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European Parliament

Social Challenges in Cities

Final Study

Regional Development

Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies
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RESEARCH FOR REGI COMMITTEE

Social Challenges in Cities

Draft Study

Abstract

This study explores social challenges and policy responses in EU cities in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. It demonstrates that the pandemic has placed additional pressures on vulnerable groups and the institutions that work to support them. It finds that the local policy capacity to respond to the crisis has differed across cities and multi-level governance settings. Participatory and integrated policy efforts have often failed to meet the expectations of urban citizens and stakeholders. To move towards urban resilience in times of crisis, EU-level funding needs to become more accessible and focused on long-term transformations, as well as improving policy dialogue with those cities most limited by ineffective local governance structures and historical legacies.

This document was requested by the European Parliament's Committee on Regional Development.

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DISCLAIMER

CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AUNE	Homelessness Prevention Action Programme
BAMF	German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees
B-SEM	Bristol Social Exclusion Matrix
CAMINA	Community Awakening and Multicultural Integrative Narrative of Almería
CF	Cohesion Fund
CLLD	Community-Led Local Development
EC	European Commission
EP	European Parliament
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF+	European Social Fund Plus
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Funds
ETUC	European Trade Union Confederation
EUI	European Urban Initiative
GDP	Gross domestic product
ITI	Integrated Territorial Investment
LAGs	Local Action Groups
LGBTI	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex
MA	Managing authorities
MEP	Members of the European Parliament
MLG	Multi-level governance
NAP	National adaptation plan
NDC	Nationally determined contributions
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OP	Operational Programme

ROP	Regional Operational Programme
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SF	Structural Funds
STEA	Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organisations
SUD	Sustainable Urban Development
UIA	Urban Innovative Actions network
UN	United Nations

LIST OF BOXES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose

This study took place in a context where inclusive urban policymaking has become the key to broader societal cohesion and peace in Europe. There is not a sufficiently in-depth understanding, however, of the social challenges that vulnerable groups in cities are facing, especially due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the fiscal pressures on European social security systems. This study provides much-needed insight into existing and new social challenges in European cities and policy responses and governance methods to address these challenges.

Key findings and recommendations

Urban policy responses on poverty and social exclusion

The findings suggest that the most important policy developments for national and city-level actions relate to inclusion, state–city cooperation, and access to services. Participatory methods of policymaking at the local level have become increasingly important and we advocate for it in European cities and at EU level. Yet, regardless of this trend, this study finds that participatory methods are not always conducted comprehensively. Therefore, multi-level governance that involves local stakeholders and authorities in the decision-making process could be practised more consistently and to a greater extent. It is essential to build the capacity of stakeholders to participate – namely, civil-society bodies, communities, public services – to allow them to take a more significant part in the process.

Urban policy responses on spatial segregation and inequality

Poverty and social exclusion have a spatial dimension that is manifested differently across the Member States and regions, mainly resulting in spatial segregation. This is especially relevant to deprived neighbourhoods in the cities studied where it promotes stigmatisation and halts positive development, leading to greater segregation and social exclusion of vulnerable groups. Actions supporting vulnerable areas usually stem from urban renewal and regeneration programmes for deprived neighbourhoods that use integrated, place-based or partnerships approaches. They tackle both economic and social challenges, and encompass spatial segregation and territorial solutions that include improving the urban environment. However, there is a risk that such initiatives will lead to gentrification, which further pushes out vulnerable groups and increases wealth inequality. The findings of this study suggest that the most important policy developments for national and city-level actions relate to spatial segregation, gentrification, lack of quality data and environmental deprivation problems.

Urban resilience to COVID-19 and other external shocks

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated spatial and social disparities. The study findings show that marginalised groups have become even more vulnerable during the pandemic, due to the poor economic, social, institutional, physical and natural resilience of the cities in which they live. Poverty and social exclusion were also aggravated, resulting in problems in relation to housing, employment, education and health. In response to these challenges, the EU has provided additional funding to Member States that will be used to solve the direct consequences of the pandemic and to bring about structural change in specific policy areas. Nevertheless, there is an urgent need to put in place a policy response and adequate preparedness for urban areas with regard to global threats such as COVID-19. The findings of this study suggest that the most important policy developments at national and city level for increased resilience to external shocks relate to ICT access, knowledge sharing, and strengthening the natural urban systems.

Collaboration at the strategic EU level

To address multidimensional social challenges in cities requires the development of a strategic framework that confront sectoral approaches to urban policy and planning. From the perspective of European cohesion policy, the key challenge is how to better support local governments in drafting strategic action plans and mainstreaming innovative local approaches. It is vital that urban stakeholders engage with the managing authorities (MA) in collective planning processes and the tailoring of funding objectives to local needs. However, our research revealed that few municipalities are active at decision-making level, and are instead most active at the level of implementation. The analysis of this study confirms that domestic politics, institutional arrangements and path dependencies mediate the impact of the partnership principle on power dispersion and spatial rescaling. Many cities encounter bottlenecks when collaborating with MAs. There is little interplay between 'bottom-up' local knowledge and 'top-down' operational and analytical expertise. MAs rarely ensure coordination and policy learning opportunities. Strategic vision is further hindered by mismatches between the funding allocated and local needs, as well as by restrictions on eligible activities and beneficiaries, and unclear monitoring rules. Lastly, few localities have the political weight and administrative capacity to align their action plans with wider European strategies.

Allocation of EU funds

A common European 'Aquis Urbain' (EC, 2009) refers to a method combining area-based, integrated, and participative approaches, including local partnerships. It seeks to concentrate cross-sectoral actions and funding into selected target areas. This approach became mainstream during the 2007-2013 period. Neighbourhood regeneration remained prominent in the 2014-2020 programming and is maintained for the upcoming period (2021-2027). Broad EU objectives embedded in Member States' operational programmes serve as a blueprint for the allocation of funding. Despite these clear aims, our research reveals that funding does not always reach the most vulnerable groups and neighbourhoods. Widespread discrimination against ethnic and racial minorities, as well as xenophobic sentiments, continue to divert funding away from 'unpopular' groups. This issue is compounded by a lack of meaningful participation by excluded and marginalised groups in decision-making processes, and their lack of organisational and administrative capacity to effectively compete for funding or to implement sustainable projects. Serious bottlenecks exist in fighting discrimination, especially with regard to residential and educational segregation and the prevention of forced evictions. Ensuring sustainable local commitment and implementation is yet to be addressed.

Cohesion policy implementation capacity

Wide variations exist in the implementation of cohesion policy in individual Member States, depending on the relationships between the national and regional levels. Such variations are associated with the placement of territorial programmes within the overall cohesion policy management structure. Absorption rates, in turn, vary in relation to the type of intervention concerned. The highest absorption rates are usually observed in the category of 'basic infrastructure'. This study reveals that stakeholders struggle to use integrated territorial investment and grassroots initiatives to access funding due to complex regulations, stiff competition within calls for tenders, and rigorous eligibility requirements. Although the new cohesion policy is considered simpler and more flexible than its predecessor in the 2014-2020 programming period, the fact that it merges more funds into one common regulation without outlining further specifications for accessing each fund means that the system remains complex. In turn, a lack of synergies, as well as instabilities in co-financing, affect the sustainability of individual projects, which often only last between three and five years. It is clear from our research that there is both a need and a desire to mainstream projects that are financed with EU grants, especially those projects that deal with social challenges.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Study context and purpose

The EU is already highly urbanised. Demographic analysis has found that it is slowly continuing to urbanise, with more than 60 per cent of citizens living in functional urban areas in 2019 (Eurostat 2019a). Cities play a crucial role as engines of the economy and centres of services for their surroundings. They face a number of concurrent and interwoven challenges such as deprivation, that are both felt on an individual level and which reproduce social inequalities at the level of communities. In 2019, 22 per cent of people in EU cities were at risk of poverty or social exclusion (Eurostat 2022). With the number of city-dwellers growing, it is more important than ever to ensure European cities are inclusive, thus contributing to the overall prosperity and stability for all within cities (EC 2021a).

Urban social issues are not new phenomena in Europe. They first arose during the industrialisation of the 20th century (Kazepov et al. 2021). In the 'cities of today, the welfare and social security achieved during the industrial era is now under pressure due to neoliberalism, financialisation and rapidly changing forms of communication technology. Inequality has grown in cities, especially since global financial crisis of 2008, threatening social inclusion. As yet, however, there is no sufficiently in-depth understanding of the urban challenges currently faced by cities, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Regional disparities and spatial disintegration are broader challenges that have been targeted by EU cohesion policy (Sielker, Rauhut and Alois 2021). Desegregation is necessary to overcome conflict and find a coherent strategy to address global threats such as COVID-19, climate change and migration. The recent flow of refugees from Ukraine is another reminder of the challenges at European and global levels that require greater collaboration and social cohesion. Global and/or cross-border threats require the goals and priorities of the EU cohesion policy to be reflected upon and revised, including with regard to how cohesion policy can be better used to support cities in crisis. At present, however, there is no clear consensus as to the impacts of cohesion policy, either in the academic literature or among European bodies.

Most of the socio-economic trends and problems visible in cities are influenced by policies and regulations implemented at various levels of government. Thus, a multi-level approach is required in order to understand how various issues manifest themselves, including social inequalities, residential segregation, educational inequalities, trends in migration and settlement, as well as issues of housing affordability. The varying capacities of cities to address social problems and govern social change is the result of several factors. These include the specific policy orientations and capacities of local governments; the availability (or lack) of public funds; and the various roles played by social stakeholders, both traditional and new, in setting urban policy agendas (Cucca and Ranci 2021).

In this context, the purpose of this study is therefore to provide the REGI Committee with an objective scientific perspective and analysis concerning social challenges in cities – in particular, those that are linked to the needs of the most vulnerable groups – and of the actions taken by cities to tackle such challenges. The study hopes to contribute much-needed insights into the ways in which social challenges in European cities have evolved during the global pandemic. The evaluation of EU cohesion policy carried out by this project attempts to shed light on the aforementioned knowledge gaps. To the greatest extent possible, the study aims to shed light on multi-level governance processes and how they can be strengthened to ensure a bigger impact on meeting the social challenges faced by cities.

To achieve the purpose of the study and reduce gaps in the knowledge regarding social and spatial inequality in European cities, the research team formulated research questions aimed at understanding

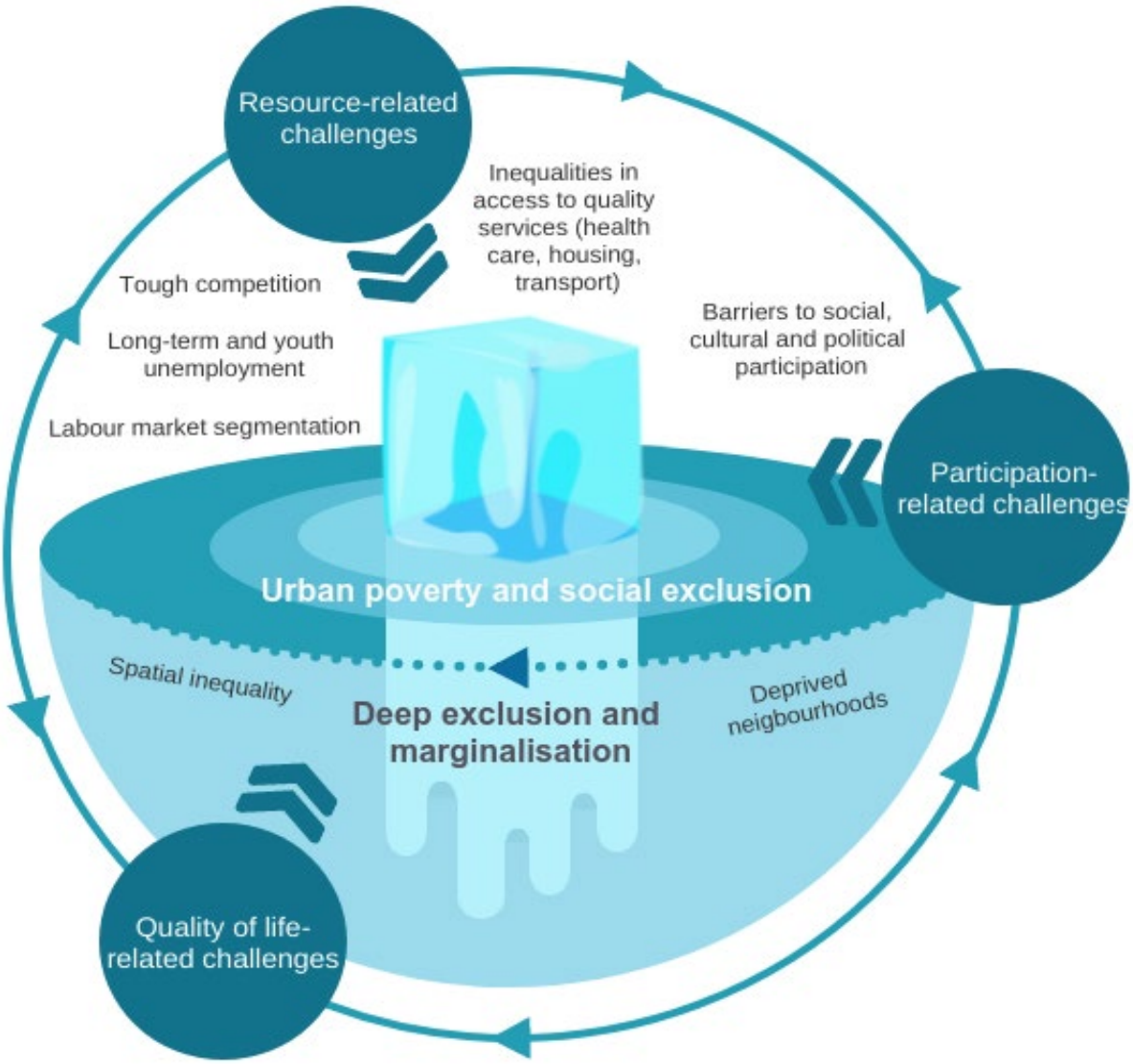
the scope and nature of social challenges in European cities, and of which groups face deep exclusion and marginalisation. The research questions also investigate the implications of specific urban contexts – as well as the relationships between cities and the state at national level, on the one hand, and between cities and international, EU-level governance on the other (e.g. cohesion policy interventions), in terms of remedying social urban challenges. The full list of research questions can be found in **Annexe 1.**

1.2. Methodological approach

The theoretical underpinning of this study is the Bristol Social Exclusion Matrix (B-SEM). To ensure a **multi-dimensional** understanding of **urban poverty and social exclusion**, the research team adopted the definitions and dimensions of social exclusion laid down in the B-SEM. These define social exclusion as: 'the lack or denial of resources, rights, goods and services, and the inability to participate in the normal relationships and activities, available to the majority of people in a society, whether in economic, social, cultural or political arenas' (Levitas et al. 2007, 9). B-SEM defines poverty or 'deep exclusion' as 'exclusion across more than one domain or dimension of disadvantage, resulting in severe negative consequences for quality of life, well-being and future life chances' (Levitas et al. 2007, 9).

The three dimensions of social exclusion relate to: 1) resource-related challenges; 2) participation-related challenges; and 3) quality of life-related challenges. The first dimension refers to social challenges that limit the access of individuals to the financial resources necessary to sustain an acceptable standard of living (e.g. long-term unemployment). Participation-related challenges refer to situations of inadequate access to, or lack of, participation in decision-making and in civil, social and cultural life (e.g. early school leaving). Lastly, improving the quality of life in cities is becoming an increasingly critical issue, both for urban planning and for those who live in cities. While the first two dimensions deal with issues that can be measured objectively, quality of life is often measured through subjective measures of well-being (e.g. life satisfaction, fear of crime and feeling insecure).

Figure 1. Social challenges in cities that relate to poverty and social exclusion



Source: PPMI

To better understand *urban* poverty and social exclusion, the research team chose three qualitative data collection methods that target cities:

- A semi-systematic literature review focusing on more than 100 European cities (November-December 2021)

- A case study programme focusing on eight selected European cities (carried out between December 2021 and February 2022);

- An expert focus group with urban policy stakeholders to validate findings (March 2022).

The **semi-systematic literature review** aimed to gain a broader overview of 1) the types of social challenges faced and 2) the groups most exposed to these challenges. Thus, it provided a solid basis for the subsequent stages of the study. The literature review followed the steps of the Rapid Evidence Assessment method: 1) fine-tuning the research questions into approachable review questions, and preparing a list of key terms to facilitate a relevant search; 2) selecting relevant electronic academic databases and trusted search engines, and conducting the search using the same keywords; 3) ensuring the validity and robustness of the sources found, using a screening process under which the relevance and reliability of documents were assessed on the basis of their titles and abstracts, applying

the same commonly agreed criteria; 4) preparing and organising a synthesis of the literature, and analysing the qualitative data (Crawford et al. 2015).

Finding literature on social challenges in cities that could answer the review questions proved a challenging task, as the relevant studies were likely to have a focus that was different from that of this review. The search strings used combined social challenges with relevant spatial zones and vulnerable groups. The full list of search terms is available in **Annexe 2.** Attempts to identify various types of research involved searching the more common electronic search sources, both open and closed access. These are available in **Annexe 3.** The research team screened all of the research records identified. Based on a review of its title and abstract, the core team determined if each specific publication fulfilled the agreed criteria listed below, and decided whether or not it should be included in the analysis. The main weakness of the literature review is that, due to time constraints and the specific search terms and search engines used, it could only grasp a snapshot of the literature available on this topic across Europe.

Table 1. Inclusion criteria for the systematic literature search

Criteria	Description
Date	The aim of this study is to use contemporary research to examine current social challenges in cities across Europe, therefore only research published between 2011 and 2021 was considered.
Geographical scope	Studies including countries from the EU-27.
Focus of the study	Studies must have a clear focus on aspects relating to social challenges in cities across Europe.
Study design	Only empirical research studies are to be included: they can be quantitative or qualitative in design and methods (e.g. evaluation studies, surveys, studies reporting perceptions through interviews and case studies analysing good practices), or they can be comparative studies (e.g. analysing different cities across a country).

Source: Compiled by PPMI

Over the course of the desk research and literature analysis, the research team gathered examples of good practice of urban action in an online inventory. Good practices were identified as those urban policy actions and initiatives that contribute to urban resilience, are based on a strong rationale and need, addresses research challenges, and provide valuable lessons for other cities and actors. The detailed selection criteria and process used can be found in **Annexe 4.**

In the next stage of the study, national experts carried out **case studies** to generate in-depth findings on the social challenges affecting selected cities, identifying the needs of the most vulnerable, as well as city and EU-level actions taking place. These case studies allowed a close examination of urban challenges in real situations, the interlinkages between them and an in-depth assessment of the contexts shaping them. Case study cities were selected to ensure demographic diversity, to include various city typologies, as well as to ensure broad geographical distribution across Europe and the coverage of different vulnerable population groups. The research team established a multidimensional selection criterion based on the following characteristics:

Table 2. Selection criteria for the case studies

Selection criteria	Coverage
Demographic diversity	Cities ranging in population size from large (e.g. Hamburg) to small (e.g., Valetta)
Diversity in city typologies	Cities, greater city and functional urban areas (Eurostat special units)
Geographical diversity	Diverse regional distribution covering all parts of the EU (Eastern, Central, Northern, Western and Southern)
Welfare regime diversity	A range of cities in terms of the types of welfare regimes and thus different levels of local government autonomy and capacity
Groups of population	Presence of vulnerable groups or groups facing multiple disadvantages (e.g. Roma people, refugees etc.)
Policy action	Presence of positive or unique policy action(s) to tackle different social challenges in the city

Source: Compiled by PPMI

Please note that the vulnerable groups targeted by the case studies were pre-selected and focused on vulnerable groups that often face multidimensional challenges according to the B-SEM index, or specific urban social challenges: Roma, migrants and youth.

Table 3. Cities chosen for case studies

Case study	Country	Region	Welfare regime	City type, population	Vulnerable group(s)	Social challenge(s)
Hamburg	Germany	Western	Corporatist	City, 1.8 million	Asylum seekers, Refugees	Integration during crisis
Helsinki	Finland	Northern	Nordic	City, 1.3 million	Homeless	Housing, inequality
Košice	Slovakia	Central and Eastern	Undefined or post-communist	City, 0.24 million	Domestic Roma	Segregation and unemployment
Miskolc	Hungary	Central and Eastern	Undefined or post-communist	Functional urban area, 0.15 million	Domestic Roma	Housing, unemployment, segregation
Roubaix	France	Western	Corporatist	Functional urban area, 1.18 million	Youth at risk	Youth unemployment, drug use, crime
Tallinn	Estonia	Northern	Undefined or post-communist	City, 0.42 million	Russian-speaking population	Historical and residential segregation and poverty
Valencia	Spain	Southern	Corporatist	Functional Urban Area, 0.79 million	Immigrants from EU and non-EU, Roma	Residential segregation, inequalities, social fragmentation
Valletta	Malta	Southern	Corporatist	City, 0.4 million	Migrants, Youth at risk	Social cohesion and wealth inequality

Source: Compiled by PPMI

The selected cities cover a broad spectrum of social challenges in the EU and marginalised groups (e.g. Roma people, migrants, youth at risk) as well as social issues (e.g. discrimination, housing, unemployment, segregation, etc.). The Hungarian town of Miskolc and the Slovakian town of Košice both have a sizeable domestic Roma population (Košice has the largest Roma community in Slovakia), with challenges in relation to housing, segregation, discrimination and unemployment (Council of Europe 2020a). The case studies looked at specific neighbourhoods or particularly innovative urban actions. Tallinn has been singled out by urban geographers as being one of the most segregated cities in Europe, with Russian speakers and the poor becoming increasingly segregated, thereby contributing to urban inequalities (BBC 2019). While Helsinki is considered a success story for its urban housing policy, Hamburg stands out for its 'remarkable ability to innovate in the face of crisis' and the expanding role played by civil society, community participation and housing (Katz, Noring and Garrelts 2016).

The study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, which placed some constraints on the national researchers who carried out the case studies (desk research, interviews and a one-day field trip). Due to lockdown requirements, several national researchers could not physically visit the area studied to conduct fieldwork as had initially been planned. The researchers did their best to make up for this through additional desk research and virtual interviews. While the case studies provide exceptionally good insights into the structure and systems relevant to specific urban socio-cultural settings, the findings should not be generalised uncritically to other local settings. To compensate for this potential weakness, the study attempts to clarify which data informed the study's specific findings and recommendations.

After the data were collected, the research team analysed the information by grouping together common findings and highlighting conflicts in the data. The research team applied comparative analysis to achieve a synthesised overview and practical and actionable policy. Having digested the outcomes of the literature review and the case studies, as well as the initial analysis, the research team conducted an **online expert focus group** to validate the study's results and gain additional insights into good practices at city–state and EU level. The online expert focus group contributed to the triangulation of the findings from the two main data collection methods (literature review and case studies).

Participants in the expert focus group included policymakers at EU institutions and agencies, city planners, representatives of EU-level associations, consultants to urban policymakers, academics, front-line workers and civil society groups. The research team identified 30 policy experts with vast experience in governance issues and cohesion policy instruments, and invited seven persons from the list to the expert focus group. Below, we present an overview of the stakeholder groups from which the chosen experts were drawn. The experts possessed various levels of expertise, gained from working in governmental institutions, local city municipalities, think tanks and academia, as well as civil society/NGOs with relevant knowledge and hands-on experience working with impoverished urban neighbourhoods and implementing cohesion policy instruments. The selected group was balanced in terms of gender, and covered different European regions.

Table 4. Stakeholder groups from which expert focus group attendees were invited

Stakeholder categories	Thematic areas
Policymakers ➢ EU institutions and agencies ➢ City planners and local policymakers Expertise and research ➢ EU-level associations and institutes ➢ Consultants to Member States/urban policymakers ➢ Researchers and academics Front-line workers/civil society ➢ Social actors, innovators and entrepreneurs in EU cities ➢ Organisations in Member States representing vulnerable groups in urban areas ➢ EU-level civil society organisations, associations and networks representing vulnerable groups	Operating in the thematic fields of: ➢ Urban policy and planning ➢ Housing and social security ➢ Residential segregation ➢ Social fragmentation ➢ Employment and youth employment ➢ Poverty, inequality, social inclusion ➢ Sustainability and human well-being

Source: Compiled by PPMI

1.3. Key terms and definitions

This study focuses on **social challenges** that are closely linked to poverty and social exclusion. The definitions of poverty and social exclusion used by the research team recognise their multidimensionality, relativity, spatial dimension and the importance of both individual and societal perspectives. Poverty and social exclusion relate not only to a person's lack of financial resources (distributional issues) necessary to achieve inalienable human rights and a relatively acceptable standard of living; they also encompass issues relating to social, cultural and political participation, and the fragility of social ties within a community (relational issues) (Levitas et al. 2007). This study understands **vulnerable groups** as being those at high risk of poverty and social exclusion; in particular, Roma, migrants and youth.

In addition, this study recognises the **uniqueness of poverty in urban areas** as stemming from the set of economic and social difficulties and characteristics specific to cities. These include their density, as well as demographic and technological differences that are distinct from rural areas, and which altogether alter the experience of being poor (Cano 2019). Unique to urban areas are the challenges of deprived neighbourhoods and the experience of living the 'urban paradox' of being materially deprived while surrounded by high economic growth. It is therefore particularly important in this study to understand which individuals and groups are vulnerable and at risk of becoming poor due to their marginalisation in society, and how their specific living situations in urban areas aggravate or improve their situations.

Spatial inequality is the unequal distribution of resources and services (housing, health care, welfare, public services, household income and infrastructures) between different locations. It is understood that the unequal quality or amounts of resources and services in certain areas of a city limit the quality-of-life opportunities for those living there. This study focuses on three spatial areas in EU cities: city; functional urban area and greater city area.

Reducing urban poverty has traditionally been a spatial concern addressing physical **infrastructure** problems such as housing, sanitation, water, land use and transportation, with the predominant target unit being the household (Moser 1995). Since the beginning of the 21st century, however, social infrastructure (education, health, welfare) and economic infrastructure (communications, aviation, business opportunities) have gained importance in the analysis of social challenges in cities, as the EU has engaged with a range of cross-sectoral and coordinated challenges ad approaches (e.g. horizonal and vertical multi-level governance) (Atkinson 2000).

Policies relating to housing, urban renewal, segregation and social mix are easier to target, design and implement in cities, and are usually recognised as the most 'urban' policies (Kazepov et al. 2022). These policies target problems that are more crucial for medium-to-large cities and consequently, the local level is assumed to be the most adequate level at which to identify and implement solutions. Issues of housing affordability, for example, are more hard-hitting in large and growing cities, where pressure in the housing market is intense and characterised by fierce competition between social groups who are attempting to enter or establish themselves in the market. Given this study's specifically urban context and the main vulnerable groups being considered, its focus is on housing, youth unemployment, residential and spatial segregation, wealth inequality, discrimination, and social fragmentation.

Urban policy indicates aspects considered by policymakers which are unique to cities, such as diverse and high-density populations, and how to make these vulnerable groups heard in policymaking, together with city-relevant local actors and infrastructure methods (social, economic, physical, and digital – so-called 'smart' cities). This study does not limit its understanding of urban policy to one form of infrastructure, as it is necessary to cover all dimensions of urban eco-systems: 1) social; 2) economic; 3) natural; 4) institutional, and 5) physical.

To signal the study's intention to consider multifarious infrastructure, the research team adopted and defined the term 'urban social policy'. **Urban social policy** focuses on those sectoral planning institutions (education, health, transport, social services) that aim to meet social challenges, and which are most effective at reaching vulnerable target groups and including them into the planning processes (Moser 1995). Where relevant, the study reflects on cross-sectoral and coordinated approaches to urban policy. It should be noted, however, that not all European cities possess the prerequisites to implement urban social policy, as this depends on their level of autonomy and the welfare regimes. This is further discussed throughout the study.

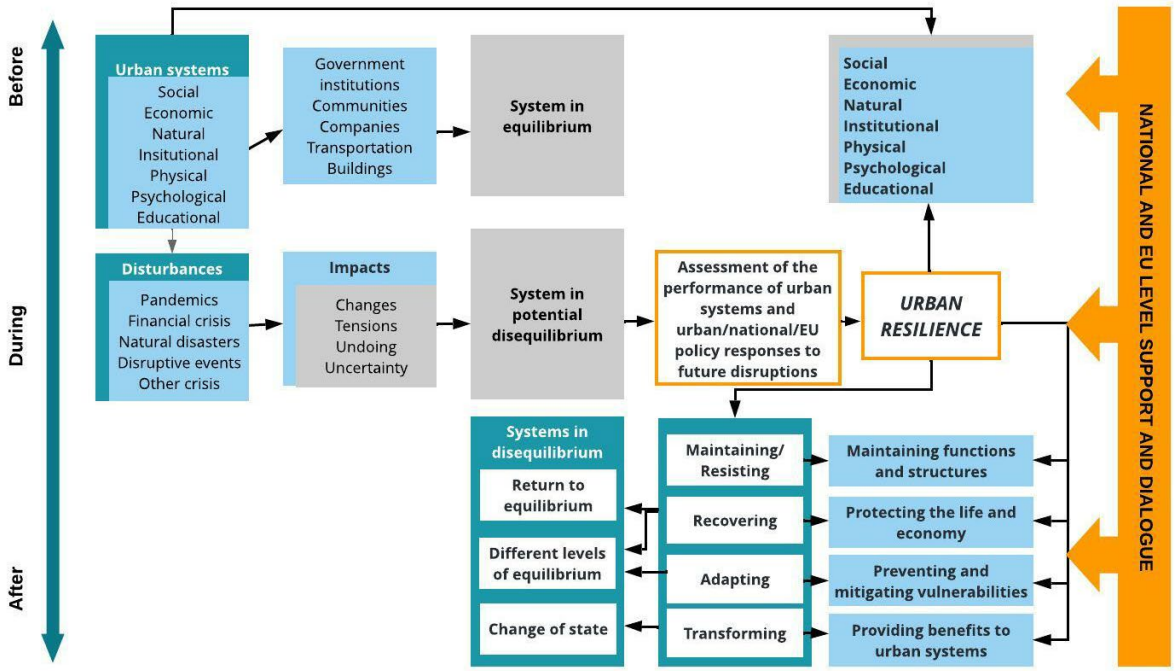
Most of the socio-economic trends and problems that are more visible in cities are influenced by policies and regulations implemented at other levels of government. Thus, a **multi-level approach** is required to understand how certain issues manifest themselves, such as social inequalities, residential segregation, educational inequalities, trends in migration and settlement, housing affordability. One of the most important features of the multi-level governance approach is the parallel vertical and horizontal relationships within multi-level governance systems. This study focuses on both the vertical (coordination between different levels of governance) and horizontal (coordination with other actors at local level) dimensions (Cucca and Ranci 2021). Cities are embedded, first and foremost, in national states (hence the need in this report for a chapter that focuses on the state and the city). This implies a substantial interdependence between the different institutional/governmental levels that constitute the backbone of governance (multi-level governance), together with the horizontal coordination of interests, actors and organisations (territorial governance).

1.4. Analytical framework

The study's analytical approach builds upon the understanding of the terms described above. In this section, we present additional underlying assumptions and the analytical framework that has guided the development of the study and the analysis of the city and of EU-level policy responses.

Analytically, the study takes an urban resilience approach to understanding social challenges in cities and deriving lessons for future urban policy. The concept of 'resilience' includes the ability of a system to 'anticipate, absorb, recover from, and adapt to a wide array of systemic threats' (OECD 2020a). It can be understood as resting on four basic pillars: resisting, recovering, adapting and transforming (Ribeiro and Gonçalves 2019). The varying capacities of cities to address social problems and govern social change are the result of several factors, including the specific policy orientations and capacities of local governments, the availability (or lack) of public funds within the national framework, and the different roles played by traditional and new social stakeholders in setting urban policy agendas. Resilience indicates that a system can return to its original stability, while also introducing innovations and capabilities developed in response to a crisis and, so to say, 'build back better'. The study therefore highlights whether the policy responses and support systems provided in cities have had the effect of promoting resistance, recovery, prevention or transformation in relation to the vulnerabilities in the cities in focus.

Figure 2. Analytical framework for systems of urban resilience



Source: Adapted from Ribeiro and Gonçalves (2019)

Policy to alleviate poverty and social exclusion in cities needs to be holistic and durable for the future, and requires long-term, structural solutions rather than short-term ones. In this regard, cities face various challenges in terms of regulatory and financial autonomy and capacity, as well as potentially conflicting dynamics with national and international actors, including those at EU level (Rauhut and Humer 2020). This study recognises that synergies and dialogue are necessary between local, regional/national and international efforts, regardless of the institutional settings of multi-level governance in which cities find themselves (Cucca and Ranci 2022). Thus, the study focuses on policy responses at city, national and EU levels, and explores synergies between these levels of governance. Its main focus is on the urban and EU levels, while discussing the relationship and impact of national

level policies throughout the study where relevant. The COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted the need for systems and levels of support between institutional, local and international levels of governance.

2. UNDERSTANDING THE NATURE, SCOPE AND IMPACT OF SOCIAL CHALLENGES IN CITIES

This section identifies the most prevalent challenges in cities across the European Union, including their root causes, the most vulnerable groups who face these challenges, and which areas of towns are most affected. Case studies in eight urban areas in the EU were analysed and complemented with the academic literature and statistics. Through an intersectional lens, we highlight intersecting vulnerabilities and forms of discrimination, focusing on the interplay between ethnicity, socio-economic status and the spatial settings of cities, while considering the main target groups for the actions considered in this study – Roma, migrants and youth.

2.1. Degrees of social exclusion and poverty

KEY FINDINGS

- Social exclusion is a complex and multidimensional process linked to other social challenges, especially in the deprived neighbourhoods and among vulnerable groups such as refugees, youth and ethnic minorities.
- The most marginalised urban communities in European cities are Roma, migrants, homeless people and people with intellectual disabilities.
- There is a lack of EU-level comparable data on social challenges across different spatial units (cities, functional urban areas and greater city areas).

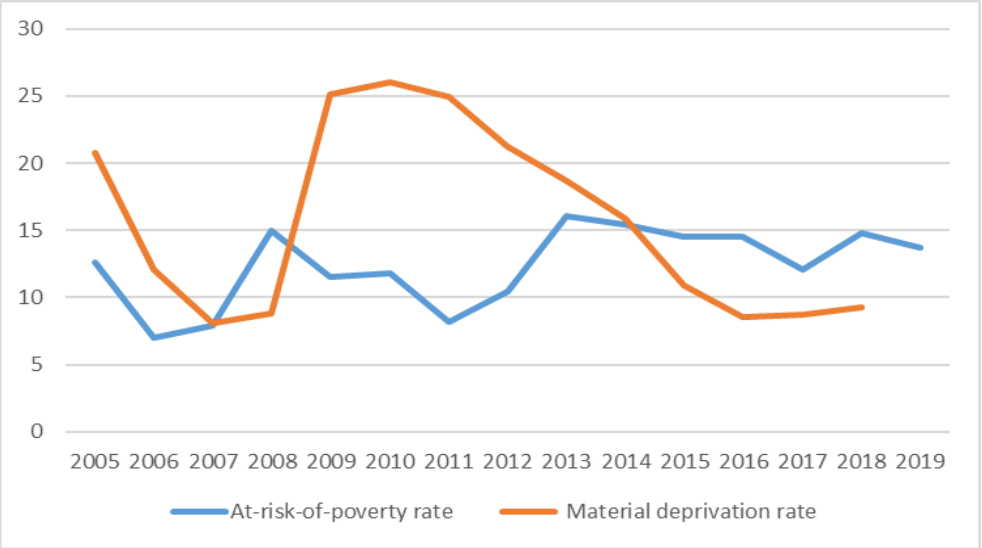
Social exclusion is a complex and multidimensional process, as it can encompass a lack of access to employment, the lack of a political voice, and poor social relationships. In a broader sense, excluded persons cannot participate in the normal relationships and activities available to most people in a society, whether in economic, social, cultural or political arenas. It is therefore not enough to examine each of these issues individually; rather, the links that tie these problems together are an essential aspect to explore. We can see repeating patterns of identified social issues that are linked to social exclusion and other problems throughout the case studies carried out for this study in eight EU cities and systematic, and in the literature review and statistics.

The risk of poverty and social exclusion does not depend strictly on a household's level of income. It may also reflect joblessness, low work intensity, working status, or a range of other socio-economic characteristics. To calculate the number or share of people who are at risk of poverty or social exclusion, a combination of three separate measures is used. These cover persons who are in at least one of the following three situations:

- at risk of poverty (as indicated by their disposable income); and/or
- face severe material and social deprivation (as gauged by their ability to afford a set of predefined material items or social activities); and/or
- have a very low level of work intensity (less than 20 % per year).

While Eurostat does not provide data on these indicators for smaller spatial units, an example from the case study in Tallinn demonstrates the relationship between the first two indicators over a time span of 14 years focusing on child poverty. Between 2005 and 2019, the material and social deprivation rates declined and the at-risk-of-poverty rate stayed relatively stable.

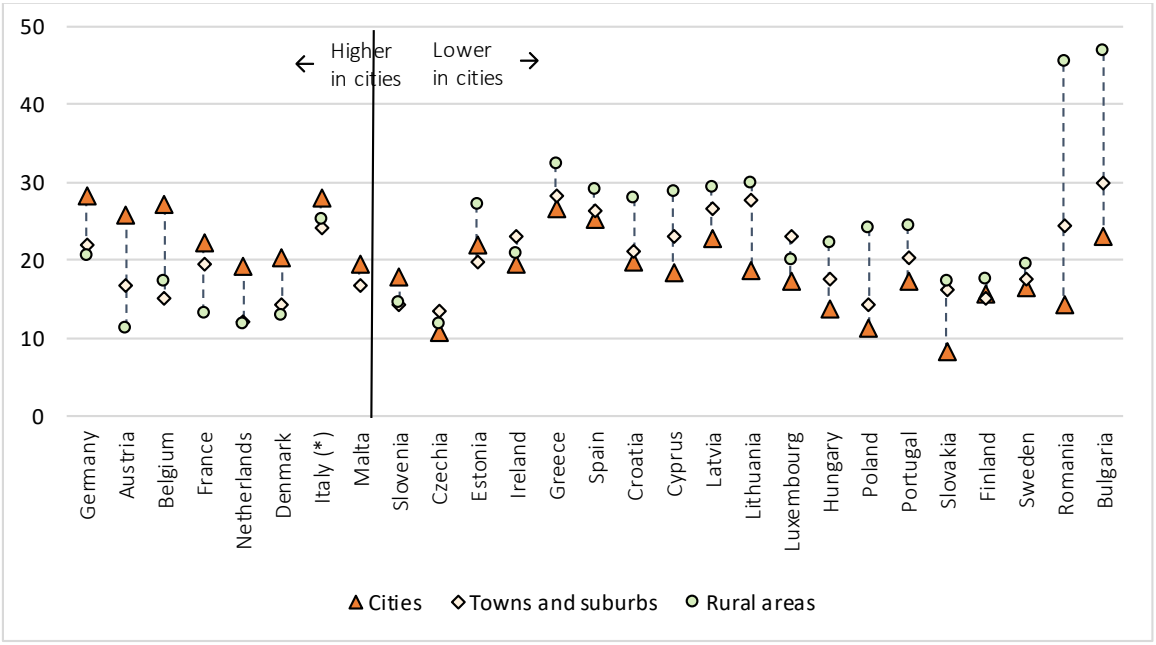
Figure 3 Child poverty in Tallinn, 2005-2019, in %



Source: Statistics Estonia

European cities harbour several paradoxes: they are relatively safe, but many people feel insecure. Housing in cities is smaller, but more expensive. Cities offer many job opportunities, but many cities have high rates of unemployment and low work intensity. They generate high levels of wealth; they also contain relatively large shares of their populations living at risk of poverty or social exclusion (Eurostat, 2019a). This tendency can be seen from the Eurostat data collected in 2020 on poverty and social exclusion in urban and rural areas (Figure 1). In Western European and more economically developed countries, poverty and social exclusion are more pronounced in highly dense urban areas compared with suburbs or rural areas. By contrast, in Eastern European Member States, there is a noticeably higher risk of poverty in towns, suburbs or rural regions. This can be explained by immigration and emigration flows; availability of municipal housing and welfare (usually higher in cities); low-paid jobs in the agricultural sector in some of the countries on the right side of the chart (Kazepov et al. 2022).

Figure 4 Share of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion, by degree of urbanisation



Source: Compiled by PPMI using Eurostat ILC_PEPS13N (2020) data **Note**: Italy (*) – 2019 data

Systematic analysis of the literature on urban areas further breaks down those vulnerable groups highlighted who are most threatened by exclusion, poverty, and those who facing intersecting inequalities. The systematic literature review revealed that EU cities tackle poverty and social exclusion issues across significantly different sub-groups of the population. Five categories of vulnerabilities emerged from the analysis, which are presented in Table 4 below, along the social groups most affected. All of the identified groups face multiple and intersecting inequalities to some extent. That depends on the context of the challenges they face and the cities they live in.

Table 5 Most cited vulnerable groups in urban areas

Times mentioned ↑

Work-related	Ability-related	Social status-related	Age-related	Nationality/ ethnicity-related
Low-income workers	Handicapped/ persons with disability	Homeless	Elderly	Migrants/ refugees
Long-term unemployed	Persons with psychological/ mental disorders	Single mothers	At-risk youth (NEET)	Roma
In precarious work	Lacking qualification/low educated		Children	Other ethnic minorities
	Drug addicts			

Note: vulnerable groups identified through a systematic literature review of urban vulnerabilities in 54 different academic articles. The groups mentioned most frequently in scholarly articles are shown in the upper rows of the table.

Unemployment is the biggest issue in EU urban areas that contributes to the problem of social exclusion and ultimately, poverty. Eurostat data shows that just under two-thirds (66.2 %) of unemployed persons aged 18 years and over were at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2020, in both rural and urban areas (Eurostat 2021b).

Case study findings portray a more detailed picture of the experience of poverty and social exclusion for vulnerable groups. A case study was conducted in northern France, in the city of Roubaix, where youth under 30 years old represent almost half of the total population, according to the 2018 census. The case study's authors found that '42.4% of **young people** aged 15 to 24 years old stay in the same city of residence and do not experience the upward mobility that is generally necessary for educational and professional success'. **Ethnic minorities** are identified as the most vulnerable sub-group, experiencing high social fragility as they are 'pushed to the margins of the society'. Interestingly, Roubaix has made significant infrastructural investments over the years, building good transport infrastructure between Roubaix and the nearby city of Lille, but no direct positive impact on these vulnerable groups was found. One explanatory factor was highlighted in relation to **low levels of education**. Roubaix has an exceptionally high school drop-out rate. Therefore, low levels of educational attainment create low social mobility and make it difficult to access the labour market, and problems persist. An interviewee from Roubaix reminds the researchers that this unemployment problem is structural, explaining that young people have inherited a system that has been in place for decades: 'the former [young people] from disadvantaged neighbourhoods themselves did not have the chance to find a job, and this fatality is perpetuated on today's youth'. Young people have to understand that it will be almost impossible for them to find a decent and well-paid job, particularly when they accumulate 'a certain number of handicaps in terms of school failure, poverty, exclusion and discrimination' from a young age.

Unemployment is an especially relevant problem for **refugees**, as the case study from Hamburg suggests. Most refugees in the city settle in temporary social housing in specific neighbourhoods (e.g. Seinfeld). However, they face difficulties when their education and professional qualifications are not recognised, or they are required to have a certain level of German language skills. In addition, interviewees note that institutional problems persist when refugees need a favourable decision in their asylum procedure, which often leads nowhere. Often, refugees cannot provide all of the documents required, and are 'completely excluded from the job market and therefore suffer from marginalisation and can't continue their integration process'. In addition, the author of the case study claims that refugees are particularly vulnerable in urban contexts, as they are placed into already deprived quarters such as Billbrook, Osdorf, Wilhelmsburg, Jenfeld and Harburg. Therefore, 'asylum seekers not only have to cope with the challenges they face during the asylum process, as well as learning the German language, but also the conditions that are prevalent in the area they are housed' – namely, poor access to social services, transportation, educational institutions, high levels of crime, and poverty.

In three neighbourhoods of Miskolc, **Roma** were multiply disadvantaged and more vulnerable to long-term unemployment. This tendency is widespread in industrial cities in Hungary. Interviewees note that this is 'the consequence of the disappearing heavy industry after regime change [end of Soviet rule in 1989]'. A lack of skills, and of opportunities to retrain, leaves this ethnic minority in an unfavourable position. In addition, Roma face **discrimination** on various levels – they are often excluded from municipal housing programmes; also, in Avas and other industrial neighbourhoods, unemployment among Roma is exceptionally high because smaller and medium-sized businesses deliberately do not employ Roma. It was noted that international companies such as Bosch have helped alleviate the situation, as they pursue non-discriminatory policies. The case study concludes that exclusion from employment leads to alienation from society, and increases the risks of long-term dependence on social welfare.

The case study from the German city of Hamburg outlined discriminatory practices towards **refugees** in the city's Jenfeld quarter. In 2014, 81 xenophobic offences were documented in Hamburg, which represents around 8% of the total number of such crimes committed in Germany in the same period. Growing discontent towards refugees in cultural (values and norms) and economic dimensions (competition for housing and employment) were identified as driving factors. With the sudden increase in refugees from 2015 onwards, people who were struggling to find suitable accommodation before the refugees' arrival, faced new competitors in the housing market as social housing reached its limits. The general public labelled refugees 'economic migrants' (*Wirtschaftsflüchtlinge*), and this discourse has continued ever since, marginalising these communities and the areas in which they live. Far-right parties such as the Allianz für Deutschland have also taken up and exacerbated this discriminatory narrative over the years.

Poverty, understood as an extreme form of social exclusion, was also widely noted in the case studies exploring the situations in the various urban areas. Urban poverty has many facets, and can be measured using various indicators. It stems from economic and social difficulties, as well as unique characteristics of cities such as their density, demography, development, and sharp contrasts in living standards. After analysing 22 different cities across Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands, Schinnerl and Greiling (2019) found the following factors to be the fundamental causes of poverty: loss of job, long-term unemployment, (too) low income, the temporary nature of jobs, low work intensity, inadequate labour market skills, lack of qualifications, and insufficient education.

The case studies further showcase the fact that poverty is widespread and interrelated with other problems, especially in deprived neighbourhoods. In Tallinn, researchers note that poverty is visible and closely linked to social segregation; certain districts of the city such as Põhja–Tallinn and Lasnamäe

contain high proportions of people supported by welfare. In Roubaix, where 45% of the population lives below the poverty line, many housing units are unsuitable and insanitary. This case study highlighted that poverty is a foundation for further difficulties in life, especially for **youth**. Interviewees in the Roubaix case study also suggest that young people who suffer from poverty often turn to a criminal lifestyle. In Hungary, increasingly economically inactive people were noted in industrial cities such as Miskolc. Roma communities were heavily affected, due to the closing down of factories, plunging them into extreme poverty in neighbourhoods such as Lyukóvölgy.

However, urban poverty can also be caused by other, more specific factors, which can form a closed cycle of repetition. García and Sanchez (2017) outline cultural factors of inheritance as key in the neighbourhood of Los Rosales in Murcia. According to the authors' findings, **Roma women** often drop out of school due to marriage, suffer from illiteracy, experience severe social control from their families that prevents them from seeking financially favourable opportunities, face a high level of prejudice in the labour market, and are unlawfully incarcerated more frequently than women in the general population. The authors argue that these factors are mainly culturally based, and contribute to a vicious circle of urban poverty into which Roma women are sucked.

Policies to control the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in lockdowns and social distancing measures. These had an indirect impact on **domestic violence**. Case study findings from Roubaix show that alcohol consumption rose sharply during the pandemic, affecting the mental health of the population, especially **children** who suffered as a result of domestic violence. Recent literature produced in the context of pandemic shows that **women** were especially vulnerable. This rise in domestic violence has been dubbed the 'shadow pandemic' by experts and policymakers (FEMM 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic amplified stress and psychological distress universally, due to confinement, deteriorating socio-economic situations, and the loss of jobs. Due to the unequal burden of unpaid domestic work and caring, women more frequently became inactive in the labour market (ILO 2021).

Data collected by the World Health Organization shows that EU Member States reported an increase of up to 60 % in emergency calls by women subjected to violence by their intimate partners in April 2020, compared with the same month in 2019 (WHO 2020). In addition, social isolation has been found to deteriorate mental health and increase the prevalence of substance abuse, increasing the risk of intimate partner violence (Peterman et al. 2020). De Paz et al. (2020) suggest that problems relating to violence do not arise from spending prolonged periods with a partner, but the lockdown itself usually acts as a trigger for additional stress factors that lead to extreme emotions and reactions, and thus the proliferation of violence. A survey carried out in 28 European countries suggests that women's mental health was more strongly affected by the pandemic than that of men (Toffolutti et al. 2021). Health services specific to women were impacted by disruptions (such as in relation to maternity care and the supply of contraception) or restricted (such as abortion provision, which was sometimes classified as non-essential). It has been found that the lack of a unified policy response to COVID-19 restrictions has widened inequities in abortion access across Europe (Moreau, Shankar and Glasier 2021).

Although this finding is not unique to urban areas (ILO 2021), recent academic literature on EU urban areas confirms that gender-based violence has increased dramatically since the start of the pandemic, and that this is **directly linked to overcrowding,** which is a common feature in deprived neighbourhoods of cities. Mittal and Singh (2020) found that already overcrowded homes, with additional anxious family members confined indoors during lockdowns, resulted in of the rise gender-based violence.

In Tallinn, the case study noted that **substance abuse** critically affects young children because alcohol consumption often leads to domestic violence. A survey revealed that 56% of clients in social

accommodation services have alcohol problems (Piirsalu 2020). The authors of the case study observed this problem in Lasnamäe, one of the spatially segregated areas of the city. Despite being Tallinn's largest borough, Lasnamäe does not have a shelter home or a school for children with mental health issues. Problems therefore persist when coupled with a lack of access to social services. A study by Allweiss et al. (2018) evaluated the experiences and perspectives of people with intellectual disabilities living in the urban district of Berlin-Lichtenberg. Such individuals tend to be more vulnerable to risks of illness (associated with their impairment, intake of medications, or social determinants such as low socio-economic status) and are confronted with various issues in relation to health care and health promotion (e.g. communication or access barriers) compared with people without intellectual disabilities.

In Roubaix, where youth unemployment and school drop-out rates are rampant, drug and alcohol use is high and leads to **criminal behaviour**. Reinforcing everyday security and tranquillity is therefore a major social challenge that, if achieved, could improve the image and attractiveness of Roubaix. With a more secure environment, shops and other economic activities could be established in the city – even in the heart of its most 'troubled' areas. This would benefit the residents, especially young people at risk of more significant social exclusion.

2.2. Spatial segregation and inequality

KEY FINDINGS

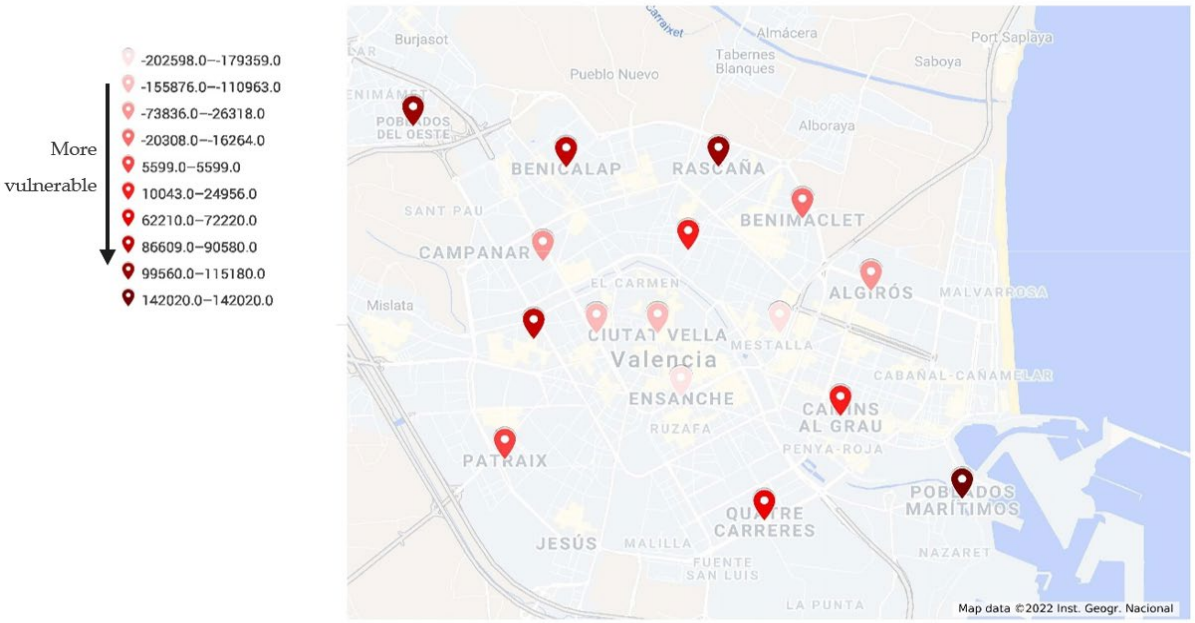
- Spatial segregation was the most commonly identified problem in urban areas, and has a detrimental effect on the most vulnerable and social excluded in the society.
- In EU cities, deprived areas usually consist of ethnic minorities, refugees or migrants and the elderly.
- Gentrification is becoming more relevant each year, and affects all vulnerable groups who are struggling financially.
- Difficulty in accessing housing and resources, as well as a lack of decent infrastructure, are the most common characteristics of deprived urban areas in EU cities.

This section explores one of the main social challenges noted during the study. Case study findings and the literature review show that **spatial segregation** was the most commonly identified problem in urban areas. Spatial segregation refers to the distribution of social groups within a specific limited space. Socio-spatial segregation is linked to all dimensions of social challenges, such as a lack of resources and participation, and a poor quality of life. It should be noted that segregation is not *per se* a negative thing – people sometimes prefer to live with those who are similar to them in terms of class, ethnicity and religion. Moreover, some of the literature suggests that opportunities for upward mobility are better for children in urban centres, regardless of segregation and even when the threat of drug and alcohol abuse is higher. The main challenge however is the risk of spatial segregation causing further poverty traps for vulnerable groups and lack of opportunities (van Ham et al. 2016).

The more extreme levels of ethnic and socio-economic segregation (these often overlap) are undesirable (and in many cases involuntary) (van Ham et al. 2016). In addition, the findings of a recent study in five EU capitals show that the segregation of the rich is much stronger than the segregation of the poor because they can choose neighbourhoods freely, and tend to move to expensive, gentrified areas (Haandrikman et al. 2021). However, in the following analysis, we will focus on the lower social strata and the difficulties they face in cities. One of the case study locations – Valencia – provides an example of the segregation seen in cities today. The visual below shows that those with lower incomes

per unit of consumption tend to live further from the city centre, while those in the higher echelons own property in the centre of the city.

Figure 5 Relative levels of urban social vulnerability in the city of Valencia, by district



Source: case study on Valencia **Note**: social vulnerability is measured via three indicators. 1) the ratio between the number of unemployed in 2019 and the population aged between 16 and 64 years, by district; 2) difficulty in accessing education. Indicator: percentage of adults with a level of education lower than school graduate or equivalent, by district; 3) average income per unit of consumption, 2018. Source: INE (2021a). Experimental statistics. **Note:** Income per unit of consumption is obtained for each household by dividing the total net income of the household by the number of units of consumption.

Urban studies typically analyse segregation across different groups (socio-economic, racial, ethnic), defining it as the degree of separation among social groups in a city space (Rasse 2019). Socio-economic segregation is largely a consequence of inequality and poverty. The extent to which inequality leads to spatial segregation is strongly related to the welfare system and housing market, as well as to the spatial organisation of the urban housing market (van Ham et al. 2016). Segregation is discussed primarily from the perspective of gentrification and deprived neighbourhoods. Other, inter-related social problems are discussed throughout this chapter.

The literature review suggests that in many European cities, low-cost (owner-occupied, private or socially rented) housing is spatially clustered in certain neighbourhoods. The case studies conducted indicate that **deprived urban neighbourhoods** form in various different ways. In Tallinn, occupation by the USSR after the Second World War fundamentally altered the city's economy, spatial characteristics, and social composition. Housing was strictly controlled by the Communist party, which led to spatial segregation, as 'newly arrived immigrant labour from Russia, Ukraine and Belarus was granted dwellings in new blockhouse districts – Mustamäe (1960s), Õismäe (1970s) and Lasnamäe (1980s) – whereas native residents of Tallinn inhabited the Central district/Old Town and the green off-city districts of Nõmme and Pirita'. Accordingly, **Russian-speaking ethnic minorities** were segregated over time.

In Miskolc, meanwhile, segregated **Roma** neighbourhoods formed due to their geographical isolation and the underdevelopment of public transport (Lyukóvölgy), or as a result of drastic changes in the neighbourhood's economic activity due to deindustrialisation, which created problems of unemployment and a population dependent on social welfare. The case study from Košice reveals that public perception and government inaction, as well as a manifest lack of support for ethnic minorities,

created devastating inequalities in the city. The area of Lunik IX is perceived as a 'symbol of failing attempts to integrate the Roma people' into society, as well as a symbol of the devastating urban ghetto in which the so-called 'antisocial' people live. The authors of the case study state that 'the historical, demographic, cultural and socio-economic differences of the Roma minority <…> leads to the term 'Roma problem' or euphemism 'Roma question' in society. Such a designation often brings a negative connotation, depicting the Roma in a bad light, which further leads to a deepening of the barrier between the majority and the Roma minority.'

Furthermore, neighbourhoods that are subject to large-scale demolition and rebuilding, or which have experienced **gentrification** processes, were found to be changing much more rapidly. One specific issue is the so-called 'waterbed' effect, in which vulnerable groups move to neighbouring areas due to the presence of some local development programme in their previous neighbourhood, which is absent in others. Liberalisation of the housing market changes the housing landscape – for example, by increasing the share of homeownership and reducing the share of available rentals. Studies have shown that the liberalisation of urban housing markets tends in particular to influence the mobility more affluent groups (Haandrikman et al. 2021). In Valletta, property has increasingly become the commodity of choice to stash capital and excess liquidity. The case study conducted in Valletta shows that 'the commercialisation of the city and large investments in support of tourism left the city with 23 % of dwellings vacant in 2017, yet the affordable property was still scarce because the prices have soared'. Those most affected by this transition are the residents of social housing or rented property. An over-emphasis on leisure has pushed up rents and property prices, making it virtually impossible for Valletta's **lower socio-economic class** or **young people** to set up homes.

The elderly are also increasingly confronted with social exclusion, due to rising rents after modernisation and the densification of their areas. Eurostat data provides an overview of the period from 2010 until the fourth quarter of 2021. During that time, rents in the EU increased by 16.3 %, while house prices rose by 41.6 % (Eurostat 2021c). Debrunner and Hartmann (2020) show that in most Swiss cities, elderly people suffer as a result of gentrification and social displacement, as newly renovated buildings are only available to middle and high-income groups. According to case study data, in one of the most prestigious historic green areas in the Central district of Tallinn, 'one can see, side by side, new near-zero energy houses and rotten wooden houses without central heating and sometimes just wood-fired. The former are inhabited by young upper-middle-class families, the latter by aged and single people.'

Green gentrification has also been noted, in which the process of environmental greening leads to increases in the perceived desirability of a locality, and ultimately to higher property values and rents. Focus group participants stated that in Rotterdam, there is a trend towards renewal, with old social housing units being demolished and replaced with expensive housing that prioritises green spaces; thus, residents who rely on social housing, who are usually **materially deprived**, have to move to the outskirts of the city (the 'waterbed' effect).

However, the case study findings from Miskolc, and the interview with the city's deputy mayor, reveal that over the last few years, segregated neighbourhoods have disappeared from the city centre due to real estate developments. However, this has not resolved the problem – only pushed it further from the central areas. The case study from Roubaix shows that unattractive and decaying housing blocks and poor infrastructure also increase segregation, as residents move to other parts of the city, thus changing the social and spatial composition of urban districts. In this way, gentrification reinforces the creation of deprived urban areas, and spatial segregation persists.

Study findings also show that **deprived neighbourhoods are often affected by other, interrelated social problems**. Field visits and interviews in Roubaix revealed that deprived urban areas (Epeule Centre, Pile Centre, Trois Ponts Sud, Nouveau Roubaix) have high rates of poverty and social assistance beneficiaries. Drug trafficking and youth delinquency are also a significant threat in those neighbourhoods, coupled with a lack of NGOs and government agencies providing help for youth to find work or offering non-formal training. Interviewees in Roubaix noted that young graduates leave the city as soon as they get the chance, while those who stay in Roubaix have fewer opportunities and more social problems. Meanwhile, in Tallinn's Lasnamäe neighbourhood, interviewees stated that there is a high concentration of social issues due to municipal social housing projects, which are predominantly inhabited by poorer, Russian-speaking families. It was found that family violence is rampant due to alcohol and drug use, and mental health issues are common among children, as these correlate highly with parental behaviours.

The case study in Hamburg revealed that spatial inequality is a significant social challenge for migrants and refugees. This consists of a number of factors such as lack of infrastructure, and insufficient access to public services and health care. In some cases, vulnerable groups are pushed to the periphery of the city, usually to deprived neighbourhoods. In many cases, these vulnerable groups already face some forms of social exclusion, but when they move further from the city centre, they become more likely to be unemployed and thus spiral into poverty. The case study from Miskolc provides an example of this tendency. People who live in distant neighbourhoods in the city tend to be unskilled or have outdated skills. As a result, their job opportunities are limited, and entry into the labour market is difficult due to poor infrastructure and connectivity. Without a residence card and social security benefits, the Roma population do not enjoy the benefits provided by the state. This, in turn, means difficult conditions for children to get an adequate education, and early school drop-outs are frequent. This issue was also raised in the focus group by a representative of an NGO working with Roma communities in rural areas; thus, the problem is not exclusive to urban areas.

Another critical social problem identified in the case studies is **access to housing**. The housing crisis affects urban areas more severely, with the housing overburden rate being highest in cities (11.8%) compared with towns and suburbs (8.8%) and rural areas (7%), according to Eurostat (EU SILC, 2019). Articles found through the systematic literature review indicate that people face difficulties in accessing decent housing, due to a sharp increase in housing costs. In the case of Brussels, Belgium, Ananian (2016) found that an increasing population and targeted housing developments create a disparity in the availability of housing, because it is purely profit-driven and built only in specific neighbourhoods. The vulnerable groups mentioned most often in the literature are low-income workers, young people, the unemployed, the homeless, single parents, the elderly, migrants and refugees, people with disabilities or mental illnesses, Roma and other ethnic minorities.

The case studies confirm these findings. For example, due to the high rate of home ownership in Tallinn, affordability of housing (or lack of it) is a disproportionally greater concern for **young people,** who are just starting their independent lives. To study, train or find a job, young people move to large cities where the housing market is often difficult. They bear costs that are frequently too high in comparison to their income, and experience worse living conditions than the general population. In Tallinn, the municipal rent sector and social housing are minimal and therefore not a feasible solution. People with low skills and education face severe barriers to accessing affordable housing. The rent for a modest apartment in the private sector (together with communal expenses) is about 600 EUR a month. In comparison, the minimum salary is 654 EUR, according to data from January 2022.

Another example comes from observation findings in Košice, where respondents unanimously identified housing as the primary social challenge for **Roma communities**. Apart from Lunik IX (a social

housing complex for Roma), there are several illegal settlements to which an increasing population of Roma have begun to migrate and build makeshift houses. These settlements are often located next to busy highways or pipelines, making them even more dangerous and putting the inhabitants of such settlements at high risk of facing life-threatening situations. This tendency is, to a lesser extent, also prevalent in smaller towns and rural regions. In urban areas, a lack of government strategy or social welfare support are viewed as the main shortcomings by interviewees.

However, **homelessness** is a violation of the right to adequate housing and several other human rights, and it has been on the rise in EU cities over the past decade. Homelessness is long-term when it has lasted for at least one year, or if the person has been repeatedly homeless for the past three years. Studies estimate that at least 700,000 people are sleeping rough or in emergency or temporary accommodation on any given night in the EU, 70% more than a decade ago (FEANTSA 2020). As homeless people often live in informal housing, they are frequently subjected to criminalisation and stigmatisation due to their housing status.

Men are still overrepresented among the homeless populations in EU cities, but in recent years, the profiles of the homeless have continued to diversify. According to a FEANTSA report in 2021, the homeless population is ageing overall, but there is also a growing number of people under 30 years old. Research finds that, on average, homeless women work for half as much time as homeless men, and are more dependent on social welfare and prone to socio-economic risks (Vázquez et al. 2019). The proportion of women among homeless people is increasing, as noted by the author of the Helsinki case study.

The case study conducted in Helsinki portrays the current situation in two Helsinki neighbourhoods (Vantaa and Espoo). The author indicates that the main driver of homelessness in those urban areas is unaffordable rental housing. Immigrants and their families constitute around 30 % of homeless people in the city. With the sharp increase in demand for real estate, foreign culture has become a major barrier, creating a 'discriminatory housing market. Through fieldwork observations, it was found that the homeless are generally satisfied with the social housing opportunities provided in the Vantaa and Espoo neighbourhoods. Even so, they were critical of increasing housing prices in the capital and the difficulties of moving out of social housing and constant support. However, the 'Housing First' approach is the key principle of success in Helsinki. This model has been proven to be the 'most effective and humane way to reduce and ultimately eliminate homelessness, as 80-90% of the population can keep their homes'. It is a strategy that combines supportive housing with social services and integrating homeless people into the labour market. In Helsinki, broad support is provided via day-centres and supported housing, which helps build a foundation for independent living with access to education, work placements and training in essential life skills. Other scholars also focus on increasing the amount of social housing as a possible solution to housing issues in EU cities (Schinnerl and Greiling 2019).

Moreover, spatially segregated areas in cities are usually worse off with regard to **access to social services, health care and infrastructure**, which poses additional difficulties for the inhabitants of such localities. Fieldwork conducted in such neighbourhoods provides the most recent evidence of this. For example, in Tallinn, a lack of social workers is an apparent problem in the Lasnamäe district, where the ratio of social workers and clients is 1:500. This problem is particularly prevalent in urban areas that are more densely populated by ethnic minorities. It is also a structural problem, as Estonia has set high formal standards for social and child protection workers, requiring a graduate degree in the field. Because higher education in the country is in Estonian, native Russian speakers often do not possess the educational requirements necessary to work at grassroots level in support of ethnic minorities. Other findings from the case study in Roubaix show that the socially excluded suffer from

health inequalities. In the Alma Sud quarter of the city, there is only one health professional per 1,000 inhabitants, and health facilities in the surrounding areas are of poor quality. At the other end of the spectrum, in Valletta, the authors of the case study note that the gradual commercialisation of certain regions (e.g. the Arċipierku Zone) also creates difficulties in accessing essential services. As the authors note, not only has living become much more expensive, and in some cases, unbearable for the poorest, but also 'there are no supermarkets, no childcare centres, no day care centres or residential centres catering for the needs of the elderly or persons with disabilities, and the area only serves the investors and tourists.'

2.3. The impact of COVID-19 on disadvantaged areas and groups

KEY FINDINGS

- COVID-19 affected the distribution of opportunities, goods and services, and exacerbated housing deprivation, unemployment and psychological distress, especially among refugees, youth and children.
- The pandemic interfered with the capacity of social service provision to the most vulnerable groups such as the homeless and refugees. Closely related to this, educational resilience was also challenged, with the poor being affected most significantly.
- COVID-19 increased spatial segregation, revealed infrastructural deficiencies, and demonstrated the shortage of urban green areas.

This section reflects on the impact of COVID-19 on disadvantaged groups and the areas in which they live in since the start of the pandemic. These impacts are outlined within the dimensions of urban resilience, taken from an adapted framework by Ribeiro and Gonçalves. The dimensions are, namely: economic, psychological, institutional, social, educational, physical and natural. Scientific literature from 2020, case study findings and the expert focus group show that the COVID-19 pandemic weakened all seven resiliencies and exacerbated challenges in problematic urban areas and among vulnerable groups. This finding resonates with the conclusion reached by the OECD (2021) that subnational governments – regions and municipalities – are at the frontline of crisis management and recovery, and are unequally confronted by COVID-19's asymmetric health, economic, social and fiscal impacts.

Economic resilience defines the development of societies and economies in the form of employment, incomes and equality. In an urban context, economic resilience was weakened due to COVID-19, especially in relation to higher inequality between social classes, rising unemployment, and difficulties in access to housing. Some cities introduced measures such as a moratorium on evictions, limits on rent increases (while supporting tenants and landlords), help for mortgage holders, and preventing utilities from being cut off.

Containment and lockdown measures disproportionately affected low-income families with young children (Hefferon et al. 2020). These families were also more likely to live in poor housing conditions, making confinement even more challenging. Brewer and Patrick (2021) identified the extra costs of having children at home for longer without access to vital free services. Such a situation required increased spending on food, heating, and to occupy children while indoors. Over one-third of low-income families with children increased their spending during 2020, while 40% of high-income families without children reduced theirs (Brewer and Patrick 2021).

The International Labour Organization's global youth survey found that among young people, the pandemic has a disproportionately high impact on young women and youth from low socio-economic

backgrounds (DJY 2020). The pandemic undermined youth career prospects, as they focused on work instead of education. According to the survey, one in six young people (17 %) employed before the outbreak stopped working altogether, most notably younger workers aged 18–24. Working hours among employed youth fell by nearly a quarter (i.e. by an average of two hours a day), and two out of five young people (42 %) reported a reduction in their income (DJY 2020). Findings from the case study in Hamburg show that refugees were particularly vulnerable, with many being employed in the service sector, which was hit hard by the pandemic. An additional risk factor for refugees was the issue of residency permits, especially during a time when employment opportunities were scarce.

In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic caused an uneven distribution of goods and burdens, opportunities, and resources in EU cities. Challenges relating to inequality and social justice appeared as a result of the crisis and of policy responses such as lockdown measures. During the pandemic, the marginalised became even more vulnerable, and in some instances the nature of their vulnerability has changed (Gray 2021). Different social groups were not affected to the same extent by its socio-economic impacts (EC 2021a), which can be seen by analysing the remaining resiliences.

Psychological resilience defines the ability to cope mentally or emotionally with a crisis or to return quickly to the pre-crisis state. In this regard, deprived urban areas were especially vulnerable in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, mostly due to problems relating to a lack of economic resilience, namely poverty and difficult housing situations. These problems manifested in an array of psychological problems for several social groups living in urban areas, as indicated by the literature and fieldwork from the case studies.

During the pandemic, the negative consequences of overcrowding manifested in various forms of psychological distress, often in deteriorating mental health. EU data show that in 2019, over 27 % of the population at risk of poverty lived in overcrowded housing, compared with 16 % of the overall population (EC 2021a). Data from the case study in Tallin reveal that material deprivation rose sharply in the Lasnamäe district, coupled with an increase in alcohol consumption and drug use. This negatively affected the mental health of children, especially as the district lacks specialised services for children facing these issues. Even beyond this district, the shortage of mental health specialists is a very significant problem in Tallinn. Participants in the focus group also noted the mental ill-health that arose during the pandemic in various EU cities.

Institutional resilience includes the administrative capacities of cities to deal with their inhabitants' problems. COVID-19 revealed the fragility of social and health institutions under the strict lockdown regimes. Problems with the logistics of service provision and lack of personnel were the most visible.

In the context of COVID-19, the lack of community housing and temporary shelters was most evident in those EU cities that are closely connected with one of the urban social challenges – homelessness. Recent literature suggests that homelessness was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, especially as today it affects all ages, including an increasing number of women, and all nationalities, including a rising number of asylum seekers and refugees (EC 2021). Homeless people represent a vulnerable urban group whose composition is changing. In most EU cities, homelessness has increased over the last decade, with growth rates ranging from 16 % to 389 %, mainly due to housing scarcity (EP 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic precipitated a catastrophic loss of jobs, unprecedented rates of unemployment, and severe economic hardship in renter households. A study on employment and social developments in Europe found that vulnerable households risk accruing arrears on mortgages or rent, which results in evictions (EC 2021a).

Although long-term homelessness decreased by more than 40 % in Finland between 2008 and 2019, during the pandemic, these numbers began to rise again. Interviews and literature on Helsinki indicate

that COVID-19 has highlighted the need for low-threshold services and homeless day care centres, which were lacking because the services had to be closed, either in full or in part, due to the virus. At the outbreak of the pandemic, many night shelters were promptly turned into 24/7 shelters as a public health measure. Cities in France, Spain and other EU countries focused on increasing the capacity and safety of their shelters, as well as offering alternative accommodation, even hotel rooms, to the poorest. Most European countries imposed temporary moratoria on evictions as a public health measure (FEANTSA 2021).

The case study findings from Tallinn show that spatial inequality was especially relevant with regard to access to services. Interview respondents identified the Lasnamäe neighbourhood as having a high concentration of social issues 'where family violence is rampant due to alcohol and drugs'. Children's mental health issues, which correlate highly with their parents' behaviour, were also mentioned. The author notes: 'Lasnamäe, despite being the largest borough, does not have a shelter home/school for children with mental issues.' A sharp increase in mobile social care workers was needed, but the social services were heavily understaffed as 'the main bottleneck is the lack of experts – psychologists, social workers, child protection workers'.

Social resilience is defined as the resilience of communities to cope, adapt and transform in response to external stress factors. The pandemic has highlighted the stark inequalities within society. The most visible impacts of COVID-19 in urban areas have been found in health inequalities and inter-related social problems, mainly for migrant youth and homeless people.

COVID-19 hit the homeless population particularly hard with regard to health risks. The estimated 700,000 people across the EU who already slept rough or lived in emergency or temporary accommodation before the crisis have been particularly exposed to health risks during the pandemic. This was because many of the measures imposed to limit the spread of the pandemic (such as social distancing and increased personal hygiene) cannot realistically be applied to people experiencing homelessness. Therefore, homeless people have higher mortality rates if they are infected with the coronavirus; for example, in London, the COVID-19 mortality rate among homeless people living in emergency accommodation has been 25 times higher than that of the general adult population (EC 2021).

Migrant youth were also significantly more affected, especially in terms of employment. Those in precarious, low-paid, manual jobs in the caring, retail, and service sectors have been more exposed to COVID-19, as their face-to-face jobs cannot be done from home (Whitehead, Taylor-Robinson and Barr 2020). An additional layer of risk is added in the case of 'critical' jobs, which can be defined as all those occupations that 'need to be performed even during a pandemic to keep citizens healthy, safe and fed' (Basso et al. 2020). On average, migrants hold over one in four low-skilled jobs in the EU. This figure rises to over 40 % in Austria, Germany and Sweden, and over 60 % in Luxembourg. Migrants are over-represented in the lowest income decile in virtually all Member States. In 2018, migrant and EU-mobile workers accounted for one-quarter of all workers in the hospitality sector in the EU, and a fifth of all workers in security and cleaning services – sectors that include primarily high-contact occupations (OECD 2020e). Forming a significant proportion of workers in critical jobs, non-EU migrant and EU-mobile workers have maintained critical systems across the EU since the start of the pandemic (Fasani and Mazza 2020a). Research has shown that migrants tend to have a disproportionately higher risk of losing their jobs than natives within the 'key worker' category (Fasani and Mazza 2020b).

Furthermore, the current COVID-19 crisis has exposed existing fragilities in health care and, interconnectedly, gaps in welfare systems. The lack of, or limited access to, social health protection had a detrimental effect on people in precarious situations (ILO 2021). The unemployed and those working in the informal economy generally do not have health insurance, or are under-protected by labour

regulations (e.g. migrant workers), and do not appear in formal statistics. Therefore, health inequalities are also widely dispersed among other vulnerable groups, such as youth not in employment and education, and the elderly.

Overcrowded, poor-quality housing in densely populated areas have often added to the increased risk of infection during the pandemic (Fasani and Mazza 2020a). The few data and other sporadic information that have become available during the pandemic usually show a significant over-representation of migrants in the incidence of COVID-19 deaths. For instance, in Sweden, 32 % of cases were migrants (who constitute 19 % of the population). In Denmark, migrants from lower-income countries and their native-born children accounted for 18 % of those infected – twice their share of the Danish population (EC 2021a). Higher excess mortality for migrants was even observed among the youngest cohorts. Excess mortality among non-EU migrants' remained between two and four times higher than that of the native-born population, even when taking into consideration that non-EU-born are more likely to live in densely populated areas that were more affected by the pandemic (EC 2021a).

Educational resilience in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic encompassed a phenomenal change event and a wake-up call to the education fraternity. This type of resilience meant that the people in the educational environment continued to function, but had to do so differently. The whole environment and processes within the education system had to adapt quickly to virtual learning. Although large and rapid switches were achieved, vulnerable groups in urban areas were heavily affected from the start of the pandemic.

Access to the internet was still not universal; therefore, some children in ECEC – particularly those from vulnerable and minority groups – did not have a chance to participate in education. Studies found that in most EU countries, following the closure of schools, students experienced learning loss, which affected disadvantaged students more severely (Pietro et al. 2020). It is believed that due to interruptions in education during the pandemic, vulnerable students with limited access to education will experience long-lasting learning loss (Carvalho and Hares 2020). Another study found that 77 % of teachers believed that vulnerable children were particularly affected at primary and secondary levels (DUO 2021). Parents with better education and higher socio-economic status may also be better able to provide emotional support and create stress-free learning environments at home, as was demonstrated through a recent survey in France and by the PISA 2018 results (Helary 2020). In higher education, those students who were most affected by the digital divide and who struggled to connect to digital education have been those from vulnerable socio-economic backgrounds (O'Malley 2020) or from marginalised racial and ethnic groups (OHCHR, 2020). The case study in Roubaix presents similar findings of a COVID-19 effect on education among youth in the city. The pandemic increased drop-out rates due to the poor living conditions of poor students, with the most frequently mentioned causes being a lack of equipment, poor internet connection, and lack of private space.

The case study in Hamburg, meanwhile, reveals that migrant children were particularly affected in the context of education. This is especially relevant, given the context of the city, which hosts a large share of the 680,000 refugees that have come to Germany since 2018. The school representative interviewed noted that 'some schools took more than a year to adequately address the issue' In addition to this, only 25 % of migrant children living in collective accommodation, and a third of those in private accommodation, had their own room, in comparison to 88% of children without migration backgrounds. This situation is worsened by the fact that the infection risk in refugee shelters is higher than elsewhere, due to the difficulty of maintaining social distancing rules. Therefore, many children are forced to remain in their accommodation, even when inhabitants are infected by COVID-19. The case study in Valletta shows similar findings – COVID-19 brought to light or exacerbated educational inequalities that were manifested in discrepancies in school attendance, restricted digital literacy and

challenges faced by the welfare sector to secure the continuity of services and support. These findings are also reflected in the academic literature. During the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic, education was more like emergency remote learning or a 'coping phase', without a well-organised online learning environment or infrastructure. This negatively affected the quality of education at all levels, as well as non-formal training and youth work in general (van der Graaf et al. 2021).

Migrant youth were overrepresented in VET schemes; therefore, disruption in job placements significantly impacted their financial security and immigration status (Majumdar et al. 2020). The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) has said that during the first wave, the rights of apprentices under collective agreements were sometimes not respected; apprentices were required to work as employees rather than receive their right to training (ETUC 2020). Cedefop has also warned that disadvantaged students are more likely to drop out during distance learning when they do not have (sufficient) ICT equipment (Cedefop 2020). These findings are confirmed by the case study in Hamburg, where refugees faced challenges with regard to education, as refugees are three times more likely to live in overcrowded conditions. In addition, unstable internet connections or a lack of ICT equipment altogether halted their participation in the education system. The focus group discussion revealed the difficulties of refugees in Dutch cities. When social contact and volunteering opportunities were scarce, the ability to learn and practice the local language was very limited, showing how institutional and educational resilience are interrelated.

Physical resilience includes the spatial dimension in urban areas, focusing especially on infrastructure. Spatial segregation acts as a driver of social inequalities, as a consequence of the concentration of disadvantaged groups in areas not supported by adequate social and physical infrastructures.

COVID-19 exposed deep disparities in power and resources in cities, with concentrations of poverty in certain neighbourhoods (Klugman and Moore 2020). Therefore, the pandemic had a disproportionate impact on deprived urban areas that were already affected by cuts to public services, the loss of social infrastructure and pressures on the voluntary sector (Marmot et al., 2020). For example, participants in the focus group discussion pointed out problem with health accessibility for Roma people in multiple EU cities. Certain neighbourhoods were missing essential infrastructure; therefore, during the pandemic it was difficult for people to get first aid as there were no adequate roads to their homes. Case study findings from Miskolc reveal that in recent years, several segregated neighbourhoods disappeared from the city centre due to real estate developments and gentrification. According to the deputy mayor of Miskolc, this has not resolved the problem, but simply pushed it further away from central neighbourhoods. In these remote neighbourhoods, abandoned weekend houses, cottages and shelters on old hobby plots are occupied and used for housing. The case study in Hamburg revealed an area-based intervention aimed at developing better infrastructure. The initiative, called 'Social City', aims to remove the 'spiral' of negative social, economic, urban, infrastructure and ecological change in deprived areas.

In terms of public transportation in cities, the COVID-19 lockdowns led to a sudden and sharp decline in passenger numbers on public transport (down as much as 90% during the first wave), leading to an enormous loss of revenue from fares throughout 2020 and 2021. With lockdown measures lifted in many parts of Europe in spring 2021, usage levels have slowly increased again. However, they have not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels. In response, cities (London, Barcelona) have developed new cycle lanes, pedestrian areas and Low Traffic Neighbourhoods in record time. (Abdullah 2021).

Natural resilience refers to environmental resilience. In urban areas, this is expressed through the adaptation and provision of easy access to green spaces. The World Health Organization recommends that urban residents have access to at least 0.5-1 ha of public green space within 300m of their homes

(WHO 2017). According to the European environmental organisation, less than half of Europe's urban population is able to live in line with these recommendations (EEA, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated this challenge, revealing how beneficial urban green infrastructure is to psychological health. Due to changes in human mobility patterns and the shifting of the work environment to the home, the value attributed to green spaces in highly dense urban areas has increased during the pandemic. For example, In Oslo, Norway, outdoor recreational activity increased almost threefold during lockdown, relative to a three-year average for the same days (Zander et al. 2020). The literature review found that such tendencies were prevalent among EU cities. Another survey in one of the largest cities in Poland, Kraków, shows that residents believe that green spaces are essential for their mental and physical health. Over 75% of respondents regarded visits to green spaces as having a very big or significant impact on reducing stress levels (Noszczyk et al. 2020).

In addition to the positive impact of the improved air quality due to less traffic, COVID-19 had some additional positive impacts on natural infrastructure in cities. The case study conducted in Košice suggests that the pandemic led to the restoration of continuously flowing drinking water in a deprived area because it was one of the three prevention methods against the spread of the disease. In other cities, green infrastructure was prioritised more than before. A survey conducted in Italian cities showed that in all regions, respondents who could not physically access urban green areas felt deprived and expressed higher levels of social isolation. Urban green spaces played a vital role during the pandemic by providing ecosystem services relevant to health (a positive impact on well-being, reduced stress levels) and recreation. Many authors urge municipalities to arrange urban planning measures so that green spaces will be not only sustained but expanded to increase accessibility and further benefits (Ugolini et al. 2021).

3. TACKLING SOCIAL CHALLENGES IN CITIES: URBAN POLICY RESPONSES IN THE EU MEMBER STATES

3.1. Local-level policy responses

KEY FINDINGS

- European cities are not only places in which specific social problems are more visible, but are also contexts that serve as arenas for innovation in urban social policy;
- Barriers to effective local policy interventions were: the pandemic; lack of staff; lack of political vision; historical legacies; weak participation; and the governance setting;
- Operating under a supportive local governance setting does not exclusively enable policy effectiveness, as this depends on the existence of other necessary enablers;
- EU-level funding is most appreciated in cities with very low levels of policy capacities, constrained multi-level governance (MLG) settings, and good collaboration between local and national governments.

3.1.1. Exploring unique governance methods and practices in cities

This section explores unique governance methods that attempt to break negative cycles of deprivation in cities and in the context of the COVID-19 crisis. As a part of the study, the research team conducted desk research on governance methods in cities. The desk research resulted in the compilation of 20 'good practice initiatives' (selection criteria described in **Annexe 4.**) and eight in-depth case studies. The aim of this task was to understand the existing and unique governance methods in various multi-level institutional settings. This section presents the intriguing approaches and methods noted.

The term 'governance' does not have a widely shared and accepted definition. In the context of public administration, the most common perspective comes from the European literature (Cepiku 2013). Governance refers to institutions and actors beyond government, and to a variety of actions and power dependencies between actors involved in collective action. Good governance is often defined as productive cooperation between the state and its citizens, with success lying in the powers participating in political administration (Keping 2018). Thus, governance implies more than multi-level approaches, but the presence of networks and partnerships, especially civil society, and participation.

The table below presents an overview of the key interventions studied in the case studies, and identifies at which geographical governance level each intervention took place, as well as its positive impact on addressing the specific social challenge.

Table 6. Policy responses in the eight case study cities

Case study city	Social challenge	Policy intervention	Governance level	Positive impact
Hamburg	Integration during crisis	The Hamburger Integrations-konzept and integration policy to implement the pact	City level, but a lot of support from federal investments under the Soziale Integration im Quartier	Multiple advancements, e.g. immigrant members of district assemblies increased to 24.4%

Case study city	Social challenge	Policy intervention	Governance level	Positive impact
Helsinki	Homelessness, segregation	The Finnish Housing First Model	Change driven by national and city-level action plans and national financial support. EU supported primarily with advice	Finland is the only EU country in which homelessness is declining
Košice	Quality of social services, homelessness, segregation, unemployment	Interreg Danube Transnational Programme (RARE) Changing Discourses, Changing Practices: The Roma as Human Resource.	Multi-level governance, primarily driven by city collaboration with an EU consortium of stakeholders	Increasing involvement of locals, significant and much-needed infrastructure developments
Miskolc	Unemployment, quality of housing, homelessness, segregation	Strengthening social cooperation in Lyukóvölgy	City-level, with tremendous support from the Hungarian Charity Service Association of the Order of Malta and ESF funding	Increasing involvement of locals, significant and much-needed infrastructure developments
Roubaix	Youth unemployment, drug use, crime	Place-based urban renewal	City-level, with some national-level support	No positive impact
Tallinn	Segregation and poverty	Tallinn 2035, spatial development, urban planning through participatory budgeting	Centrally managed city policies with limited EU funding	Increased involvement of locals in urban planning, which is perceived positively, but a lack of impact on social dimensions
Valencia	Segregation, inequalities, social fragmentation	DUSI Strategy (area-based urban regeneration)	Co-financed through the ERDF and the local government	Strategy was well adapted to the needs of locals and guided all actors in the urban system to work in a good way. However, it is difficult to have a positive impact in

Case study city	Social challenge	Policy intervention	Governance level	Positive impact
				this complex local context.
Valletta	Social fragmentation and wealth inequality	Asset-based community development, e.g. the Ħiliet il-Komunità initiative	Multi-level governance collaboration between Valletta and the EU (cohesion policy funding)	Despite a less positive impact due to COVID-19 and the MLG setting, it brought a much-needed increase in satisfaction with urban renewal.

Source: PPMI

The types of interventions used by the initiatives in the case studies and the inventory of good practice can be grouped as seen in the visual below. Some of these actions relate to specific policy fields such as education and training, compensatory welfare provision and physical infrastructure development, which are key governance policy fields.

Figure 6 Types of urban policy interventions

Source: PPMI

- Networks and partnerships: researchers increasingly describe European cities as key spaces for creative responses to global problems, and as hubs for collaborative and innovative problem solving (Curtis 2014). In the EU, local government representatives take part more often in international conferences, networks and alliances to cooperate and advocate for common interests – focusing, for example, on achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11 on inclusive, safe, resilience and sustainable settlements at local level. Some of the bigger European cities, e.g. Barcelona, Rome and others, have been frontrunners in networking to address social and urban challenges. Smaller cities such as Freiburg are also involved in partnerships (Hickmann, 2021), but are less likely to be the leaders of networks (Kern 2019).

Box 1. The Pact, Barcelona

Eurocities (2021) considers Barcelona's Pact to be the first urban and locally produced COVID-19 recovery plan in Europe. The Pact is a multi-stakeholder agreement that provides for various measures and actions, summarised in its 10 objectives, which include reactivating and strengthening the local economy of the city and improving resilience and innovation in economic sectors and the community. The Pact presents ideas for a new urban model that is based more on proximity to services and strengthening the health system of the city. The signatories to the contract agreed to work together to define the measures to be implemented in Barcelona over the next 1.5

years, as well as the budget required to achieve these measures. The City Council consulted with various sectors and municipal groups to design the Pact and achieve political and social consensus regarding its objectives and measures. It was evaluated a year later with the same partners, to assess how implementation period was going. It's an example of a participatory and horizontal multi-level governance method that allows collaboration between societal actors.

Source: PPMI

Participatory place-based design often features in network and partnership programmes. Interestingly, in the collaborative pledge between cities in Italy for the integration of refugees (See Box 2), the collaboration is between different cities, not just stakeholders within those cities.

Box 2. Charter for the integration of refugees, Italy

The Charter for the integration of refugees was drawn up on the 22 of February 2022 between six Italian cities: Bari, Milan, Naples, Palermo, Rome and Turin, together with the UNHCR and the UN Refugee Agency. The document aims to enhance collaboration between the cities with regard to the integration of persons entitled to international protection, promoting the exchange of practices, experiences, tools and developing services already available in the territories. In a statement, the municipalities were highlighted as crucial agents and incubators of innovation and good practices in the support and integration of refugees. With the adoption of the Charter through a resolution of the respective municipal councils, the six cities are committed to making a difference in the social, cultural and economic integration of refugees into Italian society. Together with other national and local institutions, the third sector and civil society, the participating municipalities aim to support concrete policies and programmes that enhance the positive contribution of refugees. Among its priority actions, the Charter for integration identifies the development of 'common spaces – multifunctional centres where, by adopting a one-stop shop approach, the fundamental services for the integration of refugee people can be offered, such as quick access to essential documents and individualised accompaniment paths at home and work.

Source: PPMI

- Place-based urban regeneration: place-based approach to urban regeneration has been a guiding principle in the EU for a decade (Keller and Virag 2021). It aims to promote local development and spatial justice through targeted urban refurbishment projects. It rests on the perception that area-based initiatives can help the EU overcome the perceived ineffectiveness of cohesion policy, address inefficiency problems, and ensure that local actors are engaged. While place-based urban regeneration has also been criticised, more nuanced research has investigated how it does or doesn't work in various situations (Gertler 2010; Rodriguez-Pose 2013). For example, the delivery of place-based policy is particularly difficult when there is a high degree of central government control and where tensions and incoherence exist in policy objectives between tiers of governance (Pike et al. 2007). This study findings suggest that there is a need to combine different policy measures to counter potential gentrification effects (See Box 3). Among the case study cities, cohesion policy instruments were most often used to support urban revitalisation and the refurbishment of public space in cities. This indicates that this type of intervention is still very common in European cities, and probably implemented to some extent with the place-based and participatory governance approach. The case studies also suggest that this approach does not always work well, as in the case of Luník IX, where a compensatory effort to house Roma in a designated area led to segregation and further marginalisation.

Box 3. Integration Machine, Milan

Integration_Machine is an urban regeneration project that aims to create a metropolitan cluster of housing and welfare services for the social integration of more vulnerable sections of the population. The project works on three priorities: the physical restoration of vacant buildings in deprived areas to host new social housing functions; the creation of social and cultural services for local inhabitants; and the activation of sustainable mobility services to improve the accessibility of the neighbourhoods. Integration Machine acts as a filter between citizens and the welfare system, especially for those who are unable to access existing social services. An example of this is what happens within the Street Education Programme. Social educators develop relationships with young NEETs living a situation of disease or marginality, trying to understand their problems and guiding them to access existing welfare services. The exchange between educators and vulnerable teenagers happens in the public space, hence in an informal setting where there are usually wider room for manoeuvre than in traditional employment or counselling centres.

Source: PPMI

- Education, training and talent attraction: scholars have argued that in the knowledge economy, in which cities are characterised according to their knowledge workers and service-oriented economic activities, urban policies and governance should be oriented towards nurturing a strong 'people climate' to develop, attract and retain talent (Penco et al. 2020). Hence, scholars such as Yigitcanlar, Velibeyoglu and Baum (2008) have defined the concept of a Knowledge-Based Urban Development as a new development paradigm for the global economy. Thus, it is understandable that many cities are targeting their policies towards education, training and the attraction of people. An example from Lithuania is International House Vilnius – a recently established talent attraction programme in the Lithuanian capital. It offers an alternative route for high-skilled migrants to process their residence permits and receive advice from the city's tourism and business development agency, as opposed to the national migration department. The challenge for such creative city programmes is that they contribute to increasing housing costs and gentrification (Cooper and Florida 2005). Thus, it is important to mention that the initiatives in the inventory and case studies have gone beyond the creative city/strong people paradigm to also focus on how training and education can limit unemployment and NEETs or potential negative gentrification effects, and benefit all people in the city.

Box 4. Romane Buca, Stockholm

Romane Buca is a national project aimed at increasing the social inclusion of Roma people and improving their access to the labour market. The national project includes local sub-projects that have been implemented in four Swedish localities: Eskilstuna and Uppsala counties, Skarpnäcks district, and Sundbyberg. The innovative experience analysed here concerns the sub-project realised in Sundbyberg Folk High School in Stockholm. The initiative provides vocational and educational activities for Roma adults (professional courses, paid internships). The Romane Buca project is run by the NGO Sensus Stockholm, in collaboration with the Employment Service (Arbetsförmedlingen). It involves three local public institutions and a private organisation: Eskilstuna and Uppsala counties, Stockholm Skarpnäcks district administration, and Sundbyberg Folk High School.

Source: PPMI

- Compensatory welfare provisions: urban social policies focusing on compensation and welfare provision naturally form part of the urban policies covered in this study, due to its focus on social challenges in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The most common form of these relate to housing, which is very much in line with the study's finding that lack of housing access and affordability is one of the key urban social challenges across European cities. Housing issues are tied to spatial and

wealth inequality, which have only worsened as a result of COVID-19 and the lack of sufficient housing stock in populous cities, which at worst causes extreme vulnerabilities for those excluded. An example of an initiative from the inventory is the well-established Housing First programme, which has been adopted by many cities across Europe.

Box 5. Housing First and Home Silk Road, Lyon

Housing First is a homeless assistance approach that prioritises providing permanent housing to people experiencing homelessness, thus ending their homelessness and serving as a platform from which they can pursue personal goals and improve their quality of life. Lyon Metropole provides tailor-made, diversified responses to the needs of each individual in or at risk of homelessness. The process is guided by principles that ensure a right to stable housing for all, without conditions such as being 'housing ready'. The Home Silk Road UIA Project fits into the broader Housing First strategy of the Metropole of Lyon. Housing First is a way of addressing homelessness that implies radically rethinking well-established policies and services. Home Silk Road is an urban renewal project whereby a brownfield site destined to deliver more than 200 units of social housing is transformed into a hub for inclusion and culture from the outset of the redevelopment process.

Source: PPMI

- Transport and physical infrastructure development: some research suggests that the social aspects have been largely ignored, in terms of both efforts and impacts, in contemporary urban sustainability planning initiatives (Cuthill et al. 2019). Yet, improved physical and transport planning is necessary to ensure carbon neutral, liveable and healthy cities for human well-being and quality of life (key objectives of the Green Deal), and can have multiplying positive effects on the economy (EC 2021b). It is thus not surprising that several of the good practice examples in the inventory and case studies to resolve social challenges also deal with transport and physical infrastructure. Sustainable transport options were the main focus area of cohesion policy funding in half of the case study cities, and are expected to further increase in importance in the future.

Box 6. Soziale Stadt ('Social City'), Germany

Soziale Stadt ('Social City') is a sub-programme of Germany's urban development promotion programme. Its conceptual base stems from urban regeneration policy, which has long been characterised primarily by physical interventions. Soziale Stadt widens that scope by strengthening social aspects and tackling social deprivation. However, its instruments are neither social benefits nor social work, but urban planning measures. At all levels, the authorities involved have always emphasised, through evaluation reports and public debates, the open and exploratory character of the programme. Trial and error are seen as a crucial element of this, and consequently, the programme has led to various innovations that today have also established in other urban development contexts, such as integrated plans, neighbourhood management and an 'Action Fund', which is an earmarked budget that can be used for small projects and is controlled by local stakeholders (most importantly residents, usually organised as a jury).

Source: PPMI

The types of actions listed above may also be **combined,** as was the case in Oslo. Grorudalsatsningen was a place-based compensatory provision programme for teachers that aimed to attract them to teach in deprived neighbourhoods, and thereby improve the quality of education in the area. This policy was positively evaluated (ECASS 2022) and was also an example of a place-based approach that makes use of intersectoral collaboration and multi-level governance – other key unique governance methods of urban policy (UIA 2021). In this case, the state and city governance collaborated on socio-education policies and the physical upgrading of the neighbourhood. This ensured that the place-

based action did not aggravate segregation through stigmatisation, but led instead to the positive development of the whole area.

3.1.2. Enablers and barriers to effective local policy interventions

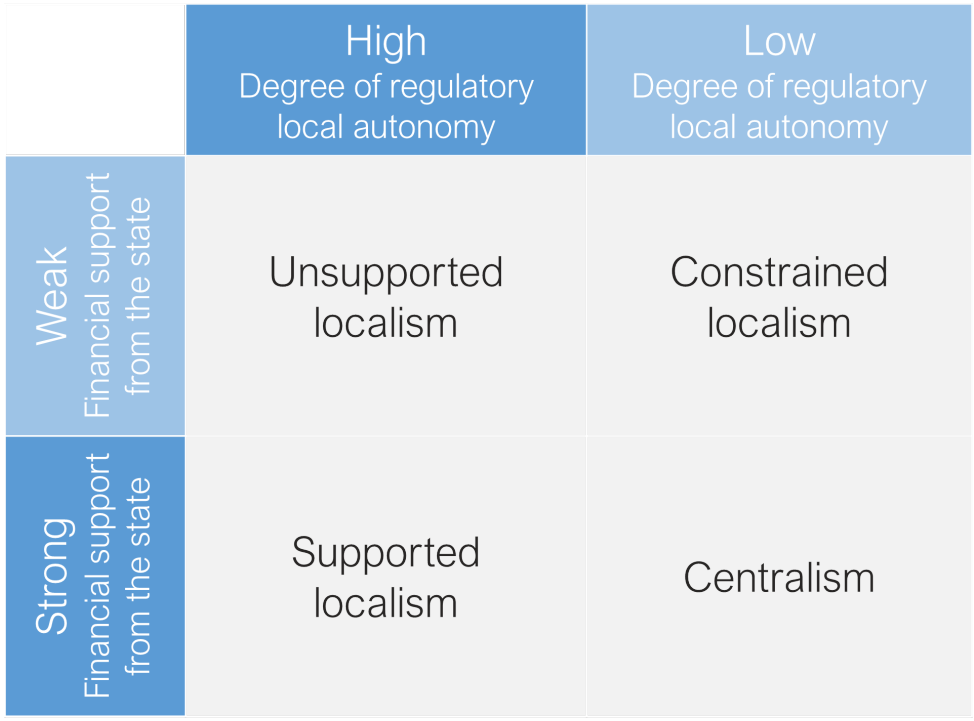
To better understand the particular challenges that cities face, this section first presents the specific multi-level governance settings in which local governments operate. Subsequently, it discusses enablers and barriers to the policy capacities of cities, as well as successful local policy interventions. Policy capacity is understood as 'the ability to marshal the necessary resources (and) to set strategic directions for the allocation of scarce resources to public ends' (Painter and Pierre 2005, 3), and is impacted by national governance structures. Capacity is not just about funding but also regulatory (regulatory capacity), which is where the link between city and national level governance plays a role. Public ends (goals) in this specific study relate to the reduction of poverty; the social exclusion and deep marginalisation of Roma, migrants and youth; and the overall improvement of cities' urban resilience systems.

Despite an increase in urban policy actions to address social problems, as presented in the previous section, researchers such as Weiland et al. (2021) are concerned about exaggerations of the abilities and capacities of cities and local governments to solve complex, global challenges such as climate change or the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to be important agents of change, local governments rely on regional and national governments, international funding schemes such as cohesion policy funding, civil society engagement, private corporations, and multi-level governance arrangements. The last of these can be defined as 'a system of continuous negotiation among nested governments at several territorial tiers — supranational, national, regional, and local – as the result of a broad process of institutional creation and decisional re-allocation' (Marks 1993, 392).

It is important to recognise interconnections with other levels of governance, as these are in large part shaped by policies and governance at different administrative levels: supranational, national, regional, and local. First, international organisations such as the UN, EU, or the World Bank, have affected the design and implementation of various programmes and interventions at local level. The widespread diffusion of participatory policies, for example, has largely been supported by international organisations. EU social policy programmes have affected local policies by influencing the power relationships within the national multi-level governance structure. In addition, cities are embedded first and foremost in national states. This implies a considerable interdependence between the different institutional/governmental scales that constitute the backbone of governance (multi-level governance), together with the horizontal coordination of interests, actors and organisations (territorial governance).

A need therefore exists to recognise that European cities operate within the context of different national governance settings that can act either as a barrier or an enabler to policy effectiveness (Cucca and Ranci 2021). The authors find that the policy capacity of urban governments to deal with the 2008-2009 financial crisis was deeply shaped by cities' institutional multi-level governance (MLG) settings across two key dimensions: a) the degree of regulatory autonomy granted to the local or regional authority; and b) the financial dependence of the local authority on the state, resulting in four specific MLG settings.

Figure 7. Typology of multi-level institutional governance settings



Source: adapted from Cucca and Ranci (2021)

- **Supported localism:** this MLG setting is characterised by the city having wide metropolitan autonomy over setting urban policy rules and goals, as well as strong state financial support. Locally based programmes receive funding from central programmes, often with the opportunity to set specific goals and methodologies, and with high involvement from local stakeholders in planning. Local stakeholders enjoy generous financing and unrestrictive support from the state.

- **Unsupported localism:** here, there is high local autonomy, potentially with a national federalist institutional structure and little or no financial support from the state. In this case, the central constraints are limited, since responsibility for urban competitiveness, welfare and social cohesion has been devolved to the local levels, yet central funding is limited. Urban policy in this situation will depend heavily on the capacity of the local governments to carry out planning and raise funds themselves.

- **Constrained localism:** cities embedded in this structure deal with strict regulation and little autonomy on the one hand, and scarce funding on the other. Urban policy in this case often depends heavily on collaboration with other municipalities in the same metropolitan area, who can join forces in place-based approaches that address very specific vulnerable groups and social challenges.

- **Centralism:** the final MLG setting is defined by strong national interventionism coupled with generous central funding. While local governments are heavily supported, they also have limited functional and institutional autonomy in decision-making.

Table 7. National multi-level governance frameworks for the case study cities

City	Institutional system	Financial autonomy	Local spending as a share of public expenditure	MLG setting
Miskolc	High state centralism	Moderate (< 50% of local revenues from central sources)	Low share for local expenditure (8 %)	Constrained localism
Košice	State centralism with local autonomy	Moderate (< 50% of local revenues from central sources)	Low share for local expenditure (9 %)	Constrained localism
Valletta	High state centralism	Low (< 10% of local revenues from local sources, taxes, fees, etc.)	Low share for local expenditure (almost 0 %)	Centralism
Hamburg	Regional federalism	High (> 50% of local revenues from local sources, taxes, fees, etc.)	Low share for local expenditure (8 %)	Supported localism
Tallinn	High state centralism	Low (< 10% of local revenues from local sources, taxes, fees, etc.)	Medium share for local expenditure (20 %)	Centralism
Helsinki	State centralism with local autonomy	High (> 50% of local revenues from local sources, taxes, fees, etc.)	Medium share for local expenditure (24 %)	Supported localism
Valencia	Regional federalism	High (> 50% of local revenues from local sources, taxes, fees, etc.)	Low share for local expenditure (7 %)	Unsupported localism
Roubaix	High state centralism	High (> 50% of local revenues from local sources, taxes, fees etc.)	Medium share for local expenditure (11 %)	Supported localism

Source: PPMI and Eurostat (2015)

The analysis of enablers of and barriers to effective policy interventions in the case study cities finds that the **most frequently mentioned barriers related to the pandemic and its associated restrictions.** This will not be discussed extensively, as it has already been discussed in the chapter on the impact of the pandemic on urban ecosystems.

The second most often reported barrier to/enabler of the successful implementation of policy was the **availability of qualified staff**. Several case studies reported that a reliance on voluntary work in community-led initiatives, rather than professional social workers, leads to inadequate support for people who are reliant on consultants and other services. Where the number of qualified staff had been increased, this led to clear positive results on the ground: 'In 2017, 68,245 asylum procedures remained unsolved, thereby demonstrating the number of people that remained in these state-mandated accommodations. In Hamburg, these numbers were reduced from 10,231 people in 2016 to 352 in October of 2018, in large part due to the BAMF's (German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees) recruitment of more personnel.' This ability of Hamburg to increase its number of qualified staff can be explained by the supportive localism setting, while the lack of staff can be explained by constrained or unsupported localism settings (e.g., Tallinn).

The third most reported enabler was strong **political vision**, which was found to have a clear enabling effect regardless of the multi-level governance setting. One clear example is homelessness in Helsinki, where the local government has chosen to go all-in, acquiring funding from multiple sources to alleviate this specific social challenge and focusing on the issue over a long period of time. Finland had previously implemented a Homelessness Reduction Programme (2001-2003) and a separate action programme for the Helsinki Metropolitan Area (2002–2005), in which the state, municipalities and other parties took measures to reduce homelessness. The goal of the latter was to build or acquire 1,000 additional homes for the homeless during the period 2002–2005. Between 2008 and 2015, the long-term homelessness reduction programmes PAAVO I and II were implemented, focusing on the reduction of long-term homelessness. The Homelessness Prevention Action Programme (AUNE) was implemented over the period 2016-2019. The same was the case in Hamburg, where a city-wide strategy from 2006 onwards on the integration of migrants and refugees still leads the way for clear policy action in this field. A lack of clear policy vision was mentioned as a key barrier to successful intervention in Valletta, Tallinn and Roubaix. The challenge faced in the case of Valencia was that the political vision became a barrier because it was too ambitious.

It should be noted that the local governance setting in both Helsinki and Hamburg is supportive localism, which may explain why we see stronger political vision and more action in these cities as opposed to Tallinn and Valletta (centralist states). The MLG setting does not, however, explain the unsuccessful strategy in Roubaix, also under supportive localism. According to interviewees, it appears that the existence of several other barriers and challenges (lack of political vision, financial rigidity, corruption, lack of societal trust and brain drain) creates a particularly difficult space for manoeuvring policy:

> *In the end, it seems that there is something that does not work in the governance methods of Roubaix, that even some elected metropolitan officials also recognise. Indeed, the interviewee would like to see responsible methods of governance presenting political decision-makers with a real ambition of engagement and not a simple aspiration to collect electoral votes.* (Roubaix case study)

The cases of Hamburg and Roubaix bring us to another key enabler/barrier, which is **historical legacy**. In the case of Hamburg, the city's historical legacy as a free port for migrants has impacted its sense of political identity and moral stand on this specific social challenge. This has made it easier for the city to take a clear stance, and to maintain this over time (i.e. the sustainability of the policy intervention). The

city's 'constitution' proudly proclaims that: 'As a world port city, the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg has a special task to fulfil towards the German people that has been assigned to it by history and location. In the spirit of peace, she wants to be a mediator between all continents and peoples of the world.'

The case of Hamburg was the only instance, though, in which historical legacy acted as an enabler of effective policymaking. In Roubaix and Tallinn, for example, it worked the other way around, as a barrier. The Soviet period fundamentally altered the economy, spatial characteristics and social composition of Tallinn. Newly arrived immigrant labour from Russia, Ukraine and Belarus was granted dwellings in new block house districts – Mustamäe (1960s), Õismäe (1970s) and Lasnamäe (1980s) – whereas native residents of Tallinn inhabited the Central district/Old Town and the green off-city districts of Nõmme and Pirita. Due to the high percentage of home ownership in the city, these spatial structures, which overlap with segregation and inequalities according to ethnicity, make it very difficult to positively change the housing and spatial inequality issues in the city.

Similarly, the author of the Roubaix case study quotes sociologist Talpin, who explained that socio-economically speaking, Roubaix has become 'the capital of spatial mismatch' (2021, p. 58) due to a major gap between the jobs created by the new tertiary activities in the city and the skills of the population. Migrants that originally came to the city to work in the textile industry and their families remain working class, and have not had the opportunity to transition into more highly skilled work. The city's traditional textile jobs are now more often found in Belgium, pushing some young Roubaisians to work on the other side of the border (Rosa Bonheur collective 2019, cited in Talpin 2021, p. 58), which causes **brain drain** and **disengagement** with local development.

Of equal importance to political vision as an enabler of effective policy interventions in the case studies was a **participatory and inclusive stakeholder approach**. This finding is very much in line with the principles for integrated territorial development, seen as key to many examples of good practice in the inventory. However, the case studies – especially those of Valencia, Roubaix and Tallinn – show that achieving participatory and inclusive policymaking should not be taken lightly. In Roubaix, for instance, there appears to be a double discourse with, on the one hand, a public discourse that displays a desire to involve people in city planning, and, on the other hand, **a silent discourse** that in fact reveals exactly the opposite. Often, the most concerned residents believe they have been caught off-guard and have had difficulty in making their voices heard despite the few consultation meetings that have been organised with the mayor of the city. This situation, among others, has resulted in the further disengagement of youth in Roubaix and distrust of the local political system and institutions. As reported by the case study authors:

> *The alarming situation of young people at risk in Roubaix has been highlighted for decades (Eurocities-NLAO, 2011, p. 4), but very little change is observed. The time has therefore come for a real break with the current forms of city governance and for the triggering of a real sustainable participatory dynamic. Participatory governance is more than necessary, especially when it comes to improving the living conditions of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods, as interviewee 1 points out by stating that: 'to do without [them] is to do against them'.*

Lessons learned from the case study on Valencia show that developing effective inclusive strategies when the parties are occupy different poles and complex power hierarchies, requires time and the involvement of experienced actors. This case study focused on the neighbourhood of El Cabanyal-Canamelar-Cap de França, the development of which has been contested since the 1980s:

> *The problem is historically deeper and rooted in time. It is rooted in the most persistent of the urban social systems of Valencia, in its social structure, in the hierarchies that position one person across*

> *another in the decision-making processes (…) The DUSI Strategy, despite its democratic guarantees and being in accordance with the European values of equality and citizenship, and following a strict methodology of participation, have not been able to find the keys to break some barriers that are preventing the population living in the Maritime Villages from overcoming their power imbalances with the rest of the city and internally.*

The DUSI STRATEGY is the document that defines the new strategy co-financed by ERDF and local government since 2016, of sustainable and integrated urban development in an urban area. Interestingly, despite EU funding being key to the initiatives discussed in the case studies, it was reported as neither a clear-cut enabler nor barrier – mostly because its contribution depended on strategies and support at the level of local and national governments. While this section touches upon the role of EU funding, it is discussed in further detail in Chapter 3.2.

One specific barrier and challenge mentioned by an interviewee in the Tallinn case study relates to **incoherence between EU and national policies**: 'There is a clear gap between EU social policies *per se* and EC country-specific recommendations. The latter tend to be too much pleasing/copying the positions of the sitting national government and less aiming to coherently implement the official line set by EC and EP'. It is a good example of a potential barrier specific to those cities that are within MLG settings characterised by greater centralism, and in which the local governance actor interviewed has less authority over city policies.

It appears that the windows of opportunity and the challenges relating to the **dynamics of city politics and the MLG setting** matter in terms of the way stakeholders perceive EU funding and policy. For example, in Valletta, some interviewees requested support from the EU in supporting and incentivising Malta's government to change its stance on rapid business-based urban development. In Roubaix, it was noted that centralised political visions limit policy capacity on the ground, and that the EU could play a role in addressing this challenge by helping these cities to widen their regulatory and financial capacity:

> *In France there are very few political measures to fight against discrimination at the local, regional and national level. Talpin (2021, p. 203) explains that in recent years we have witnessed in France the almost total disappearance of anti-discrimination policies, which have failed to become institutionalised because of the French vision of racial blindness (Najib, 2021, p. 47). Thus, Europe could play a major role in the development of more inclusive anti-discrimination policies applicable at the scale of French cities, especially with regard to discrimination in the labour market and at school.*

This analysis shows that cities in Europe face different governance contexts that can either limit or enable their policy and regulatory capacities to respond to crisis. Yet, even those cities in more challenging governance settings are ambitious about finding windows of opportunity and action to address social challenges and overall improve their urban resilience, and conversely, all of the cities found that COVID-19 limited their policy capacity. Regardless of their governance settings, the cities struggled to prevent and mitigate vulnerabilities and provide sufficient benefits to their populations during the crisis, and became more dependent on national governments for support.

In the Eurocities consultation of governments in European cities in the context of COVID-19 recovery, cities from across Europe emphasised the need for better dialogue and trust-building between national and local levels of governance in order not just to recover from the crisis, but to adapt and transform their urban resilience systems for the future (Eurocities 2022). Although the EU made it a requirement of the NRRPs to consult local authorities, Eurocities data show that cities have not been sufficiently involved in plans at national level (Eurocities 2022). Particularly within the context of COVID-19, many

city governments felt left out of discussions and decision-making, and asked national governments to be more open to cities becoming involved and gaining access to funding (both national and EU-level funds). While the discussion in this chapter has reflected on the various constraints to policy capacity to address the social challenges in cities, it should be emphasised again that the COVID-19 pandemic acted as barrier to policy effectiveness in all of the cities.

3.2. EU level policy response

KEY FINDINGS

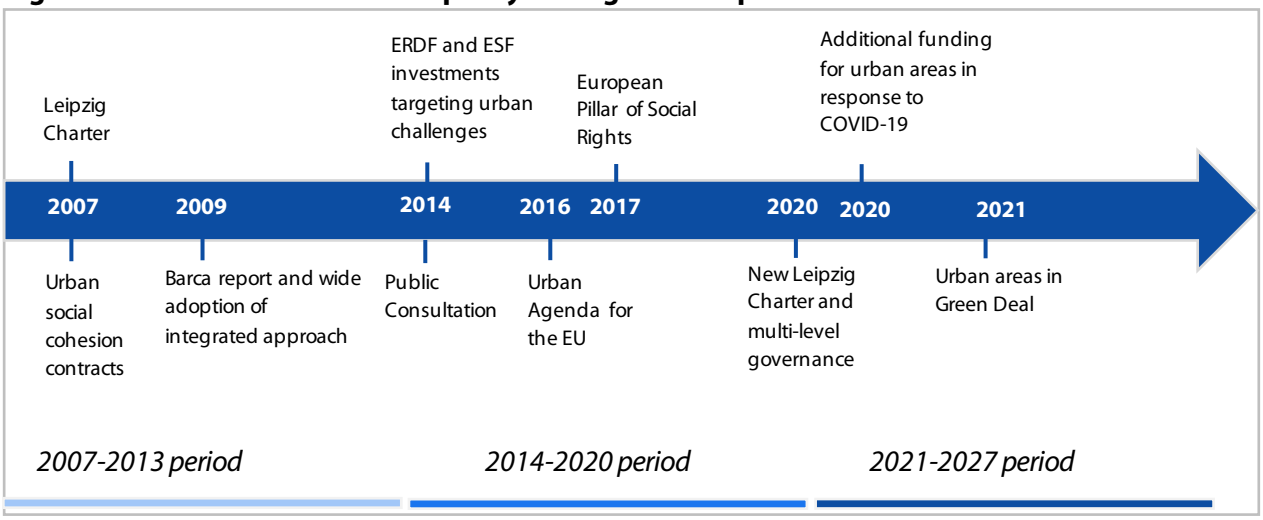
- All of the case study cities struggle to develop multidimensional projects that cover both the social and the physical aspects of development, regardless of the ambitions of the integrated approach.
- Overall, the involvement of community representatives in the programming phase is optimal when the cities already play a major role or form a separate administrative unit of equal strength to other regional units. These cities are often bigger capital cities.
- The key barriers to enabling positive impact through cohesion policy funding at urban level are discrimination, a lack of sustainability of projects, and complex bureaucracy.

3.2.1. The role of EU policies and funding in addressing social challenges in cities

a. Strategic-level developments

Around one-third of the EU's budget is devoted to cohesion policy, the primary instrument for supporting regional economic and social development, especially in the poorer states of the Union. Amounting to around EUR 392 billion during the 2021-2027 funding period (30 % of budget), this represents the single most substantial item in the EU budget. This makes its effectiveness a subject of great interest, due to the potentially high opportunity costs associated with these funds. Traditionally, cohesion policy has been based on the logic of inter-governmental redistributive bargaining, organised around aggregated measurements of disparity – mostly gross domestic product (GDP) per capita and unemployment rates. However, the escalation of intertwined socio-economic problems across the European Union (youth poverty, increasingly strained welfare states, escalating discrimination aimed at ethnic and racial minorities, and environmental degradation) have prompted the EU to rethink and reshape its redistributive logic (Kostka 2019).

Figure 8. Timeline of EU cohesion policy strategic development



Source: PPMI

Although urban planning issues remain within the jurisdiction of the Member States, over the last 30 years the EU has developed guidelines and initiatives with a more or less explicit urban focus. Recognising both the problems as well as the opportunities offered by cities, the 2007 Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities (2007) emphasised the importance of using EU funding to support urban development, particularly in deprived neighbourhoods. The principles of the Charter, which include participation, co-creation and a place-based approach, were aligned with the cohesion policy framework to ensure the efficient channelling of funding in line with the principle of subsidiarity. Since 2011, the EC and the European Parliament further increased their efforts to strengthen the urban dimension of EU policies and to support forms of regional development that can reconcile competitiveness with social cohesion.

Overall, the 2007-2013 programme tackled many interlinked urban challenges: social inclusion and the regeneration of urban neighbourhoods, sustainable urban mobility, the circular economy and housing in functional urban areas, as well as access to public services and digital solutions in small and medium-sized cities, and links with rural communities. An evaluation report commissioned by the European Parliament (Czischke and Pascariu 2015), shows that while the scale and effectiveness of sustainable urban development strategies varied between Member States, urban strategies had become embedded into Member States' national or regional schemes and had generated numerous 'good practice' interventions. For example, the French Politique de la Ville was among the first national programmes in Europe to focus on disadvantaged neighbourhoods with the overall aim of reducing inequalities, with Sensitive Urban Zones (Zones Urbaines Sensibles, ZUS) being identified at national level. Complex partnerships have been developed within this national governance scheme, which is designed to deliver integrated planning for urban renewal.

In 2014, the EC launched a public consultation to understand and address the demands of cities and stakeholders. Stakeholders from all Member States provided important insights and helped to develop specific objectives and define its functioning (EC, N/D). Moving away from rigid regional dimensions, the European Commission developed 'thematic objectives' designating the European Social Fund (ESF) as the main mechanism for channelling money directly towards human resources, with special attention being paid to 'groups at risk of exclusion' (EC 2014).

During the 2014-2020 programming period, Europe faced new challenges, exacerbated by economic crisis and climate change. The EU pledged to foster job recovery, address environmental challenges, tackle the persistent gap in education, and to fight poverty and social exclusion. The new regulatory framework focused heavily on results and contained new governance tools and conditions. Emphasis was placed on a strategic approach through Partnership Agreements and programmes, thematic concentration, a new performance framework, and *ex-ante* conditionalities. The new framework also offered several tools that allowing a combination of support from different European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI) to better tailor the needs of each territory, at national, regional, local or cross-border level.

Both the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the ESF introduced investment priorities geared towards facilitating the tackling of urban challenges. The implementation of urban development through integrated actions, which had only an option during the 2007-13 period, became mandatory in 2014 under Article 7 of the ERDF. Meanwhile, Article 12 of the ESF regulation strengthened the ESF's complementary contribution to integrated schemes. In addition, a minimum of 5% of the ERDF was earmarked for integrated projects in cities, together with a minimum of 5% of the ESF earmarked to support marginalised communities residing in urban and suburban spaces. ERDF funding focused on sustainable and inclusive growth, with the bulk of its allocation (75%) contributing to a low-carbon economy (Thematic Objective 4); environment and resource efficiency

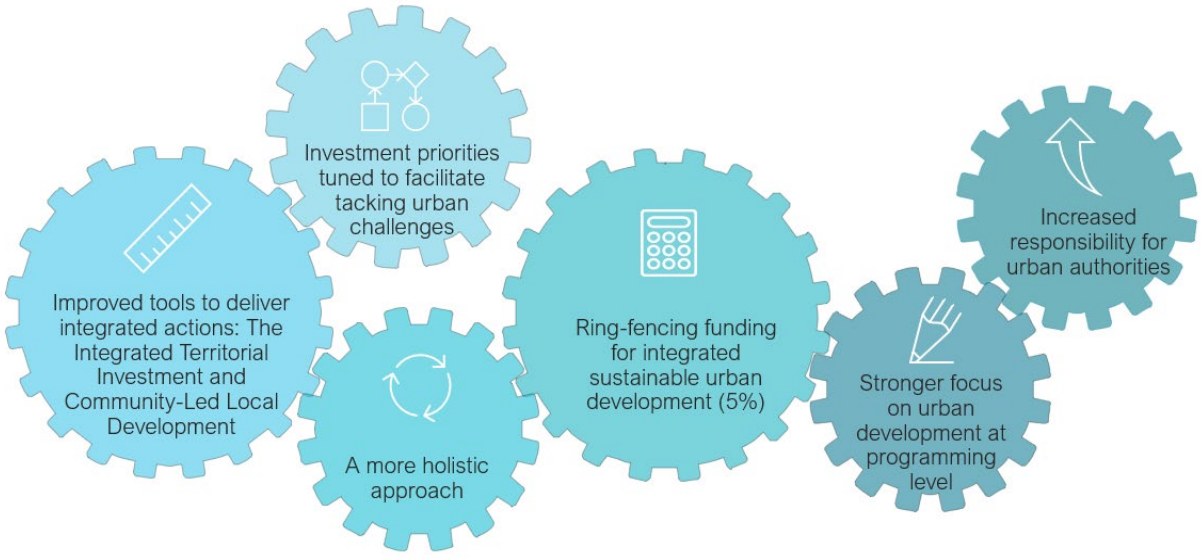
(Thematic Objective 6); and social inclusion (Thematic Objective 9). The ESF earmarked more that EUR 80 billion for investments in human capital, with further funding of at least EUR 3.2 billion being allocated to the Youth Employment Initiative targeted predominately at urban areas. In addition, 20% of ESF investments were committed to funding activities to improve social inclusion and combat poverty in urban areas (EC, 2021). Overall, the funding period 2014-2020 invested approximately 115 billion EUR in cities, towns and suburban areas (EC n.d.).

Table 8. Characteristics of interventions 2014-2020

Level of intervention	Interventions according to the EC regulations 2014-2020
European level	Urban Development Network; Innovative Urban Actions
Member State level – strategic level	Enhanced involvement of cities and urban areas in the Partnership Agreement; Integrated Sustainable Urban Development; ESF required to provide complementary contribution
Member State level -programme level	Urban-related investment priorities; ring-fencing funding
Member State level – implementation level	Integrated territorial investment Community Led Local Development
Local level – project level	Territorial cooperation

Source: PPMI

Figure 9 New features of the cohesion policy Regulation in 2014-2020



Source: PPMI

The regulation for the 2014-2020 funding period called for the further enhancement of the involvement of cities and urban areas in the Partnership Agreement (EU No. 1303/2013, Article 15). However, this involvement has not been firmly regulated and tended to mirror existing national arrangements. In some countries, this participation had a strictly informal character and depended on the personal interests of city representatives (e.g. in Tallinn and Miskolc). In regionalised countries such as Spain and Germany, urban centres tended to seek partnership agreements with national governments rather than regional autonomous regions (as was the case in Valencia and Hamburg).

To counter these developments, the European Commission encouraged urban actors to better engage with an integrated approach, particularly when using funds for urban regeneration in deprived neighbourhoods (Thorpe, 2019). The integrated approach is the opposite of sectoral or silo-based delivery, in which development is disconnected and fragmented. The following addition was made under Article 8 of the ERDF Regulation of 2006:

in the case of action involving sustainable urban development as referred to in Article 37(4) (a) of Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006, the ERDF may, where appropriate, support the development of participative, integrated, and sustainable strategies to tackle the high concentration of economic, environmental and social problems affecting urban areas. (Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 of 5 July 2006 on the ERDF)

Among other things, Article 8 allowed the use of a cross-funding option, whereby up to 15% of the funding for an ESF-type action could be provided by the ERDF. While welcomed with enthusiasm, studies by DG Regio have shown that this opportunity was not utilised effectively (especially by new Member States) (DG Regio 2010). Nevertheless, during the 2014-2020 funding period the majority of relevant Operational Programmes (OPs) across the EU incorporated urban objectives and recognised the interdependency of environmental, social, and economic planning policies. Our case studies show that Article 8 has been instrumental in invigorating public participation and increased responsibility for urban authorities, under Article 7(4) of the ERDF regulation. While their degree of competency varied according to the institutional arrangements of each Member States, urban authorities were included into Partnership Agreements and took responsibility for a selection of operations (Czischke and Pascariu 2015).

The integrated approach also stipulates that the ESF should provide a complementary contribution to urban strategies (EU No. 1304/2013, Article 12). The ESF has no specific investment priority targeted at urban areas; however, it is seen as complementary to ERDF activities. Specific references to urban areas are made in support of community-led local development strategies in urban and rural areas. While the ESF has been instrumental in funding projects targeted at marginalised neighbourhoods, its obligations towards equitable urban development remain limited. The launch of the Urban Agenda for the EU in 2016 further consolidated the importance of an integrated approach to sustainable urban development, in line with the strengthened urban dimension of the New Leipzig Charter. Although the Urban Agenda did not seek additional regulations or funding, it consolidated a working method that was better adapted to cities, and which takes into account urban stakeholders' opinions and practices on the ground. Based on the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, it ensures that funding is available for cities of all sizes and is implemented through partnerships with urban stakeholders. The Urban Agenda focuses on the three pillars of EU policymaking and implementation: 'Better regulation, better funding and better knowledge'.

The Agenda defined 12 Partnerships to work on priority themes. These include Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees, Air Quality, Sustainable Land Use, Housing, Urban Poverty, Circular Economy, Digital Transition, Urban Mobility, Security in Public Spaces and Jobs and Skills in the Local Economy. These Partnerships aim to raise awareness and build capacities with regard to the means and opportunities available for cities to pool resources and complement the local, national and EU funds allocated to address various social challenges. In particular, the Partnerships aim to provide urban administrations with the knowledge and tools they need in order to benefit from the financing provided by private and public financial institutions and other intermediaries.

In 2020, the New Leipzig Charter reinforced the EU's commitment to multi-level governance (vertical and horizontal), as well as the integrated approach and active citizen engagement in consultations on new and existing EU legislation. The Charter provided an opportunity to champion a more citizen-focused approach to cohesion policy at programme level, to encourage imaginative and effective ways

to involve citizens, and to give people a more direct voice in the EU's second most important policy area. The Charter also put forward the place-based approach as an overarching principle for places and policy sectors. The signatories to the Charter insisted that:

Urban strategies and urban funding instruments should be based on sound analysis of the specific local situation, especially potential benefits and risks, stakeholders and restrictions, while following place-based development. This will enable endogenous urban transformation and reduce local socioeconomic inequalities. Appropriate formal and informal instruments should cover all spatial levels, from neighbourhoods to local authorities and wider functional areas including the metropolitan level. (Inter-Ministerial Meeting 2020)

Policymaking for urban development is linked to key policy areas and EU objectives. The Green Deal (EC 2021b) discusses several areas that concern cities. The principle of creating renewable and environmentally friendly energy systems and providing sustainable food options are complex challenges for cities, especially economies struggling with high levels of poverty and social exclusion. As the need for green transitions become more evident, so too do their links to social inclusion and exclusion (e.g. energy poverty, access to decent green jobs). A focus on socially inclusive cities is imperative to achieve the goals and objectives around the new economy, and to build a just and durable transition.

The EU strategy on green societal transitions suggests that future policymaking will need to place a stronger emphasis on minimising the damage caused by climate change, in order to achieve its objectives with regard to human well-being and social cohesion. The focus of the EU cohesion policy during the **current programming period** 2021-2027 remains on the promotion of economic, social and territorial convergence through sustainable competitiveness, research and innovation; digital transition; the objectives of the European Green Deal; and the promotion of the **European Pillar of Social Rights**. During this funding period, the Member States will have additional flexibility to transfer resources among the funds at any time within the programming period. Further flexibility will also be granted to enable the phasing of smaller operations, which will give Member States more opportunities to complete operations that were not completed under the 2014-2020 programmes.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the negative impacts it has generated across the EU, cohesion policy has formulated a fully fledged crisis response mechanism for use in future crises. Under exceptional circumstances, EU Member States will now be able to redirect previously earmarked funds. While the Regulation is yet to be confirmed, the Commission is in the process of developing temporary and quick-response tools to address any unusual circumstances.

The new Regulation, with its strengthened urban dimension, includes the following measures:

- the introduction of a single rulebook that covers all seven funds;
- strong focus on objectives 1 A smarter Europe and 2, A greener Europe. Between 65 % and 85 % of ERDF and Cohesion fund (CF) resources will be allocated to these priorities, depending on the wealth of individual Member States;
- 8 % of the ERDF is dedicated to sustainable urban development, as well as a new networking and capacity-building programme for urban authorities, the European Urban Initiative;
- The new ESF+ will focus up on the challenges identified in the European Semester, considering the principles set out in the European Pillar of Social Rights;
- The new European Urban Initiative (EUI) aims to strengthen integrated and participatory approaches to sustainable urban development and to provide a stronger link to relevant EU policies; in particular, cohesion policy investments. It will do so by facilitating and supporting cooperation and capacity building among urban actors, as well as innovative actions,

knowledge, policy development and communication in the area of sustainable urban development.

The EUI will be allocated EUR 500 million from the ERDF (from Investments for jobs and growth goal). The EUI will comprise three main strands of activities (Article 10(2) ERDF/CF Regulation proposal), with the following allocations from the total budget:

- Support for capacity-building (20%);
- Support for innovative actions (60%);
- Support for knowledge, policy development and communication (20%).

The three strands are based on the aim of the initiative to strengthen integrated and participatory approaches to sustainable urban development and to provide a stronger link to relevant EU policies; in particular, cohesion policy investment (EC, 2019). Indeed, the ex-post evaluation reports confirm the ever-increasing absorption of SF by cities, they also point towards innovative urban projects that use SF to address the most pressing social exclusion challenges (EC, n.d.) According to the survey conducted by EUROCITIES, the ESF has brought about tangible results in cities, with better access to jobs, schools, training, housing and social care for vulnerable groups. The survey also shows that an increasing number of cities expanded their responsibilities in terms of managing local or regional ESF allocations for their metropolitan area as intermediate bodies (Eurocities 2018).

To streamline and secure effective implementation of the dispersal of funding across various thematic and special areas, the Regulation has introduced Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI). This is a mode of delivery that bundles together funding from several priority axes of one or more OPs to carry out multidimensional and cross-sectoral interventions. ITIs were introduced to stimulate an integrated approach at different levels and in various spheres, with a functional territorial perspective, potentially greater delegation of management tasks to the local level and, again potentially, a thematic and financial mix from different funds and OPs. As such, ITIs are well suited to supporting integrated actions in urban areas, as they offer the possibility of combining funding linked to different thematic objectives, including combinations of funding from those priority axes and OPs supported by the ERDF, ESF and Cohesion Fund (Article 36 of the Common Provisions Regulation). The funding planned for territorial and urban strategies amounts to approximately EUR 30 billion, around 10 % of the total cohesion policy budget.

Thus, since the reorientation towards greater dialogue and input from local levels (integrated and inclusive approaches), much of the funding targeted at urban levels reflects priorities articulated in the regional and national OPs. This is why significant variation exists between countries in terms of the priorities and types of projects implemented at local level. The table below shows which thematic areas in the case study cities have benefitted most from cohesion funding since 2014. The data collected from the case studies reveal that Valetta and Valencia have targeted funding almost exclusively at physical infrastructure, while funding in Helsinki and Hamburg has covered a wider thematic focus including social, natural and economic infrastructure. While further data are needed, our findings show that all of the cities studied struggle to develop multidimensional projects that cover both the social and physical aspects of development, regardless of the ambitions of the integrated approach.

Table 9. Overview of areas of focus for EU cohesion funding in the case study cities since 2014

Themes	Hamburg	Helsinki	Kosice	Miskolc	Roubaix/ Lille	Tallinn	Valencia	Valletta
Social infrastructure								
Homelessness and housing issues		✓						
Strengthening social cohesion and community ties				✓				
Welfare services targeting vulnerable groups		✓						
Education investments	✓							
Economic infrastructure								
Social inclusion and combating poverty	✓	✓						
High-quality employment (training and internships)	✓	✓			✓			
Support for businesses					✓			
Natural infrastructure								
Environmental protection and resource efficiency		✓						
Climate change adaptation and risk prevention		✓						
Institutional infrastructure								
Large scale projects on key institutions				✓		✓		
Physical infrastructure								
(Sustainable) transport options					✓	✓	✓	✓
Urban revitalisation/ refurbishment of public place				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Universal access to ICT							✓	

Source: PPMI

b. Urban Innovative Actions

Urban Innovative Actions provided EUR 330 million to support innovative actions in the area of sustainable urban development (as set out in Article 8 of the ERDF regulation). These actions have included studies and pilot projects to test new solutions to urban challenges that are likely to grow over the coming years. For example, the project 'Community Awakening and Multicultural Integrative

Narrative of Almería (CAMINA)' is a holistic initiative aimed at rediscovering the values of culture and cultural heritage and their positive effects on social integration in three deprived neighbourhoods – Almedina, La Chanca-Pescaderia and the Centre – located in the Spanish city of Almería, which represent the past splendours of the ancient city. The initiative targets the city's Roma and the migrant populations, who are overrepresented in the poorest neighbourhoods, and champions partnerships with third-sector organisations and higher education institutions. The project aims not only to mainstream Roma culture, but also to cede authority to local neighbourhoods and build political and cultural capacity.

Capacity-building support is also enshrined in a number of ways in the URBACT programmes. Within the scope of European Territorial Cooperation, URBACT programme III is based on experience and past success, and is structured in a similar manner to URBACT programmes I and II. The programme aims to support cities in implementing the new tools proposed by cohesion policy legislation, particularly the ITIs and Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) (URBACT OP Draft 7.4.2014, p. 7 cited in Hamza et al. 2014). The work of the URBACT programme complements that of the Urban Development Network, and provides stronger links to new instruments and thematic networks for the exchange of experience. It offers an opportunity to test innovative collaborative approaches that target social exclusion and urban marginalisation. For example, the *Rumourless Cities* transfer network strengthens transfers of good practice across six municipalities including Hamburg, to address growing negative attitudes towards a cross section of groups in society, including long-established migrants (third-country nationals), Roma, recently arrived refugees, LGBTI people, and general homophobic stereotyping. Valletta's involvement with URBACT Healthy Cities resulted in the 'Malta Deep Dive', an innovative exploration of the relationship between urban planning and obesogenic (obesity-causing) environments (URBACT, 2021).

CLLD is another important tool to promote the implementation of 'bottom-up' local development strategies prepared and implemented by local action groups, involving representatives of all sectors of local interest. CLLD is an extension of the LEADER approach aimed specifically at urban areas. It promotes community ownership and multi-level governance. CLLD enables needs-based capacity building activities, as well as networking and the stimulation of innovation at neighbourhood level to empower communities to fully exploit their potential (Articles 32-35 of the Common Provisions Regulation).

This bottom-up approach involves the formation of Local Action Groups (LAGs) consisting of representatives of local socio-economic interests from the public and private sectors, with the area of interest being represented by the administrative-territorial units contained in the LAG. By the beginning of 2017, over 2,400 local action groups had been approved throughout the EU, and had begun to implement their integrated, multisectoral development strategies; by 2018, the number of LAGs exceeded 2,700. As part of local development, the local population takes control and forms a local partnership that develops and implements an integrated development strategy. The strategy is designed so as to harness the social, environmental and economic strengths of the community rather to than offset the problems it faces.

Box 7. Helsinki's HOPE Project

In Helsinki, EUR 4.5 million was allocated to the HOPE project, which teaches citizens how to understand and measure air quality. The project, financed through the ERDF, creates a feedback loop between high-resolution hyperlocal air quality data and the actions of individuals and communities through co-design and participatory budgeting. With a better understanding of air quality hotspots and issues due to the availability of new user-centric, personally relevant data, combined with means and 'nudges' to enable personal (and communal) behaviour changes, the project empowers

residents to become owners of their own air quality. HOPE is based on community-led local development, and brings together stakeholders from the public and private sectors as well as local university and forum groups. On the technical side, the project produces more comprehensive data on the air quality in the districts covered, and has developed more cost-efficient means of doing this. At a social level, it increases citizen participation and inclusion in various districts of the city.

3.2.2. Reflections on the effectiveness of cohesion policy interventions

This section of the report presents the main challenges involved in accessing and successfully implementing cohesion policy funding at city level, as noted in the case studies and focus group. It discusses the overall impact of cohesion policy interventions, before delving more deeply into the dispersion of power and the status of the integrated approach, as well as barriers to the effectiveness of cohesion policy interventions at the urban levels.

a. Overall impact

Extensive literature exists on EU cohesion policy, and more specifically on its effectiveness and impacts with regard to reducing disparities and promoting economic convergence. Unfortunately, the quantitative research is largely inconclusive: some works have found positive long-term impacts, while others point to impacts that are positive but only short-term. Some studies have found no impact at all, or even negative impacts, due to the methodological challenges involved in investigating the effectiveness of this extensive funding programme.

Previous broad literature surveys on the impacts of cohesion policy include Hagen and Hohl (2009), Marzinotto (2012), Pienkowski and Berkowitz (2015), Crescenzi and Giua (2017), and Bachtler et al. (2017). While the ex-post evaluation reports and econometric studies commissioned by the EC highlight important achievements and challenges, the long-term impacts of cohesion policy are equally ambiguous. Without any standardised evaluation tools, quantitative cohesion scholars rely on their own in-house indicators and analyses, making comparisons or prediction difficult. The success or failure of cohesion policy is habitually determined by rates of absorption and allocation, which obscure the quality of the projects implemented and their impacts on the community. Those studies that do look at individual projects financed using EU funds are often unable to generalise their findings, and tend to focus on outlier cases. Issue to the lack of an overarching EU strategic framework like the Europe 2020 strategy for 2014-20, it is almost impossible to provide strategic direction in the planning of cohesion policy at EU, national and sub-national levels. This hampers the formulation of a coherent approach both across and within programmes, as well as limiting the unity of purpose between institutions. No comprehensive European-level database exists of SF projects and local-level strategies. In the validation focus group, experts insisted that it is extremely difficult to access standardised project evaluations reports, or even comparative evaluations of OPs.

There is also a substantial lack of the comparable data needed to coherently analyse the urban aspect in cohesion policy implementation. Several studies have been carried out, incorporating various case studies, but that is all. The reason for this lack of evidence lies in the lack of codified interventions in the implementing regulations for cohesion policy. This situation has not improved in the new programming period. Evaluation plans are still in preparation, and could complement the lack of regulatory structures in this context. However, it is doubtful that standardised evaluation indicators on their own will make Europe-wide comparability and monitoring possible.

Various stakeholders, particularly those working with social issues (which are difficult to quantify), call for interdisciplinary methodological approaches that are able to capture and assess quantitative outputs and 'softer' social impacts. One participant in the validating focus group echoed the view

expressed by many NGOs representatives working with Roma people, who insist that more sophisticated EU-level monitoring is necessary to ensure that initiatives on the ground align with EU cohesion policy objectives. However, some cause for optimism exists: the legislative framework for cohesion policy in the 2021-2027 period places unprecedented emphasis on the results-orientation of programmes, including monitoring, reporting and evaluation. There is also a shift from evaluation of implementation activities to impact evaluation, through two recommended approaches: theory-based and counterfactual. One participant in the validating focus group representing Urban Innovative Actions (UIA) network explained that UIA is currently working on a database called the 'Knowledge Lab', which will help to gather together and analyse the knowledge produced in cities on innovative actions, mainstreaming and the integrated approach. This would be a very welcome first step.

i. Power dispersion and multi-level governance

Scholars specialising in the European Union provide important insights into new forms of power-sharing in policymaking, degrees of compliance with EU regulation, and convergence (Piattoni and Polverari 2016). Their focus lies on the partnership principle: a cornerstone of policy to encourage vertical cooperation between different levels of government and horizontal collaboration between public, private and third-sector actors at all levels. While there is widespread recognition of the value of partnership, its exact impact on power dispersion is less clear. Research on multi-level governance largely shows that the 'regionalisation' of cohesion policy is stronger in federalist states, and is very political in nature. In turn, the role of cities within multi-level governance varies across Europe, and the scale of decision-making is also dependent on national administrative arrangements (Atkinson and Zimmermann 2016; Kostka 2019; Mendez et al. 2019). While the scope and scale of partnership may have steadily increased, the European Council has consistently resisted proposals to implement Partnership Agreements and programmes through a 'fully fledged effective partnership'.

This study confirms that despite the increased mobilisation and participation of cities in the policy process, decision-making power over Cohesion programming remains in the hands of managing authorities at national or regional level. The interviewees in Roubaix, Tallinn and Miskolc insisted that power relations have not been affected by Cohesion legislation, and that national governments remain the main agenda setters. In countries with a longer history of experience with multilevel governance, such as Spain and Germany, cities enjoy greater discretion over programming decisions; however, the formulation of final strategies and the allocation of funds (towards priority axes) is decided at higher levels. Since in Germany there is no national competence in cohesion policy, German cities can influence the agenda through their involvement in the development of OPs at the level of the Länder. However, engagement varies between federal states, and appears dependent on the general urban density of individual Länder. The city of Hamburg was instrumental in influencing the Green Deal agenda with a specific focus on marginalised neighbourhoods. In the case of Helsinki, the historically strong collaboration between the capital and its national government has translated into greater discretion over cohesion funding. However, cities with weaker political links to their national bodies remain on the sidelines of decision making, and are often active only in monitoring committees. It is often the case that cities compete with private and social stakeholders in calls for tenders, without having had an influence over the conditions and objectives.

Local stakeholders in our case study city of Roubaix insist that marginalised local communities are consistently excluded from all forms of decision-making, and therefore from funding opportunities. The validation focus group emphasised that the EU needs to do more to engage citizens in its funding schemes. One participant representing a youth organisation insisted that the EU focuses exclusively on the macro-level dimension instead of supporting grassroots initiatives and actors, stating: 'When the funding instruments are issued it is more macro than local. There is a big gap and lack of understanding

and lack of monitoring'. An expert on cohesion policy funding asserted that small and medium-sized cities in particular do not have the capacity to implement an integrated or community-based approach, as this is a very difficult process involving training technicians in the municipality, engaging diverse stakeholders, and reaching out to local communities. An urban policy expert participating in the focus group pointed out that localities require extensive support to help them learn how to navigate and benefit from a multi-stage tournament approach.

Although the European Commission intended for cities to become more involved during the 2014-2020 programming phase, our analysis reveals no significant difference from previous periods. It remains doubtful that the partnership principle will devolve greater power to the localities in the seven years ahead. In fact, in countries such as Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria there is a political push to strengthen national oversight of the EU's financial mechanisms (Surubaru 2021). In line with the existing scholarship, our analysis confirms that domestic politics, institutional arrangements and path dependencies mediate the impact of the partnership principle on power dispersion and spatial rescaling.

Nevertheless, during the 2014-2020 period, Valletta, Roubaix, Helsinki, Miskolc, Hamburg and Valencia mainstreamed urban aspects of their OPs, demonstrating a growing commitment to local issues among Member States. According to interviewees for the case studies, the experience gained from the URBAN Initiative and other capacity-building programmes have helped Member States develop far-sighted urban strategies, acknowledging and better conceptualising urban needs. As a Community Development Manager in Valletta expressed, "I think the availability of funds is already a blessing… We'll be able to recruit professionals to carry out certain tasks… We will be able to inform policy and create new policies...". Interviewees from Hamburg, Valencia and Helsinki shared this sentiment. The case studies carried out on Roubaix and Miskolc deem cohesion funding to be an indispensable instrument for incorporating the issues of marginalised urban neighbourhoods into regional and national development strategies. A Roma advocate from Miskolc insisted that cohesion funding can be a potent tool for implementing national Roma inclusion strategies and empowering urban Roma associations. Stakeholders in Valencia, Hamburg and Helsinki maintained that cohesion policy is useful for testing innovative pilot projects in the most 'overlooked' urban areas. Although stakeholders from Tallinn were the least enthusiastic about the potential of the ESIF to engender urban development, during the current funding period, the Estonian capital is the main beneficiary of the EU's recovery and resilience plan for COVID-19 recovery.

Box 8. Local input in Spain

In Spain, the Ministry of Finance and Public Administration sought to directly involve local authorities through events to disseminate information throughout the run-up to the start of the new funding period. For example, a programming meeting for local authorities was held in Madrid in May 2013, including presentations on cohesion policy provisions for local area development. In addition to promoting engagement with local-level actors, such events also serve to build administrative capacity in local-level organisations involved in the delivery of Structural Funds. Individual towns and cities have been able to comment directly on the consultation version of the Partnership Agreement.

While collaboration with civil actors under the partnership principle had already been well established in previous periods, it was further strengthened by the 2014-2020 cohesion policy framework, with the Common Provisions Regulation requiring the creation of partnerships for all European and Structural Investment Fund (ESIF) programmes, and a new European Code of Conduct on Partnership identifying principles to ensure that the involvement of partners in cohesion programming and delivery is timely,

meaningful and transparent. While the level of participation by non-governmental stakeholders has improved since the 2007-2013 period, concerns remain with regard to selection and the quality of the consultation process, as well as the low take-up of stakeholders' views.

Evaluating the outcomes of CLLD-type interventions that aim to ensure bottom-up approaches presents numerous challenges – not least because such interventions do not fit the standardised evaluation frameworks established for 'mainstream' EU programmes. Various attempts have been made to customise such evaluation methodologies in the past under LEADER and now, more broadly, under CLLD. However, the adequacy of these methodologies remains unproven. Preliminary studies reveal that for relatively small investments, this approach has unleashed a myriad of local job creation initiatives, which have been extremely popular, and have allowed local communities to explore sustainable solutions to many of the challenges posed by the Europe 2020 Strategy. However, the full potential of CLLD has not yet been realised, due to the way in which it has been implemented. This is the result of it being narrowly perceived as a 'delivery tool' and in particular, due to its incorporation, without any special provisions, into mainstream programmes run by administrations steeped in a tradition of the top-down delivery of grant aid.

The interviewees in the case studies contended that neighbourhood associations, NGOs and citizen groups lack influence at the level of programme design, and that their main contribution is at the level of implementation. This is especially true in Miskolc, Tallinn and Roubaix, but also affects Valletta, Hamburg and Valencia. During the 2014-2020 programming period, few non-governmental stakeholders took part in the consultation phase of the Partnership Agreement preparation, or in the preparation of OPs. In Tallinn and Valencia, the Partnership Agreements were developed in a top-down manner, extending cooperation to carefully selected policy experts and service delivery organisations. In Hamburg, the role of urban associations and NGOs in setting priorities appears more robust – albeit that, as in Valencia, larger professionalised organisations hold more influence. In Miskolc, the initial opening of partnerships to all interested stakeholders corresponds with a reluctance to cede decision-making authority over strategic action plans and to provide technical support for less organised interests. In Tallinn, Helsinki and Valletta, citizen groups and NGOs sought to influence the process, but felt they had achieved little input. The interviewees from Roubaix and Miskolc insisted that their input was minimal, and that the needs of marginalised communities (e.g. Roma in Miskolc and young immigrants in Roubaix) were effectively glossed over.

The Tallinn case study demonstrates that institutional arrangements constitute the greatest barrier to local participation. In all matters, Estonia is characterised by weak policy input channels into central institutions by local interests: 'This structural pattern ensured a perfect top-down implementation of EU policies by central government agencies and achievement of EU SF programme's operational outputs. But it constrained […] active involvement of local elites in multilevel governance arrangements and development of policy ownership of EU policy implementation at the local level.' (Sootla and Kattai 2020, p. 283). Similar findings emerged from Valletta, Roubaix and Miskolc.

Overall, the involvement of community representatives in the programming phase is optimal when the cities already play a major role or form a separate administrative unit of equal strength to other regional units. Such cities are often larger capitals such as Berlin or Vienna.

ii. Integrated Approach

The effectiveness of ITI in urban areas is difficult to evaluate. Identifying the value of 'integrated' approaches is complex, particularly where wide diversity exists among the participants, themes and territories covered. Nevertheless, assessments are broadly positive regarding the role of ITI in incentivising cooperation, integrating funds, and generally supporting the territorial dimension of

cohesion policy as part of a 'place-based' approach. Many ITIs were considered new, exhibiting innovation and adaptation in terms of both thinking and practice (EP 2019). Moreover, there are potentially important effects relating to the process of ITI implementation that may be observable only over the longer term (e.g. new participatory cultures in policy-making or cooperative governance models) (URBACT 2015).

For example, an evaluation of ITI in the Dutch G4 cities concluded that ITI allowed mismatches in supply and demand in the job market to be addressed. The combination of funding prompted policymakers to view problems beyond the boundaries of individual policy areas. ITI also incentivised knowledge institutions, businesses and government representatives to work together (Ecorys 2019). An evaluation of ITI in two Polish cities (Katowice and Lublin) highlights similar cooperative dynamics. The introduction of innovative governance structures, including associations of municipalities and steering groups, strengthened multi-level strategic planning and increased the role of local authorities, NGOs and neighbourhood groups in managing and implementing SF (Ferry and Borkowska-Waszak 2018). In Nordrhein-Westfalen, the ERDF MA implementing the ISUD noted that a key innovation is the combination of ESF and ERDF funding in a project call to address various aspects of the Land's goal of preventing social exclusion. This in turn is seen as being due to the Land government's goal of integrating EU Funds as far as possible at local level (Ecorys 2019).

Nevertheless, even the positive assessments identify the substantial challenges involved in the design and implementation of ITI. Evaluations have noted in particular the challenges of developing strategic, integrated project proposals. Particularly where implementation has been delayed and spending deadlines have placed pressure on programme authorities, there is a danger that the design and selection of projects will overemphasise speedy absorption compared with strategic quality (EP 2019). It is worth noting that the existing research shows that delays, spending pressures and excessive bureaucratisation are a routine feature of European funding mechanisms, despite efforts to streamline implementation procedures (Kostka 2019). For example, the stakeholders interviewed in Tallinn insisted that application process is overly complex and harsh, resulting in applications being rejected due to minor technical errors. This drags down the efficiency of the usage of EU funds and reduces the direct help such funds are intended to provide to end beneficiaries. Authorities in the cities of Valletta and Helsinki also criticised the bureaucratic pedantry and administrative complexity of the process. In effect, actual implementation took place only in a few Member States, including Poland and the Netherlands.

The very complexity of ITI makes implementation challenges inescapable. Factors such as the designation of monitoring and control systems, meeting rules on public procurement or state aid, thematic concentration, the cohesion policy performance framework, and the results-oriented nature of the approach, all create specific challenges in the context of these strategies (Van Der Zwet et al. 2014).

The cities in all of the case studies remained committed to the integrated approach; however, the implementation of such projects faces numerous technical and political challenges. All of the cities studied appear committed to allocating 5% of funds to specific integrated urban programmes or priorities. However, the interviewees insisted that they lack the technical capacity to navigate the complex bureaucracy of tender procedures and contracts. One participant in the validation focus group asserted that acute challenges exist in implementation of the integrated approach, as with any other framework or conceptual idea that looks good in theory but falls apart in practice. To address this problem, the Commission needs to support local actors and have greater representation at the local level. Another participant stressed that smaller cities find it difficult to co-finance sustainable initiatives or to develop acute monitoring systems and *ex-ante* evaluation schemes.

Our analysis shows that local authorities struggled to move away from sectoral plans and pursue a more integrated approach. Indeed, many of the unsuccessful proposals in Miskolc, Helsinki and Hamburg were rejected because of a lack of strategic coherence or attempts to disguise one-dimensional projects as integrated initiatives. Grassroots organisations in Miskolc and Roubaix insisted that they lack the necessary human resources to form and maintain extensive networks and meet the funding requirements.

In this respect, Valencia emerges as an example of good practice. During the 2014-2020 period, the development of urban areas was supported through three major funding mechanisms. The first of these was a budget for sustainable urban development. This was allocated through the multi-regional Sustainable Growth OP and, as in the previous funding period, was reserved for municipalities with more than 50,000 inhabitants. A volume equal to the obligatory 5% was effectively allocated. The second mechanism was an additional 2.5% of the ERDF budget, earmarked for urban projects via Thematic Objective 4 (low-carbon economy). Third, the Autonomous Communities specified additional urban development actions at regional Operational Programme (ROP) level. The Integrated Sustainable Urban Development Strategy (DUSI STRATEGY) for El Cabanyal-Canyamelar-Cap de França in Valencia is a good example of such an approach.

Table 10. Thematic objectives of the DUSI strategy in Cabanyal

Objective	Lines (keywords)
OT 2. Technological access	Digital divide
OT 4. Low Emission Economy	Urban mobility, energy efficiency, renewable energy, building
OT 6. Environmental protection	Cultural and natural heritage of tourist interest, urban environment
OT 9. Social inclusion	Physical, economic, and social regeneration, housing, infrastructure, cultural programmes, employability, entrepreneurship, commercial reactivation, integrated support for families, community prevention, gender
OT 13. Operational Efficiency and Governance	Management, Capacities, Control, Governance, Partnership, Communication, Agents.

Source: EDUSI (2021)

The case study on the DUSI project records the history of the neighbourhood of El Cabanya and the plan to solve the century-long problem of the connection between the city centre of Valencia and the beach, either by the construction of a road through the neighbourhood, or via other options. Likewise, it explains that between 1998 and 2015, resistance from residents of the neighbourhood managed to paralyse this plan, thanks to judicial interventions, demonstrations, hunger strikes and artistic initiatives that have increased the visibility to the neighbourhood as an area of heritage at risk (InnDEA, 2015). Thus, the DUSI Strategy for El Cabanya focuses the efforts of everyone in the same direction, mainly on physical and social urban regeneration. It is complemented by a set of sustainable urban development initiatives with funding from the European Union, the state and the regional government.

Aid was requested in 2016. According to current data, a few months ago implementation of the project was extended by a year until December 2023. Funding of more than EUR 30 million was envisaged, 50% from ERDF funds and the rest provided from the city council's own funds (Table 2). Of the total investment, the city council reports that EUR 16 million, corresponding to 27 projects, are currently

being carried out, while projects eight totalling EUR 13.5 million are currently under tender. Seven projects have already been executed, using EUR 761,000 in funding. A further EUR 400,000 are in preparation to finance three other projects. All interviewees considered DUSI a useful tool, both for the physical improvement of an urban neighbourhood, and for the lessons learned with regard to management issues that can be extrapolated to other areas.

b. Key barriers to positive impact through cohesion policy funding

i. Discrimination

The case studies also reveal persistent discrimination that perverts local approaches and leads to the diversion of funding away from the most marginalised areas and 'unpopular' groups. For example, segregated Roma neighbourhoods in Miskolc and Košice are rarely represented in local development strategies. In Miskolc, the majority of projects targeted at Roma are top-down initiatives that are often completely disconnected from national or local action plans. The former President of the Roma Municipality in Miskolc insisted that EU funds are not spent on projects that nurture real cooperation and the real involvement of different stakeholders. 'Large-scale' projects are neither properly evaluated, nor do they address the most acute needs of the community. This appears to be a wider pattern affecting most Central and Eastern European Countries (Kostka 2019).

Similarly, discriminatory dynamics were identified in Roubaix, a city that is home to a large North African community who suffer from injustice, exclusion and racial discrimination (IGAS Report 2019, p. 146; Talpin 2021, p. 195). While Roubaix City Hall has long benefited from ESF allocations, the needs of the city's North African community continue to be neglected. An interviewee for the Roubaix case study suggested that the fight against racial discrimination should be an additional criterion for granting SF, and that comprehensive monitoring should be put in place to prevent the diversion of funds away from the most vulnerable groups. The new ESF+ programme, adopted by Members of the European Parliament in June 2021, is endowed with nearly EUR 88 billion for the period 2021-2027. It will play an important role in tackling the socio-economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, and will prioritise combatting youth unemployment and child poverty. While this is seen as a great opportunity to develop sustainable projects, the interviewees fear that the money will not be channelled towards vulnerable immigrant communities. One of the participants in the validation focus group discussion, an expert on SF funding and management, explained the common practice of circumventing segregated Roma settlements from regeneration strategies financed using EU money.

In Hamburg, political commitment to earmarking funding for the integration of ethnic communities is much greater. In 2010, the European Ministerial Conference proclaimed that in order to fight inequality, it was necessary to invest in districts with a high concentration of immigrants. As a result of such commitments, Hamburg will receive EUR 55 million from the ESF+, which will be added to the EUR 82.5 million the city plans to invest during the funding period of 2021-2027. These funds are directed at disadvantaged young adults, refugees and long-term unemployed people, to aid them in their search for employment. In addition to this, Hamburg will receive another EUR 24.9 million to address the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic and to support those who have been most severely affected.

ii. Sustainability of projects

This study also confirms that the sustainability of ESIF projects continues to be an issue. The stakeholders interviewed said that longer funding timeframes are needed to tackle complex social problems such as unemployment and housing. Interviewees in Valletta suggested that the integration of long-term funding programmes would foster the emancipation of stakeholders, rather than their

temporary empowerment. Interviewees in Roubaix and Miskolc also highlighted that 'project culture' prevents implementation of long-term policies and necessary structural reforms. Similar opinions were expressed during the validation focus group. One participant discussed a project in Prešov, Slovakia, in which the local authorities implemented a housing project for Roma people lasting just two years. The case studies from Helsinki and Hamburg confirm that projects targeted at vulnerable groups require continuity and long-time objectives. The participants in the validation focus group expressed the view that ESIF not only need to be scaled up, but should also be synergised with national and local social and economic policies. Coordination mechanisms are crucial to avoid overlaps and the duplication of efforts.

Wider research confirms that the alignment of ESIF strategic goals and procedures with domestic policies, reforms and administrative practices is pivotal for the scaling-up and mainstreaming of ESIF projects (Kostka 2019; Darvas et al. 2019). The commitment of Member States to exploiting the 'added value' of cohesion policy and the use of EU funds to buttress national/regional initiatives positively impacts the longevity of local projects. The alignment of ministerial objectives with ESIF programming facilitates strategic collaboration between political offices, public bureaucracy and managing authorities. The Spanish example shows that a complementary approach prevents the dispersal of funds to miscellaneous, short-lived projects and the creation of a 'two-tier system' in which EU funds are used for projects that are separate from ongoing political reforms. In turn, a lack of steering mechanisms that are able to induce the alignment of organisational procedures and interests prompts excessive fragmentation and the duplication of efforts. In Slovakia, EU-funded projects are often isolated from broader public interventions and long-term budgetary commitments (e.g. educational reforms, social housing, Roma integration). Unable to induce wider policy changes, the majority of ESIF projects in Slovakia do not continue beyond their designated seven-year funding period (Kostka 2019).

iii. Bureaucracy

The analysis shows that slow progress in the implementation of projects in urban areas partly results from low levels of administrative capacity on the part of the experts involved in such implementation. In some countries, the main bottlenecks that lead to long delays are public procurement and state aid policies. Burdensome bureaucracy and the competitive nature of SF have also been a demotivating factor for stakeholders working in marginalised neighbourhoods. Fieldwork conducted in Helsinki suggests that applying for EU funding is regarded as complicated and time-consuming. Many actors lack the know-how to apply and later administer EU funding. In addition, applicants already need to be financially sustainable before they receive funding from the EU, which has been considered a major obstacle for EU-funded projects. Instead, many of the activities to prevent homelessness in Helsinki have been funded nationally by the Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organisations (STEA), a state aid authority that operates in connection with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and other funding providers. The STEA is responsible for the preparation, payment, monitoring and impact evaluation of funds granted to social and health organisations (STEA 2022).

Similar concerns arise from the fieldwork in Valencia. One Spanish interviewee pointed out that, 'to work with vulnerable social groups in local spaces, we need less bureaucratic models, which allow actors smaller than the city councils to participate in calls for intervention, such as associations, even if it is with the approval or support of the city council. Agile platforms are needed that allow collaboration and synergies from the associative level to the European level. But also at purely local levels, institutions are needed to strengthen dialogue and participation. Moreover, it is necessary to provide training for the social partners so that they can attend and participate on an equal footing. If not, the technical-bureaucratic fabric will always dominate'. Similar sentiments were heard in Valletta, Tallinn, Roubaix

and Miskolc. In Helsinki, organisations working with homeless people stopped applying for EU funding because the bureaucracy was seen as too time-consuming and inflexible.

All participants in the validation focus group expressed the need to further simplify the allocation procedures, tender schemes and eligibility criteria. Participants also asserted that there is a need for instruments that provide better coordination of sectoral policy and more 'focused urban spending'.

4. TOWARDS URBAN RESILIENCE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Today, urban societies make up more than half of the total population of the European Union. Cities have the economic, social and environmental potential to bring significant added value to their inhabitants, and urban policies expand the scope to capitalise on those benefits. However, while population growth in cities is fuelled by higher net migration from within the country's borders, as well as migrants from within and outside the EU, city-dwellers face stark differences in the uptake of the value created. The urban population is fragmented and polarised; deprived neighbourhoods can be found in any capital of an EU Member State, and in many other cities. In such areas, marginalised communities face poverty and social exclusion, and lack access to the resources necessary to escape the cycle of poverty. Certain specific social groups face particular difficulties in urban areas, as their challenges are heavily intertwined. National, local and EU-level policies and the EU structural funds aim to alleviate such problems. Furthermore, external shocks and crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic shape the socio-economic landscape in cities, and put societies to test.

This chapter draws on the knowledge accumulated in the case studies, the systematic literature review and the focus groups. It summarises recent developments and provides key recommendations for different levels of governance in today's context. The first part of the chapter focuses on the improvement of *municipal-* and *national*-level policies, providing concrete actions and policy recommendations. The second part of the chapter delivers *EU-level* and *national* policy recommendations.

4.1. Strengthening the capacity of urban systems to support vulnerable groups

4.1.1. Policy responses on poverty and social exclusion

Cohesion policy aims to enhance economic, social and territorial cohesion, reducing social disparities. This includes the reduction and eradication of poverty and exclusion, which calls for the prevention of segregation and the promotion of equal access and opportunities for all citizens, including the most marginalised communities (EP REGI, 2015). Nevertheless, Member States need to take supportive action in this goal through their own national programmes and through local municipalities.

Participatory methods of policymaking at the local level have become increasingly important and are advocated for in European cities and at EU level. Our findings also recognise this as crucial factor for the vulnerable groups consulted in this study. Yet, regardless of this trend, this study finds that participatory methods are not always conducted comprehensively. This is either due to a lack of follow-up information, or of the involvement or continuous monitoring of the feedback and opinions of key stakeholders. Thus, in some cases, more inclusive decision-making was regarded as a key enabler to improve the policy capacities of urban governance structures at the local level. Therefore, multi-level governance that involves local stakeholders and authorities in the decision-making process could be practised more consistently and to a greater extent. It is essential to build the capacity of stakeholders to participate– namely, civil-society bodies, communities, and public services – to allow them to take a more significant part in the process.

The findings of this study suggest that the most important policy developments for national and city-level actions relate to social exclusion, state–city cooperation, and access to services.

Table 11 Policy recommendations on social exclusion

Challenge	Recommended national action	Recommended city action
Social exclusion	Initiate national programmes focusing on deprived neighbourhoods, linking investment to living quality, strengthening social cohesion and integration – thus enabling municipalities to build day care centres, playgrounds, community centres and to strengthen the social cohesion of vulnerable groups. It is key to provide support to cities, since cities may not be effective in implementing place-based initiatives on their own if their regulatory and financial capacity is low. With regard to housing, focus on investments based on integrated long-term strategies to strengthen the economic, social and spatial aspects of urban society. First and foremost, emphasis should be placed on homelessness reduction policies through long-term housing projects and the updating and expansion of short-term accommodation facilities, coupled with support for the training of specialists.	Promote 'soft' urban development elements such as social activities, with the support of local NGOs that target vulnerable groups. As shown in the Miskolc case study, such programmes introduce education, training and employment programmes that help to foster social inclusion. In addition, involve local stakeholders in various forms of community-led local development that are not yet present or effective. In countries where stakeholders are already heavily involved (e.g. Nordic countries) improvements are needed to the accessibility of information and to reporting and dissemination activities. Better monitoring of the situation and the opinions of stakeholders through data gathering has been found to be very effective in some settings, and is likely to be an approach that can travel well across cities/countries.
State–city cooperation	Because social exclusion is an encompassing issue, well-functioning cooperation between national government and cities has been found to be essential for positive progress. Specifically, at national level, there is a need for further promotion of projects so that cities can apply and use the funds. However, an emphasis on continuity and the longevity must be ensured in order for this to work (clear criteria, expansion of post-project observational timespan, thorough observational committees and functions). Ensure a better dialogue between cities and the EU level, and between cities and the national level. Cities currently feel left out of discussions and decision-making.	Propose a project-twinning instrument to enable institutional cooperation between beneficiary and partner countries. In addition, build trust by sharing and using expertise from good-practice city initiatives at national and EU level.

Challenge	Recommended national action	Recommended city action
Access to services	Access to public services is regarded as one of the most significant goals when addressing the inclusion of marginalised groups. Therefore, there is a need to improve the collaboration of public employment services with partner organisations, education and training providers, social services, health departments, and voluntary organisations experienced in working with vulnerable groups. There is a need for engagement of more senior and experienced personnel, who know the local contexts and have relevant networks.	Several case studies reported that the reliance of community-led initiatives on voluntary work instead of professional social work leads to inadequate support being provided to people reliant on consultations and other services. Therefore, municipalities could increase spending to improve the social infrastructure for the homeless, the elderly, people with mental problems and other vulnerable groups by participating in networks and alternative funding schemes. Increase the accessibility of facilities for all, especially for ethnic minorities, people with physical disabilities and long-term residents. Aim to deliver community facilities that are free of charge, or subsidised leisure centres, libraries, cultural centres etc., prioritising areas with higher levels of social housing. Participate more actively in international city-to-city networks, which were found to be helpful for cities to gain expertise in solving problems relating to social infrastructure.

4.1.2. Policy responses on spatial segregation and inequality

Poverty and social exclusion have a spatial dimension that is manifested differently across the Member States and regions, mainly resulting in spatial segregation. This is especially relevant to deprived neighbourhoods, where it promotes stigmatisation and halts positive development, leading to greater segregation and social exclusion of vulnerable groups. As a result, people living in less favourable parts of cities face multidimensional problems that reinforce each other, such as isolation and having unequal access to resources and services (health care, welfare, public services, lower household income and poorer infrastructure).

Actions supporting vulnerable areas usually stem from urban renewal and regeneration programmes for deprived neighbourhoods that use integrated, place-based or partnerships approaches. They tackle both economic and social challenges, and encompass spatial segregation and territorial challenges that include improving the urban environment. However, there is a risk that such initiatives will lead to gentrification, which further pushes out vulnerable groups and increases wealth inequality. The findings of this study suggest that the most important policy developments for national and city-level actions relate to spatial segregation, gentrification, lack of quality data and environmental deprivation problems.

Table 12 Policy recommendations on spatial segregation and inequality

Challenge	Recommended national action	Recommended city action
Spatial segregation	Ensure policy integration vertically between levels of government and horizontally across policy fields, and strengthen the position of segregated areas in the broader urban context. Multi-level governance approaches and comprehensive planning that targets the whole area should be applied. In addition, substantial planning for potential adverse side-effects should be taken into consideration. When implementing regeneration programmes that focus on spatially segregated areas, in order to avoid the 'waterbed' effect, focus on holistic approaches to neighbourhood and city development instead of specific missions in one deprived neighbourhood.	To recognise in due time the types and specificities of the problems in their segregated areas, cities must be able to select the most appropriate measures from a broad spectrum of possible interventions. In addition, closeness to local actors must be ensured. After projects have been implemented, it is essential to monitor changes and see whether people are engaged.
Lack of quality data	Regions eligible for support from cohesion policy are defined in the NUTS-2 nomenclature of territorial units. In order to tackle spatial segregation on a more comprehensive basis, smaller units are required. Therefore, a mechanism for cities to report on the NUTS-3 level and, in some cases, neighbourhood level, would bring added value.	Cooperate with local statistics agencies that provide the data necessary to reveal the spatial inequalities in cities.
Gentrification	Introduce recurring, immovable property taxes (e.g. annual taxes on a particular property value). Ensure stricter regulation of collaborative economy platforms for short-term accommodation (e.g. Airbnb). Adverse effects of short-term rental platforms include the reduced supply of housing, as properties shift from serving local residents to serving Airbnb travellers. This hurts local residents through rising housing costs and contributes to the gentrification of some (mainly central) city areas.	Collaborate with all stakeholders involved – public and private, financial and social (private partners, HAs, landlords, different public entities, neighbourhood committees) – to generate affordable housing and the subsequent management of such properties. Experts have outlined that municipalities must prevent renovations that increase prices and thus, ultimately, evictions. The focus should be on integrated district renovation where public subsidies are provided and prices/rents are reduced. If public subsidies are involved, rent caps and regulations should be

		introduced to prevent capitalisation on the subsidy.
Environmental deprivation	Environmental deprivation must be challenged with caution to avoid 'green gentrification', in which new green amenities greatly increase local property values and displace poor renters. As such, physical regeneration initiatives should be coupled with coherent 'soft' horizontal policies on education, social welfare and the labour market, and should be distributed equally between neighbourhoods. Loss of biodiversity and valuable land, as well as increases in pollution caused by increased car use, result from urban sprawl. To lessen this environmental damage, functional urban areas should establish joint development strategies and coordinate spatial planning practices to restrain the spread of low-density regions.	It was found that policies which focus on building the capacities of longer-term residents are an appropriate fit to cope with environmental challenges. To implement these on a city level, resources could be allocated to resident-led micro-interventions in the form of participatory budgets or similar initiatives. In addition, involvement of residents in neighbourhood-level strategy building is seen as an appropriate tool to increase trust among citizens and the ownership of responsibilities relating to the environment.

4.1.3. Urban resilience to COVID-19 and other external shocks

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated regional disparities. The study findings show that marginalised groups have become even more vulnerable during the pandemic, due to the poor economic, social, institutional, physical and natural resilience of the cities in which they live. Poverty and social exclusion were also aggravated, resulting in problems in relation to housing, employment, education and health. In response to these challenges, the EU has provided additional funding to Member States that will be used to solve the direct consequences of the pandemic and to bring about structural change in specific policy areas. Nevertheless, there is an urgent need to put in place a policy response and adequate preparedness for urban areas with regard to global threats such as COVID-19. The following recommendations, which aim to improve resilience to both natural and man-made crises, are therefore of the utmost relevance. The findings of this study suggest that the most important policy developments at national and city level for increased resilience to external shocks relate to ICT access, knowledge sharing, and climate resilience.

Table 13 Policy recommendations for urban resilience

Challenge	Recommended national action	Recommended city action
Uneven access to ICT	Due to increased broadband connectivity, there is a need to create or update the policy framework for digital growth. Experts highlight the need to strengthen ICT applications for e-government, e-learning, e-inclusion, e-culture and e-health, and to promote the accessibility of administrative information in the face of potential natural or man-made disturbances.	Ensure that access is always available to crucial administrative information and practices. This has proven especially relevant in the context of COVID-19. In parallel, this can improve civic participation in decision-making processes.
Lack of knowledge sharing	Introduce free-of-charge, open-source national knowledge platforms for resilience and innovation building in urban planning initiatives, which can serve as a centralised platform to hold relevant information regarding international project funding used by scientists, experts, advisors and residents in all LAUs.	Use knowledge-sharing networks and protective learning environments such as URBACT, UIA, C40 and Eurocities, which help to develop the capacity for integrated approaches and raise the overall quality of policymaking and action planning at local level.
Poor climate resilience	There is a need to adopt sustained multi-level governance integration of nationally determined contributions (NDC) and a national adaptation plan (NAP), thus concentrating efforts towards building sustainable cities. Project proposals need to be evaluated with regard to the specific indicators used to measure the project's success in reaching its objectives.	Climate resilience is a novel initiative in many of the EU's cities. Therefore, the lack of human and institutional capacity could be dealt with using incubator platforms such as Local Governments for Sustainability's Transformative Actions Programme. This system for matching cities with suitable project preparation facilities and financiers has been indicated as helpful in overcoming capacity-related challenges. Urban green spaces are also crucial welfare landscapes in European cities. Cities should build upon the lessons learnt from COVID-19, to further develop and make green spaces accessible for all to improve urban resilience and tackle social challenges over all.

4.2. Improving EU funding programmes in the field of urban social challenges

4.2.1. Collaboration at the strategic level

To address the multidimensional challenges faced by modern cities and enhance urban resilience requires the development of a strategic framework, as well as to challenge sectoral approaches to urban policy and planning. As promoted under the EU cohesion policy, Sustainable Urban Development (SUD) already emphasises the importance of having in place a strategic framework and clear targets. An essential requirement for the success of interventions carried out using the ESIF is to ensure that individual urban-level projects are part of a long-term strategy. The 2014-2020 programming regulations operationalised SUD through integrated strategic actions. From the perspective of European cohesion policy, the key challenge is how to better support local governments in drafting strategic action plans and mainstreaming innovative local approaches.

It is vital that urban stakeholders engage with the managing authorities in collective planning processes and the tailoring of funding objectives to local needs. However, our research revealed that few municipalities are active at decision-making level, and are instead most active at the level of implementation. In line with the existing scholarship, our analysis confirms that domestic politics, institutional arrangements and path dependencies mediate the impact of the partnership principle on power dispersion and spatial rescaling. Many cities encounter bottlenecks when collaborating with MAs. There is little interplay between 'bottom-up' local knowledge and 'top-down' operational and analytical expertise. MAs rarely ensure coordination and policy learning opportunities (with the exception of Valencia). Strategic vision is further hindered by mismatches between the funding allocated and local needs, as well as by restrictions on eligible activities and beneficiaries, and unclear monitoring rules. Lastly, few localities have the political weight and administrative capacity to align their action plans with wider European strategies.

Table 14 Policy recommendations for collaboration at the strategic level

Challenge	Recommended national action	Recommended EU action
Lack of strategic capacity at local level	Maintain the involvement of cities in defining the OP and in the delivery and implementation phases, using bidirectional feedback. Set up a permanent working group or mechanism that connects the relevant government departments, MAs and LAs, and allows local objectives to be taken into account when drafting urban measures at the OP level. Enhance technical expertise relating to strategic planning and complexity management at MA level, as well as EU funds management at local level.	EU institutions should coordinate and make effective use of various urban networks at European level. The European Commission, as well as the European Parliament, could provide a platform for cities' concerns, which would help to better position cities at national level. The EP/EC should strengthen the use of Article 9 initiative 'Urban Development Network' as a platform for the better positioning of urban actors and urban agendas. It should also promote policy learning among beneficiary local authorities.

Challenge	Recommended national action	Recommended EU action
Imprecise definition of integrated urban development	Support the creation of urban typologies and concepts in close collaboration with cities and towns. Support international urban networks and lesson learning exchanges.	The definition of integrated urban development could be better mainstreamed by developing adequate urban concepts. This could be defined as an ex-ante conditionality for future urban programmes.

4.2.2. Allocation of funds

A common European 'Aquis Urbain' (EC, 2009) refers to a method combining area-based, integrated, and participative approaches, including local partnerships. It seeks to concentrate cross-sectoral actions and funding into selected target areas. This approach became mainstream during the 2007-2013 period. Neighbourhood regeneration remained prominent in the 2014-2020 programming and is maintained for the upcoming period (2021-2027). Broad EU objectives embedded in Member States' OPs serve as a blueprint for the allocation of funding. For example, Thematic Objective 11 during the previous funding period urges Member States to develop programmes that promote social inclusion and combat poverty and discrimination.

Despite these clear aims, our research reveals that funding does not always reach the most vulnerable groups and neighbourhoods. Widespread discrimination against ethnic and racial minorities, as well as xenophobic sentiments, continue to divert funding away from 'unpopular' groups. This issue is compounded by a lack of meaningful participation by excluded and marginalised groups in decision-making processes, and their lack of administrative capacity to effectively compete for funding or to implement sustainable projects.

The study identified some positive trends, such as a growing focus on people with refugee status, and links between policy priorities towards integration and the use of 2014-2020 ESI Funds. However, such efforts have not been able to prevent a further deterioration in the living conditions of ethnic minorities such as Roma, as well as widespread hostility among majority societies. Serious bottlenecks exist in fighting discrimination, especially with regard to residential and educational segregation and the prevention of forced evictions. Ensuring sustainable local commitment and implementation is yet to be addressed. Cooperation with civil society and private sector engagement in implementation remain insufficient. Accounting for the impact of integration efforts on the ground should also be improved.

Table 15 Policy recommendations for the allocation of funds

Challenge	Recommended national action	Recommended EU action
Discrimination against racial and ethnic groups	National governments should develop and adopt national action plans against racism and adopt common principles for their implementation. National governments should improve the collection of data on equality, disaggregated by racial or ethnic origin, which are crucial to uncovering and addressing existing inequalities at the local level.	The EC should strengthen its monitoring of minority inclusion programmes and link it to the wider cohesion agenda. As guardian of the Treaties, the Commission must guarantee that anti-discrimination legislation, such as the Racial Equality Directive, is properly transposed and enforced. The EC should put in place safeguards and targeted measures to ensure that mainstream interventions reach out effectively to refugees, Roma, immigrants

Challenge	Recommended national action	Recommended EU action
	National and Regional Operational Programmes should incorporate explicit measures to tackle structural racism. National and Regional Operational Programmes should align with existing anti-discrimination frameworks (e.g. Roma integration strategies)	(i.e. conditions to ensure non-discrimination). Managers of EU fundings can further develop data collection, monitoring and reporting methodologies to meet expectations of accountability for the use of public funds, and ensure that the impacts of targeted and mainstream measures on marginalised communities are assessed and that this leads to policy learning and review. Further promote and operationalise the EU Action Plan Against Racism.
Lack of empowerment	National Monitoring Committees (MC) and Intermediary Bodies (IB) should include representatives from neighbourhood councils and civilian groups. Consultations with neighbourhood groups should be institutionalised in accordance with the partnership principle.	The EC should support Member States' integration efforts by facilitating exchange, cooperation and focused thematic discussion through the network of Urban Contact Points. EU-level policymakers can ensure high-level dialogue and policy guidance by pursuing bilateral monitoring missions, involving national and local authorities as well as civil society.
Lack of technical capacity	Technical support should be targeted towards anti-racist grassroots organisations.	EU-level policymakers, funders and other stakeholders can support the capacity building of local authorities and civil society in order to promote their active mobilisation. Besides, they can support the representation of ethnic/racial groups under the partnership principle and CLLD.

4.2.3. Implementation capacity

Wide variations exist in the implementation of cohesion policy in individual Member States, depending on the relationships between the national and regional levels. Such variations are associated with the placement of territorial programmes within the overall cohesion policy management structure. Absorption rates, in turn, vary in relation to the type of intervention concerned. The highest absorption rates are usually observed in the category of 'basic infrastructure'. This may be due to the relatively simple implementation of projects in this category, and their high costs. The evaluation reports indicate that integrated approaches targeted at 'social issues' absorb less funding, and their scaling-up rates continue to be low. In short, absorption rates differ not only between thematic categories but also among regions and localities within a given category. However, the high absorption of available resources does not necessarily mean that an intervention is compliant, effective, or efficient. This study reveals that stakeholders struggle to use Integrated Territorial Investment and grassroots initiatives to access funding due to complex regulations, stiff competition within calls for tenders, and rigorous eligibility requirements.

Although the new cohesion policy is considered simpler and more flexible than its predecessor in the 2014-2020 programming period, the fact that it merges more funds into one common regulation without outlining further specific provisions for each fund will inevitably create more complexity. Discrepancies and disconnects between the budgetary procedures in Member States and those at EU level were also put forward as a reason for the lack of budget synergy. Basic issues such as the length and timing of budget cycles and the absence of an agreed Europe-wide standard budget structure, complicate the search for synergy still further. The co-financing of projects is also a problematic issue. In the area of social policy, the co-financing requirements of the ESF and ERDF are considered to result in the increased alignment of policy priorities between both levels, and affect national budgets. However, this positive leverage effect is limited and less visible in those Member States that receive relatively little money, such as France and Germany.

In turn, a lack of synergies, as well as instabilities in co-financing, affect the sustainability of individual projects, which often only last between three and five years. It is clear from our research that there is both a need and a desire to mainstream projects that are financed with EU grants, especially those projects that deal with social challenges.

Table 16 Policy recommendations for implementation capacity

Challenge	Recommended national action	Recommended EU action
Lack of monitoring and impact evaluation	Member States should develop more cohesive ex-ante and ex-*post* evaluation methodologies. Monitoring should go beyond checking for fraudulent activity and should look at thematic operations and softer, long-term impacts.	The EC should enhance its monitoring of projects through the creation of coherent benchmarks and databases. It should work with research institutions to further develop evaluation techniques.
Inconsistent use of ITI	Technical support should be provided directly to stakeholders using ITI.	The EC should support capacity building activities targeted directly at MAs and local stakeholders.
Regulatory complexity	Member States should comply with EU regulations. MAs should avoid bureaucratic pedantry and allow some level of flexibility during calls for tenders. Technical support should be provided to applicants, particularly those stakeholders working in the area of social exclusion. All urban authorities should possess a unit designated to deal with European funding and local budgets.	The EC should ensure the stability and consistency of regulatory frameworks.
Lack of budgetary synergies	Urban budgetary action plans should be aligned with themes prioritised in OPs (and vice versa). Budgetary cycles should also be aligned as far as possible. MA should institutionalise regular budgetary consultations with local authorities.	Enhance budgetary coordination is needed between national and EU levels.

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ANNEXE 1. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Table 17. Research questions the case studies will help to answer

Conceptual dimension
❖ What are the prevalent social challenges in cities across the EU? What are the causes of these social challenges? ❖ What groups are most at risk of poverty and social exclusion in cities across the EU? What groups are facing 'deep exclusion' and marginalisation? ❖ How do the social challenges fit within the broader context of urban development? Do they have a clear spatial dimension in cities across the EU?
State-city dimension
❖ How do social challenges differ between cities across Europe depending on their size (using Eurostat spatial units)? ❖ What actions have been undertaken by cities across the EU to tackle social challenges? What are the existing and unique governance methods in different multi-level institutional settings to address social challenges and ensure inclusion in European cities? ❖ How has the COVID-19 crisis influenced social challenges in cities across the EU and their governance settings? What actions have been undertaken by cities to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 crisis on those individuals most severely affected? ❖ Which local policy interventions have been effective in addressing social challenges in cities across the EU? What is the rationale behind these local policy interventions and the reasons for their success? What are the barriers to their success?
European dimension
❖ What direct and indirect roles do EU policies and EU funding sources, in particular cohesion policy instruments, play in addressing social challenges in cities across the EU? How can these policies and funding sources be improved to achieve a more sustainable and holistic impact? ❖ How can cohesion policy interventions be better planned and monitored to tackle social challenges in cities across the EU? How can the regulatory framework be improved to make it more effective and to better help vulnerable groups? ❖ How can cities across the EU make use of cohesion policy instruments in the 2021-2027 programming period to tackle social challenges and improve their urban policy capacity (regulatory and financial capacity)? ❖ What is the best way to improve and maintain policy dialogue with cities about social challenges and creating sustainable, inclusive spaces?

Source: PPMI

ANNEXE 2. RAPID EVIDENCE ASSESSMENT: SEARCH TERMS

Table 18. search term for review questions

Social challenges	Conditional search terms	Conditional search term
"Social challenges"	"Cities"	"Vulnerable group"
"Urban challenges"	"Urban areas"	
"Social exclusion"	"Neighbourhood"	
"Marginalisation"	"Towns"	
"Social issues"	"Suburbs"	
"Societal issues"	"Communities"	

ANNEXE 3. RAPID EVIDENCE ASSESSMENT: SEARCH ENGINES

Table 19. search engines for semi-systematic literature review

Systematic search (Rapid evidence assessment)	
Open-access databases	**Peer-reviewed or academic journals**
https://scholar.google.com/ https://www.base-search.net/	https://www.sciencedirect.com/ https://www.jstor.org/ https://link.springer.com/

ANNEXE 4. INVENTORY QUALITY CRITERIA AND STRUCTURE

The following quality criteria were considered when developing the inventory of good practices.

Table 20 Quality criteria

Quality criteria	Description
Contributes to urban resilience	The concept of 'resilience' includes the ability of a system to 'anticipate, absorb, recover from, and adapt to a wide array of systemic threats'. Therefore, resilience indicates that a system can return to its original stability, while also introducing innovations and capabilities developed in response to the crisis. Given the 'crisis' European cities are going through with the pandemic and in many cases an unfavourable political climate for effective social policy, it is a criterion of good policy and practice that the initiative aims to contribute to improving the urban resilience of the locality. This means that the design of the initiative and its activities should carefully consider building resilience that positively contributes, in the long run, to anticipating and recovering from crisis.
Strong rationale and need	To ensure that the policy or practice is innovative and relevant, it is also important to consider whether it has a clear rationale that responds to the acute needs of the most vulnerable and the most relevant social challenges in cities today. Does it respond to the needs of vulnerable groups and have a clear and strong rationale as to how it will meet the needs of the target group?
Addresses research challenges	An example of innovative and good practice can also be identified from the fact that it fills a gap or need in the academic literature or research with regard to a challenge that is difficult to understand, or a gap that needs to be further explored. If this is the case, then the initiative brings added value even if it is experimental. An example of such a need is the poor coordination between different levels of governance or between different sectors. Good practice examples could be policies that have been able to cross the borders of sectoral and multiple governance models and which represent exemplary attempts to innovate and fill the knowledge gaps.
Valuable lessons for other cities and actors	Due to the differing urban development contexts in European cities, it is not advised to consider transferability as a quality criterion. However, lessons learned can still spark future inspiration and insights that may prove very useful across borders or for other cities or actors in the same country. Good practice examples provide many useful lessons due to an abundance of documentation and material (not necessarily peer-reviewed).

The research team recognises that many innovative initiatives unfortunately cannot monitor or get involved in research to significantly demonstrate their own success. Given that this study is particularly interested in the urban resilience of societies during the times of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is also likely that several great initiatives will not yet have run for long enough to have generated sufficient, or to enable significant studies to prove their effectiveness. Nevertheless, it was important to make ensure that those cases that have been included provide interesting examples from different geographical parts of Europe, covering different types of social challenges (resources, participation and quality of life-related), as well as different target groups.

Key strands of the inventory include the design of the policy or initiative, descriptions, performance, and resources. Each strand comprises variables, all of which are presented in **Table 5**. While most of these variables are straightforward, some require additional explanation. Multi-level institutional governance settings (**MLG settings**) refer to the degree of local regulatory autonomy and the extent of financial support available from the state, which determines the level of autonomy with which governance works. **Evaluation** of the action refers to evidence and proof of positive and transformative change. **Criticality** refers to potentially negative aspects of the initiative that could nevertheless represent important lessons learned for other cities or initiatives.

Figure 10 Inventory structure

Source: PPMI

ANNEXE 5. LIST OF CITIES IN THE LITERATURE REVIEW

Table 21. List of cities in the EU covered throughout the semi-systematic literature review

Country	Cities				
AT	Innsbruck	Graz	Linz	Vienna	
BE	Antwerp	Brussels	Ghent	Liège	Bruges

Country	Cities						
BU	Varna	Sofia					
CZ	Ostrava	Prague	Pilsen	Havířov			
DE	Duisburg	Berlin	Cologne	Leipzig	Dortmund	Essen	Rostock
	Hamburg	Munich	Münster				
DK	Copenhagen	Aarhus					
EE	Tallinn						
EL	Komotini	Athens					
ES	Barcelona	Seville	Murcia	Pamplona	Zaragoza	Oviedo	
FI	Helsinki	Oulu					
FR	Bordeaux	Strasbourg	Marseille	Paris	Rennes	Lille	Nantes
HU	Budapest	Szeged	Miskolc				
HR	Zagreb	Rijeka	Zadar	Varaždin			
IE	Dublin						
IT	Bari	Milan	Genova	Bologna	Napoli	Palermo	Rome
	Torino	Verona	Turin	Brescia			
LT	Vilnius						
LU	Luxembourg						
LV	Riga						
NL	Amsterdam	The Hague	Rotterdam	Utrecht	Groningen	Maastricht	
PO	Białystok	Płock	Gdańsk	Warsaw	278 other Polish cities[1]		
PT	Braga	Lisbon	Porto				
RO	Cluj-Napoca	Bucharest	Arad				
SI	Ljubljana						
SE	Stockholm	Gothenburg	Malmö				
SK	Bratislava	Košice					

Source: Compiled by PPMI, based on cities covered in the literature review

1 The article indicating the coverage of 278 Polish cities does not provide an extensive list of these cities, only the number and mention of some of the cities.

This study explores social challenges and policy responses in EU cities in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. It demonstrates that the pandemic has placed additional pressures on vulnerable groups and the institutions that work to support them. It finds that the local policy capacity to respond to the crisis has differed across cities and multi-level governance settings. Participatory and integrated policy efforts have often failed to meet the expectations of urban citizens and stakeholders. To move towards urban resilience in times of crisis, EU-level funding needs to become more accessible and focused on long-term transformations, as well as improving policy dialogue with those cities most limited by ineffective local governance structures and historical legacies.

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