

Press Release

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Brussels 2023 Urban Summit

Brussels 20Urban23 Summit

(Can) Cities Save the World!?

The Brussels Urban Summit 2023

Over **2,000 politicians, academics and civil society representatives** from **600 cities** around the world have confirmed participation in the Brussels Urban Summit from 12 to 15 June, including more than **140 mayors** from cities worldwide.

By 2050, the United Nations estimates that two thirds of the planet's inhabitants will live in urban areas. These areas are therefore key to facing today and tomorrow's global challenges, such as climate change, migration, urban growth and inequality, the consequences of which will determine the fate of billions living in our cities. The Brussels Urban Summit convenes three international city conferences to discuss urban challenges and solutions: the triannual 14th Metropolis World Congress, the Eurocities Annual Conference and the 6th Meeting of the OECD Champion Mayors for Inclusive Growth Initiative.



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The Brussels Urban Summit, bringing together the biggest city networks, is uniquely suited to foster discussions about urban solutions to global challenges, concrete paths to their implementation and the critical role that cities will play in this journey. Brussels, the capital of the European Union, will host more than 2,000 politicians and city experts representing over 400 cities worldwide will gather in Brussels in 10 days' time. The honoured participants of the Summit include: Anne Hidalgo (mayor of Paris), Barthélémy Toye Dias (mayor of Dakar), Mansur Yavaş (mayor of Ankara), Jaime Pumarejo (mayor of Barranquilla), Asmaa Rhlalou (mayor of Rabat), Balendra Shah (mayor of Kathmandu), Emmanuel Serunjoji (mayor of Kawempe, Kampala), Fabian Mayer (mayor of Stuttgart), Sōichirō Takashima (mayor of Fukuoka), Karin Wanngård (mayor of Stockholm), Ricardo Rio (mayor of Braga), Susan Aitken (mayor of Glasgow), Kostas Bakoyannis (mayor of Athens) and many more influential politicians. All believe that cities are at forefront of answering today's challenges and will be even more so in the future. They are committed to collaborate internationally to further these solutions.

In addition to plenary sessions, the programme of the BUS includes meetings and workshops, power lunches, and site visits to allow participants to learn from one another and share their solutions to common challenges affecting cities worldwide, while engaging in genuine debate—when ideas clash, innovation is born. This Summit, designed to create debate, understanding, engagement and collaboration among cities, politicians, academics and the Brussels-based stakeholder community, will provide a platform to all, making every voice count in the search for a better urban future.

The Brussels Urban Summit is an initiative of the Brussels Capital Region, Eurocities, Metropolis and the OECD Champion Mayors for Inclusive Growth Initiative. In addition to these leading partners, the Summit counts among its partners: the City of Brussels, the European Commission, the United Cities and Local Governments, the Global Parliament of Mayors, and many others. The Press Club Brussels Europe and Politico are media partners of the Brussels Urban Summit.

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The Brussels Capital Region

The capital of Brussels, host of this important urban conference, is also headquarters to numerous European and international institutions. Despite being pocket-sized, this cosmopolitan city is home to a hyper-international community, with the world's second largest number of nationalities represented among its inhabitants, after Dubai. What differentiates Brussels from other metropolitan cities is that it is a city of minorities, with no dominant culture.

In just 10 years, the city has rapidly initiated a metamorphosis from a city for cars to a city for people. However, Brussels policymakers will not stop there—they also want to play a pioneering role in the fight against inequality and climate change.

Pascal Smet is State Secretary of the Brussels-Capital Region, responsible for Urbanism and Heritage and European and International Relations. He is the key figure in the transformation of public spaces in Brussels, which began by making squares car-free, constructing bicycle lanes and creating new tram lines. Smet is a strong believer and pioneer of coalitions for forward-looking cities.

Pascal Smet, State Secretary of the Brussels-Capital Region, for European and International Relations:

"For the first time ever, the three largest city networks are coming together to discuss major societal challenges and formulate urban solutions. It is only right this global city conference takes place in Brussels, a hyperinternational diverse metropolis and urban laboratory for innovation. The Brussels Urban Summit confirms Brussels' international status as diplomatic capital of the world."

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Eurocities

Eurocities wants to make cities places where everyone can enjoy a good quality of life, is able to move around safely, access quality and inclusive public services and benefit from a healthy environment. Eurocities does this by inspiring municipalities and EU decision-makers through networking with more than 200 larger European cities, which together represent some 130 million people across 38 countries, and by gathering evidence of how policy-making impacts on people. Connect with us on Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, [Facebook](#)

Our key events:

- 15 June, 10:00 - 11:30 **City leadership in a global climate crisis.** The session will highlight the dramatic impact of climate change in cities and demonstrate how urban leaders are shaping the pathway to a climate-neutral future
- 15 June, 11:30 - 12:00 **Summit Conclusions** reflecting the main messages and takeaways from the Brussels Urban Summit
- 14 June, 16:00 - 18:00 **Eurocities General Assembly.** The discussion will focus on the 2024 EU Parliament elections and what the next European political mandate may mean for cities
- 14 June, 19:00 - 23:00 **Eurocities Awards.** The prizes recognise outstanding achievements by Eurocities members in the delivery of local activities or practices to improve urban life quality
- 15 June, 08:30-09:45 Mayors Digital Assembly and Mayors signing up for sustainable culture

André Sobczak, Secretary General, Eurocities:

“Many of Europe’s cities have been here for many centuries, if not millennia. The national governments and the European institutions are, so to speak, the new kids on the block. This may explain why our cities have the experience and the skills to find solutions for today’s and tomorrow’s global challenges. And this is why cities always put local people’s quality of life front and centre, and why they must have the respect of other levels of government and their rightful place at the table.”

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Metropolis

Metropolis brings together big cities to share solutions that improve metropolitan quality of life.

Big cities are great. They foster innovation, creativity, scientific progress, productivity, diversity and exchange. But life in big metropolitan spaces is not great for everyone. It can bring pollution, traffic congestion, segregation, noise, substandard housing, and climate risks. We want to change that.

At the Brussels Urban Summit, we will be elevating the voice of cities to the world stage. Our membership is global - with over 140 cities across Africa, Asia, Europe, North America and South America. By sharing this international expertise, we can make cities more liveable and prepare them for the future.

Our key events:

- 12 June, 14:50 - 16:15 **Metropolis Policy Debate: Greening Cities: A Pathway to Social Inclusion?**

This exclusive political dialogue features global political leaders who will share their insights on how greening cities could be a tool for social equity and tackling climate change. Press is invited for the opening of the event only.

- 14 June, 14:00 - 16:00 **Metropolis General Assembly**

Metropolis will officially welcome new members, launch our new strategic plan and elect a new board of directors and president. This is a closed event for Metropolis members, but press may attend.

Jordi Vaquer, Secretary General of Metropolis:

"It has been six years since the large cities that form the Metropolis community last met in person. Our World Congress at the Brussels Urban Summit will demonstrate that the spirit of cooperation is still strong, despite all the disruptions and polarization of recent years. Metropolitan leaders are as focused as ever in securing better quality of life in big cities worldwide, and they are putting aside their differences to work together on solutions to the pressing challenges facing urban spaces."

OECD Champion Mayors for Inclusive Growth Initiative

Since 2016, the OECD Champion Mayors for Inclusive Growth Initiative has been at the forefront of the global debate on inequalities to shape a more inclusive future in cities. From the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic to war in Europe, a series of unprecedented shocks are confronting our cities and threatening the foundations of inclusive growth. At the same time, cities are facing multiple structural challenges, ranging from addressing housing affordability to embracing the net-zero and just transition, coping with digitalisation, and rebuilding trust in democracy.

The OECD Champion Mayors will convene at the Brussels Urban Summit to discuss how to address the most pressing issues facing cities while building resilience and opportunities for all. The OECD is joining forces with Eurocities and Metropolis to amplify the voices of mayors in the global arena. See the list of the OECD Champion Mayors, a global coalition of over 60 mayors from OECD countries and beyond.

6th Meeting of the OECD Champion Mayors for Inclusive Growth: Confronting the cost of living and housing crises in cities

Even before the current cost-of-living crisis, households were paying more and more for housing. Average real house prices rose by 77% between 1996 and 2022, while GDP per capita grew only by 29% during the same period. The prices for utilities, housing maintenance and repair rose by 20% year over year in 2022. As a result, more than one in three low-income tenants spent 40% or more of their disposable income on rents. Cities have become the focal point of this housing crisis. In 2021, across 17 OECD countries with available data, buying a house in a metropolitan region was 40 percentage points (pp) more expensive than in a region far from a metropolitan area. Within metropolitan areas, city centres are on average 30% more expensive than suburbs. The compounding cost-of-living and housing crises are challenging inclusive growth while potentially deepening inequalities in cities.

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During the 6th Meeting of the OECD Champion Mayors for Inclusive Growth, over 40 city leaders will discuss measures to tackle the cost-of-living crisis and boost more affordable and sustainable urban housing. The Champion Mayors will endorse a set of collective commitments through the “Brussels Blueprint for Affordable Cities and Housing for All” to alleviate short-term pressures on the cost of living and scale up long-term change in housing. The OECD will also launch a policy paper with new data and analysis on housing in cities.

key events:

- 13 June, 17:50 - 18:00 **Meeting of the OECD Champion Mayors for Inclusive Growth Initiative.** Journalists are invited to attend the closing remarks by Dagur Eggertsson, mayor of Reykjavik and Chair of the OECD Champion Mayors, and Yoshiki Takeuchi, OECD Deputy Secretary-General. Mayors are available for interviews following the session close at 18:00.
- 13 June, 10:30 - 12:00 **Plenary session “Tackling inequalities and rebuilding the social contract in cities,”**
The OECD will also lead the first plenary session with remarks by OECD Secretary-General Mathias Cormann.
- 14 June, 14:00 - 15:30 Workshop **“Brick and mortar or click to order? The future of SMEs in city centres”**
- 14 June, 16:00 - 17:30 Workshop **“The changing organization of work and workplaces: drivers and implications for intermediary cities / Midsized Cities”**

Lamia Kamal-Chaoui, Director, OECD Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities:

“Inequality is pulling our cities apart. The cost-of-living crisis is piling on the pressure - when cities are unaffordable it undermines inclusive growth and jeopardises trust in our democratic values and the social contract. The OECD Champion Mayors for Inclusive Growth are meeting at the Brussels Urban Summit to respond to rising inequalities and make their cities more affordable for all.”

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Programme

	MONDAY 12 JUNE	TUESDAY 13 JUNE	WEDNESDAY 14 JUNE	THURSDAY 15 JUNE
08:00		Registration	Registration	Registration
09:00		Networking coffee	Networking coffee	Networking coffee
10:00		Metropolis Board of Directors	Eurocities breakfast on City Diplomacy	Eurocities / Mayors signing up for sustainable culture
11:00		Int'l host cities breakfast meeting	Urban Insight session 2 / Migration and Diversity: Cities lead the way in turning challenges into opportunities	FMDV Board
12:00		Summit opening	Urban Insight session 3 / City leadership in a global climate crisis	Eurocities Mayors' Digital assembly
13:00	Registration	Urban Insight session 1 / Tackling inequalities and rebuilding the social contract in cities	Summit conclusions	
14:00	Metropolis ExCo Lunch	Lunch Break	Lunch Break	Lunch Break
15:00	Metropolis Policy Debate	Power Lunches	Power Lunches	Power Lunches
16:00		Meeting of OECD Champion Mayors for Inclusive Growth	Urban exchanges*	Urban exchanges*
17:00		Brussels Urban Visits*	Metropolis General Assembly	UCLG Executive bureau
18:00			Eurocities General Assembly	FMDV Investment Forum
19:00			Metropolis Board	Brussels Urban Visits*
20:00		Welcome drink @ Oldmasters Museum	Dinner @ Gare Maritime ft. Eurocities Awards	City adventures to Antwerp, Ghent, Leuven
21:00				UCLG Reception @ Brussels Parliament
22:00				This is Brussels! Urban answers to global challenges @ Flagey
23:00				

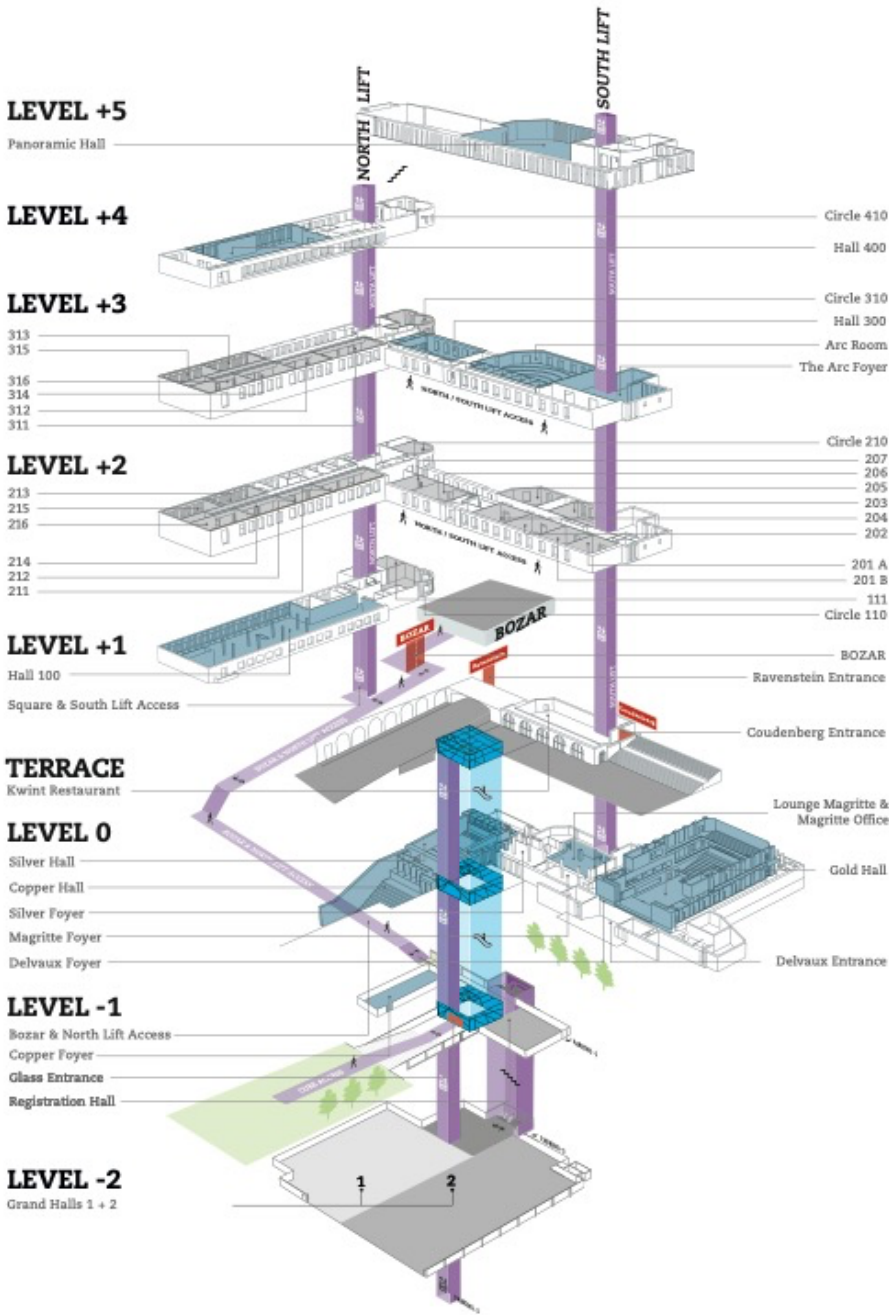
Programme

TUESDAY 13 JUNE	Sustaining Cities, Naturally – Urban Ecosystem Restoration through Nature-based Solutions 14:00 - 15:30	Future of the European urban policy 2024-2029: Perspectives from large cities 14:00 - 15:30	Citizen science engaging people for a greener future 14:00 - 15:30	Building the Future: How Science is Transforming Metropolises 14:00 - 15:30	New European Bauhaus 14:00 - 18:00	
	Homelessness – inequalities and risk factors 14:00 - 15:30	Time policies: an opportunity to live better in our cities 14:00 - 15:30	Engaging citizens within cities in transition in the Global South 16:00 - 17:30	Kanal and Brussels2030: the Brussels Region takes its cultural destiny into its own hands 16:00 - 17:30	The Power of Care: How Supporting Caregivers can Change Our Cities 16:00 - 17:30	
	Urban Recovery Watch: Cities in the Implementation of the Next Generation EU 16:00 - 17:30	On track for CO2-free mobility 16:00 - 17:30				
	How to make Brussels a runner-friendly city? 12:15 – 13:15	Diversity and migration 14:30 – 16:00	City Gate 14:30 – 16:30	Local and circular 14:30 – 17:00	Canal area 14:30 – 17:00	City scenes along the canal 14:30 – 17:00
WEDNESDAY 14 JUNE	Accelerating Climate Neutral Cities 14:00 - 15:30	Urban food policies for sustainable and just future 14:00 - 15:30	Empowering cities: Co-decision, Capacity and Capital 14:00 - 15:30	Brick and mortar or click to order? The future of SMEs in city centres. 14:00 - 15:30	Solar Cities – Above and beyond rooftops 14:00 - 15:30	
	Roadshow EU Mission 100 Climate Neutral and Smart Cities by 2030 14:00 - 18:00	The changing organization of work and workplaces: drivers and implications for intermediary cities 16:00 - 17:30	Metropolitan Governance for a Sustainable European Future 16:00 - 17:30	Fostering an All-of-Society collaboration amongst and with African Cities to realize the SDG Goals 16:00 - 17:30	Local Green Deals - accelerating and scaling-up your city's green transition in line with the European Green Deal 16:00 - 17:30	
	Artificial Intelligence and Data for Sustainable cities, opportunities and challenges 16:00 - 17:30	How to enhance human rights in your City 16:00 - 17:30	Addressing inequalities and informality: rethinking financing and the role of local and regional governments 16:00 - 17:30			
	City of Brussels – pedestrian area 14:30 – 15:30	Urban food strategy 14:30 – 16:00	The European Quarter 14:30 – 16:00	The North territory 15:45 – 17:00	City scenes along the canal 14:30 – 17:00	
THURSDAY 15 JUNE	After the Earthquake: A Conversation with Mayors 12:30 - 14:00	Urban transformations: from monofunctional to mixed neighbourhoods 14:00 - 15:30				
	Art nouveau - Hotel Van Eetvelde 14:30 – 15:45	How to make Brussels a runner-friendly city? 14:15 – 13:15	Brussels a bicycle-friendly city 14:30 – 16:00	Walking visit of Antwerp 13:30 - 18:00	Musical visit of Ghent 13:30 - 18:00	Cycling visit of Leuven 13:30 - 18:00

Location

Square Brussels

Situated on the imposing Mont des Arts with a broad view over Brussels, Square sits in the historical and cultural heart of the city, very close to the Central Train Station, plenty of hotels, restaurants and the iconic Grand Place.



Practical Information for press

Media accreditation: <https://media-accreditation-bus23.netlify.app/>

Brussels Urban Summit's main media partner Press Club Brussels Europe will put at your disposal a **full-equipped recording studio** with everything you need to produce high-quality recordings, interviews, and livestreaming events. At our media corner, you can broadcast high-class presentations and webcasts against a custom backdrop. The studio **features cameras** allowing you to shoot from various angles. The studio is perfect for recording and livestreaming.

Our studio, where you can record and livestream your presentations or interviews with keynote speakers, organisers, or other stakeholders of the Summit, is an ideal space for hybrid events featuring participants live in the studio as well as those joining in remotely. If you have questions and/or want to make a booking, then feel free to contact our team. They will be happy to show you all the services available to you when organising your bespoke interview or recording to help you achieve your goals.

Book a slot by contacting contact@pressclub.be

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