre of Vitoria-Gasteiz.

The idea to create a Green Belt started back in the 1990s when the periphery of Vitoria-Gasteiz was experiencing serious environmental problems, such as flooding, biodiversity loss, and soil degradation. The Environmental Studies Centre, a public agency and part of the city council, initiated the development and the restoration of the Sailburua wetlands as one of the first and main measures, proving to be a great example of how to use nature to solve flooding problems. The Green Belt not only became a biodiversity hotspot, but also a popular recreational destination, offering spaces for physical activities, social gatherings and interactions with nature, such as birdwatching and organic farming. Cyclists also frequent the area via a 33km, circular green route which connects all the parks that make up the Green Belt.

One of the sectors to oppose the Green Belt development most vocally was the housing industry, which wanted to use the area for residential development. The regional administration was also more interested in developing grey infrastructure, such as canals, to stop the flooding. In response, the Environmental Studies Centre highlighted the ecosystem services provided by the nature-based solutions and the multiple benefits they would have over grey infrastructure.

Vitoria-Gasteiz is also implementing greening measures and nature-based solutions within the city centre. Planners have identified parks, urban gardens, vacant lots, streams and more that they want to develop. A lot of greening takes place near roads, e.g. through the planting of trees, but in some areas, where the rate of available space is low, small gardens are created or individual plants planted. To keep maintenance costs low, Vitoria-Gasteiz relies on native plants, which are less expensive and more sustainable, but not necessarily the type of “green” people expect to see. To win over the public, it is important to demonstrate the value and benefits of nature to residents by highlighting the ecosystem services it provides.

One of the initial concerns around implementing greening measures was gentrification, the influx of wealthier businesses, resulting in higher rents and the displacement of low-income residents. However, the neighbourhoods where greening measures were implemented did not see significant gentrification. While there were rent increases in some areas, they were limited. The way Vitoria-Gasteiz designed its green spaces could provide one of the main explanations: planners ensure they are providing attractive green spaces to all parts of the city. While the kind of green might differ depending on the location, the approach used allows for green spaces everywhere.

Vitoria-Gasteiz’s greening measures go hand in hand with policies for more sustainable forms of transport. The ambition to limit car usage started in the late 1970s/early 1980s, when parts of the medieval quarter, including the main square beside the town hall and the main commercial street, were pedestrianised. Soon afterwards, the city decided to pedestrianise almost the entire medieval quarter. The mayor at that time was a strong proponent of these measures, and the success and popularity of other pedestrian zones were a big incentive for these new changes. Today, there are more than 500,000m² of pedestrian areas in the city, some of which experienced a traffic flow of more than 25,000 cars per day in the past! Apart from creating space for pedestrians, Vitoria-Gasteiz has also begun to limit car parking. Nonetheless, urban growth and the expansion of the city through new neighbourhoods made the situation more complicated as car usage has continued to increase since the 1980s. The need for a reduction is not just important for an immediate effect on quality of life, but also for achieving the city’s climate goals. Private transport accounted for 29% of CO₂ emissions in 2006. However, pedestrianisation faces opposition by the same groups as in other cities, although support among residents is generally high. During EUROPEANMOBILITYWEEK 2018, Vitoria-Gasteiz creatively highlighted the importance of pedestrian areas by temporarily reopening parts of a pedestrianised street to cars. The event was intended to remind people what it would be like if these streets were open to cars, and how valuable these spaces are. The temporary reopening was accompanied by information posters and proved to be very successful, making the front pages of two local newspapers.

In order to further strengthen sustainable modes of transport, Vitoria-Gasteiz also completely redesigned its bus network. The old network was replaced by an integrated grid system with two tram lines and nine bus lines. The opening took place on a single night in October 2009, with all changes implemented simultaneously. This redesign was preceded by a wide public participation process, which spanned two years and involved all affected neighbourhoods. To encourage the use of public transport, a “push & pull” strategy was also used. While the redesign pulled people into public transit, commuters were pushed away from cars by tripling parking tariffs. Since 2009, the system has seen an 89% increase in trips per year, despite public transport use in Spain decreasing overall.

The creation of the superblock took green mobility planning to the next level. It started when work on the Sustainable Mobility and Public Space Plan began in 2006. Vitoria-Gasteiz organised a civic forum with different stakeholders to discuss models for public space and mobility. Based on the results, they decided to create an integrated approach that aims to address mobility and public spaces at large. This then led to the idea of establishing superblocks, similar to the ones in Barcelona. Experts in both cities collaborated and Barcelona also saw this as an opportunity to research how superblocks would fare in a medium-sized city like Vitoria-Gasteiz. The first pilot phase started in 2010, when Calle Sancho el Sabio, a wide street with four lanes, was reduced to one lane and the surrounding streets were pedestrianised.

“Superblocks are an urban innovation that introduces low-carbon mobility practices through the reorganization of urban space, which minimizes the use of motorized modes of transportation. Superblocks help to reorganise urban space into car-free areas aimed to maximize public space and foster social and economic interactions at the street level while keeping private cars and public transport outside of the neighbourhoods.”

This definition comes from the EU SMARTERES project, which focuses on local social innovation processes and has worked with Barcelona and Vitoria-Gasteiz on their superblocks. You can find more information on their website.
Creating superblocks is a complex undertaking and a long-term vision which can lead to problems and public pressure. In this case, residents of Vitoria-Gasteiz expected the government to implement superblocks quickly. Therefore, residents should be made aware of the need for proper planning from the beginning. Despite this hurdle, Vitoria-Gasteiz has one key piece of advice for other cities: do not be hesitant – reclaim streets based on this strategy whenever you can! If you let an opportunity pass you by, it might be a long time before it comes back.

The first two superblocks were funded as part of the CIVITAS project. Researchers also collected data on traffic flow in the first central superblock. Based on this data, they calculated that CO2 emissions decreased 40% while overall traffic flow decreased 60% from 2006 to 2011. As of 2020, there are two superblocks in Vitoria-Gasteiz, and a third is currently being planned. Many measures in the city were implemented according to the superblock approach - for example, parking policies. While not directly linked to each other, the development of the superblock, the redesign of the bus network, and the establishment of a new tram are all part of Vitoria-Gasteiz’s integrated approach to mobility and public space. While there were separate measures happening in parallel, there was constant cooperation and coordination between the different groups working on them.

Climate change and other environmental threats often go hand in hand. When designing a human scale city - improving quality of life for all - the city also becomes more climate resilient and thus “future proof”. Vitoria-Gasteiz is already well equipped to handle such challenges but continues to innovate. In the future, Vitoria-Gasteiz plans to restructure more streets and create more green spaces, thus becoming even more human scale.

In 2018, Lahti conducted a survey asking residents about their experiences throughout the city and on their daily commutes, and how these affect them. The survey could be answered online and included four collaborative workshops, where the city asked residents to identify and classify important points along their daily routes. Most negative points were concentrated in the city centre, where participants identified mobility issues such as dangerous intersections.

The data collected from this survey is now being used to help create the city’s sustainable transport master plan. Universities are also using the data as a basis for further research. This is also one of the key takeaway for Lahti: while many people perceived the process as positive and easy to participate in, the administration would have been overwhelmed by the sheer amount of data had it not collaborated with a university.

In order to engage residents, reduce car traffic in the city centre and promote sustainable mobility, Lahti has also created the EU’s first Personal Carbon Trading (PCT) scheme. As part of the CitiCAP project, the city has developed an app which tracks users’ means of transport and the CO2 footprint associated with them. The overall aim of the app is to make residents more aware of their impact on the environment and the climate through their mobility behaviour, and thus encourage changes. When the user downloads the app, they enter information about themselves, including whether or not they have children, how long their daily commute is, etc. The survey could be answered online and included four collaborative workshops, where the city asked residents to identify and classify important points along their daily routes. Most negative points were concentrated in the city centre, where participants identified mobility issues such as dangerous intersections.

The data collected from this survey is now being used to help create the city’s sustainable transport master plan. Universities are also using the data as a basis for further research. This is also one of the key takeaways for Lahti: while many people perceived the process as positive and easy to participate in, the administration would have been overwhelmed by the sheer amount of data had it not collaborated with a university.

In 2018, Lahti conducted a survey asking residents about their experiences throughout the city and on their daily commutes, and how these affect them. The survey could be answered online and included four collaborative workshops, where the city asked residents to identify and classify important points along their daily routes. Most negative points were concentrated in the city centre, where participants identified mobility issues such as dangerous intersections.

The data collected from this survey is now being used to help create the city’s sustainable transport master plan. Universities are also using the data as a basis for further research. This is also one of the key takeaways for Lahti: while many people perceived the process as positive and easy to participate in, the administration would have been overwhelmed by the sheer amount of data had it not collaborated with a university.

In order to engage residents, reduce car traffic in the city centre and promote sustainable mobility, Lahti has also created the EU’s first Personal Carbon Trading (PCT) scheme. As part of the CitiCAP project, the city has developed an app which tracks users’ means of transport and the CO2 footprint associated with them. The overall aim of the app is to make residents more aware of their impact on the environment and the climate through their mobility behaviour, and thus encourage changes. When the user downloads the app, they enter information about themselves, including whether or not they have children, how long their daily commute is, etc.

Based on this information, the app then allocates them a CO2 budget per week. For example, a standard budget is 17kg of CO2, which equals to about 90 km/week. This budget is then increased depending on the information the user inputs. If the user stays within their allocated budget, they are rewarded with virtual money, which can be used to buy tickets for things such as public transport, access to the public swimming pool, etc. The app is being piloted in 2020 and also allows the city to collect valuable mobility data, which the city hopes to use in future planning processes.

Overall, participation plays a big role in Lahti and helps make it a more human scale city. It will be instrumental in achieving some of the targets the city has set for itself. For example, the ambitious effort to become carbon neutral by 2025 greatly depends on initiatives such as the CitiCAP app and the involvement and engagement of the public in general.
The German city of Essen is located in the centre of the industrial Ruhr region, which plays an important part in the city's history. The Ruhr River and the parallel Emscher River flow through Essen from east to west and have been instrumental in shaping the urban landscape. Over the last several decades, the 2017 European Green Capital has become increasingly deindustrialised and has undertaken various projects - such as the New Ways to the Water project - to support structural changes as well as greening and development strategies.

The New Ways to the Water project sets the aim of connecting green spaces and waterways throughout the city, with a focus on creating walking and cycling networks, and is implemented via smaller individual sub-projects that together contribute to this overall goal. Since the project began in 2005, multiple cycling and walking routes have been created, each with a specific theme: the 'water route' to the west, the "city route" in the centre and the "nature route" to the east. In addition, "valley" and "mountain" routes have been added to the network. The green routes make up a network of 150 km. The project aims to ensure that residents live no more than 500 meters from one of these green routes, thus contributing to their overall wellbeing and quality of life. It also helped complete a cycling track which is now part of a Natura 2000 site.

The project is being implemented with the support of a number of city agencies, most notably the Department for Green Infrastructure and the Job Centre. The Job Centre is involved because a key part of the project is an employment scheme. The scheme aims to tackle long-term unemployment by providing jobless people with training - mostly in landscaping and horticulture - and job opportunities. When the project started in 2005, there were 150 positions of varying durations in the employment scheme, with an average length of nine months. The number of positions in the scheme has been reduced due to changes on the federal level, and from 2018-2020, there were 30 places annually. Despite this cutback, the employment scheme has been a success, and between 2007 and 2020, 249 people were reintegrated back into the workforce as a result.

Many of the sub-projects are being completed in the neighbourhoods where participants of the employment scheme live. This is not by design, but simply due to the nature of the project. Most, though not all, of the projects are in neighbourhoods with higher unemployment rates - mainly in former coal mining areas along the Emscher River in the North of Essen. Enhancing these neighbourhoods is an important goal of the project. Local residents appreciate the improvements made to their neighbourhoods, and in one neighbourhood, locals even came together to create a voluntary group responsible for cleaning a local park a few times a week.

One of the reasons the employment scheme was created is because of the challenge of finding sufficient funding to run the project. Coupling the greening and employment programme allows for the creation of green spaces, while also creating job opportunities, thus enabling the two departments to pool financial resources. The employment scheme now receives €1.2 million annually, which makes up a significant source of funding for the overall project. The cooperation between the departments and the various sources of funding was - and still is - one of the key selling points of the project and a major reason for its success.

In addition to the Job Centre, the project also has numerous other funding sources, including the European Regional Development Fund, the Federal Government, the State of North Rhine-Westphalia, and the city of Essen. New Ways to the Water also receives additional resources through compensation measures funding (which is paid by projects that are required to offset their environmental damages). While it was important to have different funding sources, coordinating them was a challenge for the city which is why an interdepartmental working group under the direction of the green infrastructure department was created.

A project that is not directly contributing with funding but has an immediate effect on the options, feasibility and success of New Ways to the Water is the Emscher Conversion project. Due to the history of coal mining, sewage canals in the city were running overground and, as a result, the naturally flowing Emscher river became a man-made system of open sewers. The Emscher Conversion project is seeking to address this by draining wastewater in closed underground sewers and transforming the river and its subsidiary waterways into near-natural bodies of water.

The Emscher Conversion project is a more extensive regional project led by the Emschergenossenschaft - a local water management association - and is planned to be completed by 2022. The project is separate from - but directly linked to - the New Ways to the Water project because it creates green space and opportunity which New Ways to the Water can build on. By cooperating with one another, both New Ways to the Water and the Emscher Conversion have achieved more than they would have been able to individually. The logic here is that first, the Emschergenossenschaft comes in to build the underground canal and renaturises the river. Then, New Ways to the Water comes in and creates the rest of the infrastructure - cycling routes, improving green spaces, etc.

New Ways to the Water is scheduled to come to an end at the same time as the Emscher Conversion in 2022. However, other projects will continue to enhance the human scale of the city, and the administration has also started planning for future projects, such as cycling infrastructure projects in the city centre. Essen has achieved a lot through New Ways to the Water, but more is still to come. Central to the project's success was the integration into other projects and strategies, and the cooperation with different departments and the region overall.

People enjoying the green space along the Emscher river

“"The Essen New Ways to the Water project is one of the very few examples of a true ‘win-win-win’ project. The environment and citizens win with the creation of a high class green-blue network, the unemployed win with hands-on job training and the city wins because smart combination of funding relieves the budget.”

Simone Raskob
Deputy Mayor for Environment, Transport and Sports, City of Essen

The cooperation between departments and different strategies, and the cooperation with different departments and the region overall.

Since the project started, New Ways to the Water has added over 25 new cycling routes and helped to improve over 40 existing cycling lanes. In total, more than 18 hectares of new green spaces have been created. The transformed areas are now popular for leisure activities and sports. The main activity promoted is cycling, which people enjoy as a sport, as well as a means of transportation.

New Ways to the Water is scheduled to come to an end at the same time as the Emscher Conversion in 2022. However, other projects will continue to enhance the human scale of the city, and the administration has also started planning for future projects, such as cycling infrastructure projects in the city centre. Essen has achieved a lot through New Ways to the Water, but more is still to come. Central to the project’s success was the integration into other projects and strategies, and the cooperation with different departments and the region overall.

New Ways to the Water is scheduled to come to an end at the same time as the Emscher Conversion in 2022. However, other projects will continue to enhance the human scale of the city, and the administration has also started planning for future projects, such as cycling infrastructure projects in the city centre. Essen has achieved a lot through New Ways to the Water, but more is still to come. Central to the project’s success was the integration into other projects and strategies, and the cooperation with different departments and the region overall.
One of the biggest challenges the initiative faced was that in line with the initiative’s standards, developers opposed the project and wanted to use the coveted land to build high-rise residential developments; although families have the option to build their own homes in a co-housing scheme, seldom does this happen. Instead, they often hire professionals to do the work. The developers were also satisfied with the fact that by participating in the initiative, they could market themselves as being eco-friendly and socially conscious businesses. Additionally, participation in the initiative gave them the opportunity to build new and innovative buildings in line with the initiative’s standards.

The initiative started in 2009, when a citizens’ association wanted to build a collective housing project together. As was expected, developers opposed the project and wanted to use the coveted land to build high-rise residential property. However, they were won over by the co-housing initiative when the city administration assured them that they would still be involved in most of the construction and development; although families have the option to build their own homes in a co-housing scheme, seldom does this happen. Instead, they often hire professionals to do the work. The developers were also satisfied with the fact that by participating in the initiative, they could market themselves as being eco-friendly and socially conscious businesses. Additionally, participation in the initiative gave them the opportunity to build new and innovative buildings in line with the initiative’s standards.

One of the biggest challenges the initiative faced was that prior to this, there was no legal precedent for building these kinds of projects in France. As a consequence, many banks were hesitant to provide loans when families approached them. A group of residents and members of the local association for collaborative housing, Ecoquartier Strasbourg, then created a network and collaborated with actors from other cities, such as Nantes and Lille. The network lobbied the French government to create a legal definition for collaborative housing. This led to a new law being adopted in 2014, which now gives loan providers and banks a legal basis for their decisions.

The costs associated with the different projects depend on multiple factors, such as the type of co-housing, location and more. They can be valued at around €3000/ m², as is the case in the “melting potes” project and is a relatively high price for Strasbourg. Other projects, such as in the Cronenbourg neighbourhood, are valued at €2100/m². The city also co-finances parts of the project, such as the soil studies, social landlord and more. In addition to the financial burden, there is a serious time commitment for the groups wanting to join. Being involved in most of the design and construction, as well as the social components of co-housing can be very time-intensive, and the entire project is a long-term commitment for everyone involved.

The people interested in the co-housing initiative, especially in the beginning, were people with a certain level of means, time, education and an interest in innovative forms of housing. To address this disparity, the city soon created different kinds of projects so as not to leave a large portion of the population behind. There are now four different categories of projects in the co-housing initiative, including social rental projects, which prioritise inclusion and low-income housing. These projects also provide a social landlord, who manages the property, and a project living assistant, who has a background in social work and architecture and is responsible for guiding families through the co-housing process. They help the families figure out their priorities, what they could do with the communal space and what would be of value for everyone - for example, creating a common room, a gym, or outdoor space.

Initially, the criteria for the proposal evaluation included an environmental dimension, but after a shift in responsibilities and reduced involvement from the city administration, this was cut. However, many buildings still have sustainable features such as solar panels, organically sourced materials, or family and neighbourhood gardens. Nonetheless, Strasbourg aims to make this an explicit requirement again in the future.

Strasbourg’s co-housing initiative has had an impact on how the city centre has been designed. The projects show that it is possible to be innovative when it comes to housing design and architecture. It also shows that it is possible to have a citizen-based vision for the expansion of the city centre. Letting residents be part of designing the city strengthens the relationship between them and the city administration, a key factor for success.

As of 2020, there are over 20 projects approved in the greater Strasbourg area with over 225 households involved. Initially, the projects were in the city centre, but lately there has been development in the periphery. However, one factor remains key, influencing every new plot Strasbourg gives away: the availability of land - a crucial criterion for a human scale city.
LEARNING FROM THE BEST

The aim of this toolkit is to share with you the key lessons that the European Green Capital winners and finalists have learned over the years and to include you in a growing community of change-makers that is willing to share both successes and failures. Every city needs to find its own way to get to a human scale, taking into account its geographic location, the history reflected in its urban fabric, as well as the needs and skills of its inhabitants.

This toolkit gives examples of what other leading cities have already accomplished and where they are still struggling. The human scale toolkit encompasses and combines many themes already covered in previous EGCN toolkits, as the idea of a human scale city is overarching and we cannot achieve sustainable cities without putting people at the centre.

During the EGCN human scale workshop, network members defined key ingredients for the human scale city. These include access to green spaces, walkability, sustainable forms of transport, proximity to essential services and affordable housing. They discussed issues such as gender and public transport, participation and the mapping of results and the importance of exchanges and collaboration through networks – both international networks, such as the EGCN, as well as local and national ones.

The aim of this toolkit is to share with you the key lessons that the European Green Capital winners and finalists have learned over the years and to include you in a growing community of change-makers that is willing to share both successes and failures. Every city needs to find its own way to get to a human scale, taking into account its geographic location, the history reflected in its urban fabric, as well as the needs and skills of its inhabitants.

This toolkit gives examples of what other leading cities have already accomplished and where they are still struggling. The human scale toolkit encompasses and combines many themes already covered in previous EGCN toolkits, as the idea of a human scale city is overarching and we cannot achieve sustainable cities without putting people at the centre.

During the EGCN human scale workshop, network members defined key ingredients for the human scale city. These include access to green spaces, walkability, sustainable forms of transport, proximity to essential services and affordable housing. They discussed issues such as gender and public transport, participation and the mapping of results and the importance of exchanges and collaboration through networks – both international networks, such as the EGCN, as well as local and national ones.

You can find a graphic recording of our final discussion held in virtual breakout rooms below:

The human scale toolkit is based on the EGCN workshop, which was scheduled to take place in the 2012 European Green Capital, Vitoria-Gasteiz. However, we, like everyone else, were forced to adapt to a situation that none of us expected to be in, and had to move the workshop online. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced us all to alter our daily lives and restricted our ability to work, teach, meet with friends and family and access basic services.

We were all reminded of the fact that we need to know how to fight – or ideally, prevent – such crises. This applies to the next pandemic as much as the climate crisis; in fact, the interlinkages between the two show just how much we are responsible for the disasters befalling us. However, this also means we have the power to change our current path and create a better future.

Although it was a coincidence, the human scale workshop might have fit our current situation better than any of our previous workshops. Despite the pandemic, access to green spaces still remains a pressing issue, with many events and gatherings moving outdoors. During the height of the COVID-19-related lockdowns, some Europeans could only travel within a certain radius of their homes.

You can find a graphic recording of our first session, where EGCN member cities discussed the effects of the pandemic, below:

The pandemic is not over yet and we will see what is to come. However, a human scale city is better equipped to respond to such crises. We hope this toolkit helps you become a more human scale city and find inspiration, even – or especially – in times like these.

CRISES AND THE HUMAN SCALE CITY

The human scale toolkit is based on the EGCN workshop, which was scheduled to take place in the 2012 European Green Capital, Vitoria-Gasteiz. However, we, like everyone else, were forced to adapt to a situation that none of us expected to be in, and had to move the workshop online. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced us all to alter our daily lives and restricted our ability to work, teach, meet with friends and family and access basic services.

We were all reminded of the fact that we need to know how to fight – or ideally, prevent – such crises. This applies to the next pandemic as much as the climate crisis; in fact, the interlinkages between the two show just how much we are responsible for the disasters befalling us. However, this also means we have the power to change our current path and create a better future.

Although it was a coincidence, the human scale workshop might have fit our current situation better than any of our previous workshops. Despite the pandemic, access to green spaces still remains a pressing issue, with many events and gatherings moving outdoors. During the height of the COVID-19-related lockdowns, some Europeans could only travel within a certain radius of their homes.

You can find a graphic recording of our final discussion held in virtual breakout rooms below:

During this time, their access to green space became dependent on proximity, and only residents living close to green spaces were able to enjoy them. Public transport, while essential for liveable cities and climate-friendly mobility, has suffered since the start of the pandemic. How this sector develops in the future will also depend on whether cities can recreate the trust in public transport. Fortunately, cycling has seen a steep rise in popularity.

While many effects might only be temporary, they illustrate that we have to continuously try to create more human scale cities. For example, domestic violence has increased, gender roles and inequalities were enforced, and public participation processes were minimised. In addition, we have seen an unprecedented number of people working from home. We may never fully return to pre-corona times, as our working styles and expectations have changed, with potentially long-term consequences.

The pandemic is not over yet and we will see what is to come. However, a human scale city is better equipped to respond to such crises. We hope this toolkit helps you become a more human scale city and find inspiration, even – or especially – in times like these.
IT’S YOUR TURN

I include your residents
While projects usually include some form of participation, many still fail to truly include their residents. However, since they are the people most affected by your work, they should be at the centre of it. This also greatly increases your chances of success. For example, Strasbourg has an association focused on the needs of residents in their housing development. The city and its co-housing initiative highlight the value of citizen-led projects in such initiatives - after all, they are the ones living in them.

F fight urban sprawl through decentralisation
The prognosis for Europe is the same as the rest of the world: we are becoming more urbanised. While this creates many benefits, growing cities constantly have to fight urban sprawl. Many cities approach this by thinking of the 15-minute city, or even more ambitious, the 5-minute city. A 15-minute city seeks to ensure that residents have their needs met - for shopping, health, work, culture and education - within 15 minutes of their doorstep. Being able to access everything you need within this radius also helps greatly reduce the need for cars. Keep this idea in mind whenever you plan your city!

S spread your green spaces around the city
We all want access to green spaces. For those of us without a backyard, this means going to parks and green squares within the city. In many cities, access to green space can be directly linked to environmental justice issues and gentrification. The wealthier you are, the better your access to green spaces. However, as seen in Vitoria-Gasteiz, if green spaces are distributed evenly throughout the city, this effect can be minimised.

H ighlight the value of nature - with facts!
There are numerous ways to calculate ecosystem services provided by nature, and it is not always easy to agree on how to make these calculations accurately. However, do not let that stop you from doing it yourself. Agree internally, find experts and then get it done. Use the data and facts to show your residents and decision-makers the value we have in nature-based solutions. Simply saying that flood protection through grey infrastructure is inferior to green infrastructure is good, but you can do better. Vitoria-Gasteiz continuously uses the argument of ecosystem services provided by nature when talking to residents. It is one of the best arguments there is - so use it!

C ollect your green work with your social work
Environmental problems are not detached from social problems. By addressing one problem, you can usually find a way to address the other, as well. When Essen created green spaces and flood protection, it created an employment scheme at the same time. This dual benefit also led to additional funding, without which the project might not have been possible. Use educational programmes and professional training to teach people about sustainable issues and create future-proof jobs. Sustainability is based on leaving no one behind - reflect that in your work.

C hange the law if you have to
It might be ambitious to change a national law to implement your local project, but Strasbourg and its allies have shown that this is possible. If you have an ambitious and innovative new idea that is difficult to implement because of local, regional, or national laws, see if you can change them. You think you can’t? Find out what the problems are and if the arguments are justified. Times are changing, and often our laws have not caught up with our sustainability goals. It might be difficult, but you can be successful. If you have a project you believe in, the work might just be worth it.

D on’t let opportunities go to waste
Even in cities where there is political, administrative, and public support, projects can still fail. Almost all examples mentioned in this toolkit require one thing: space. Availability of land and public space is essential to creating green spaces and housing or completely redesigning your city. If you don’t own large parts of your land, it becomes more difficult to get things done. So, whenever there is a chance to take space and give it back to the people, don’t hesitate to take it. It is one of the most important aspects in making your city future-proof - do not let these opportunities pass you by!

You don’t know what you got ‘til it’s gone
We have a long way to go when it comes to creating green spaces and pedestrian- and cycling-friendly cities. This can often lead to us underappreciating the things we have achieved already. Vitoria-Gasteiz created a one-day event and reopened a pedestrianised street to cars. It was only temporary and mainly for show, but it did not fail to make an impression. Residents not only valued the existing pedestrian area more, the initiative might also help win their support for similar projects in the future. Apply this approach to other areas as well.

Y ou might have to use educational programmes and professional training to train people about sustainable issues and create future-proof jobs. Sustainability is based on leaving no one behind - reflect that in your work.
Ready to act? There are a number of additional resources available to support you in your efforts and help you move faster.

**UrbanA Wiki**

The EU UrbanA project focuses on sustainable and just cities. The wiki is an ongoing, open-ended, online collaborative database and knowledge source. It captures the learning process of the UrbanA Community of Practice and is an important part of UrbanA’s knowledge commons. It includes a database of approaches, projects and initiatives for just and sustainable cities.


**SUMP Guidelines**

The 2nd edition of the European Guidelines for Developing and Implementing a Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP) is a comprehensive revision of the widely-used first edition launched in 2013. The guidelines aim to integrate the dynamic developments in many areas of urban mobility and document some of the rich experience of implementing the concept of Sustainable Urban Mobility Planning since the Guidelines’ original publication. The website also provides further links to useful resources such as a SUMP Self-Assessment Tool.

[www.eltis.org/mobility-plans/sump-guidelines](http://www.eltis.org/mobility-plans/sump-guidelines)

**EU Gender equality strategy**

The Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 presents policy objectives and actions to make significant progress towards a gender-equal Europe. The goal is a Union where women and men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, are free to pursue their chosen path in life, have equal opportunities to thrive, and can equally participate in and lead our European society. While the Strategy focuses on actions within the EU, it is coherent with the EU’s external policy on gender equality and women’s empowerment.


**The EIP-SCC Marketplace**

The European Innovation Partnership on Smart Cities and Communities (EIP-SCC) is a market-changing undertaking supported by the European Commission, bringing together cities, industries, SMEs, investors, researchers and other smart city actors. The EIP-SCC Marketplace plays a distinctive and new role in engaging cities, industry and financiers in interest-matching activities, leading to project design and delivery. Building solutions and facilitation are the two main tasks of the Marketplace to help deliver investments.

[https://eu-smartcities.eu](https://eu-smartcities.eu)

---

**Coming soon: The new Leipzig Charter**

In 2007, the ministers for Urban Development and Regional Planning in EU member states adopted a charter for sustainable European cities in Leipzig. In response to developments in the last decade and new challenges facing us today, the document is being rewritten to provide a framework guiding post-2020 urban policy coordination in Europe. It is scheduled for release in late 2020. The original document from 2007 can be found here:


---

**EU Gender equality strategy**

The Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 presents policy objectives and actions to make significant progress towards a gender-equal Europe. The goal is a Union where women and men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, are free to pursue their chosen path in life, have equal opportunities to thrive, and can equally participate in and lead our European society. While the Strategy focuses on actions within the EU, it is coherent with the EU’s external policy on gender equality and women’s empowerment.


---

Neither the European Commission nor any person acting on behalf of the Commission is responsible for the use that might be made of the following information.

© European Union, 2020

Reuse is authorised provided the source is acknowledged.

The reuse policy of European Commission documents is regulated by Decision 2011/833/EU (OJ L 330, 14.12.2011, p. 39). For any use or reproduction of photos or other material that is not under EU copyright, permission must be sought directly from the copyright holders.


**Getting in touch with the EU**

In person

All over the European Union there are hundreds of Europe Direct information centres. You can find the address of the centre nearest you at: [https://europa.eu/european-union/contact_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/contact_en)

On the phone or by email

Europe Direct is a service that answers your questions about the European Union. You can contact this service: 
• by telephone: (+32 2) 808 6 7 8 9 10 11 (certain operators may charge for these calls),
• at the following standard number: +32 229994% or
• by email via: [https://europa.eu/european-union/contact_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/contact_en)

Finding information about the EU

Online

Information about the European Union in all the official languages of the EU is available on the Europa website at: [https://europa.eu/european-union/index_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/index_en)

EU publications

You can download or order free and priced EU publications at: [https://publications.europa.eu/en/publications](https://publications.europa.eu/en/publications). Multiple copies of free publications may be obtained by contacting Europe Direct or your local information centre (see [https://europa.eu/european-union/contact_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/contact_en)).

EU law and related documents

For access to legal information from the EU, including all EU law since 1952 in all the official language versions, go to EUR-Lex at: [http://eur-lex.europa.eu](http://eur-lex.europa.eu)

Open data from the EU

The EU Open Data Portal ([http://data.europa.eu/euodp/en](http://data.europa.eu/euodp/en)) provides access to datasets from the EU. Data can be downloaded and reused for free, both for commercial and non-commercial purposes.
The European Green Capital Network is a network of former European Green Capital Award winners and finalists. Founded by the city of Copenhagen during its own award-winning year in 2014, the Network’s main role is to:

- share best practice, discuss challenges and create solutions for impactful sustainable urban development in Europe, and
- serve as a platform for change, representing European cities in relevant European and global political processes.

**Toolkits for cities**
The European Green Capital Network encourages other European cities on their paths towards a more sustainable future by providing guidance and support. During 2018-2020, the Network is holding expert workshops to develop toolkits based on four thematic vision clusters for European sustainable cities. The toolkits will provide recommendations and strategies for cities both inside and outside of the network.

The vision clusters are:

**100% renewable**
Climate change mitigation and transitioning to fossil fuel-free cities

**Less Waste, More Value**
Sustainable waste management, circular economies and responsible consumption

**Human scale**
Integrated urban planning and sustainable mobility, green spaces, inclusive communities

**Future-proof**
Climate change adaptation, resilience, sustainable water sources and ecosystems

**Network Members**
Stockholm, Hamburg, Vitoria-Gasteiz, Nantes, Copenhagen, Bristol, Ljubljana, Essen, Nijmegen, Oslo, Lisbon, Amsterdam, Freiburg, Münster, Barcelona, Malmö, Nuremberg, Reykjavik, Frankfurt, Brussels, Glasgow, Umeå, ’s-Hertogenbosch, Ghent, Lahti, Tallinn, Lille, Strasbourg, Dijon, Grenoble and Turin

**Stay up to date**
[@EU_GreenCapital](https://twitter.com/EU_GreenCapital)
#EGCN

Learn more: [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/europeangreencapital/applying-for-the-award/egc-network](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/europeangreencapital/applying-for-the-award/egc-network)

Contact the Network secretariat at: network@europeangreencapital.eu