

Survey of European mayors: City leaders need support to tackle housing and social crises



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Tackling the spiralling housing crisis and responding to rising social inequalities are growing concerns for mayors of European cities in 2024, a major new survey from Eurocities has revealed.

Published two weeks ahead of the European elections, the second annual Eurocities Pulse Mayors Survey, which collected results from 92 mayors in 28 European countries, has uncovered the main trends, challenges and priorities that shape urban affairs in 2024.

The survey also confirms that climate change remains the top priority for city leaders overall. As was the case in 2023, well over half of mayors put climate action as their top priority for 2024, more than double any other category.

According to the survey, the biggest priorities for mayors in 2024 are:

- 67% climate action: Mayors highlight cities' central role in leading actions such as building renovations and developing sustainable transport.
- 31% social inclusion and equity: Mayors highlight rising inflation and the cost-of-living. They want to work with the EU to protect people's social rights in the green and digital transformations and build city's capacity to respond to pressure on essential social services.
- 30% access to affordable and social housing: Mayors state their willingness to work with the next EU institutions and national governments to invest in high-quality, fair housing and to improve social housing.
- 28% sustainable mobility: Mayors emphasise the importance of safety, affordability and efficiency, while minimising harmful emissions.

While climate change remains the top priority for European mayors in 2024, they also pay much more attention to social inclusion and housing than last year,” says André Sobczak, Secretary General of Eurocities. “This underlines that, unlike many populist politicians, mayors do not oppose ecological and social needs. Rather, they aim to work simultaneously on both challenges to develop a just transition where no one is left behind.

Despite a recent backlash against the European Green Deal’s policies among some national and European politicians, mayors responding to the survey underline their commitment to achieving the EU’s climate neutrality goals.

The vast majority of mayors are also confident that their citizens support their ambitious climate goals,

However, when it comes to being able to fund climate action and other priorities, mayors state that they are not receiving enough support from the EU or their national governments.

Even though city and EU priorities are often very much aligned, these are areas where European funding and policies are falling well short, and continue to be held back by national governments,

As a result, many cities lack the capacity to meet their climate targets, while others are struggling to meet the housing needs of the most vulnerable people. If this situation does not improve, we risk a huge backlash among citizens.

With June’s European elections set to bring new mandates for the European Parliament and the European Commission, mayors state that the main areas for future EU investment must be climate change and energy, sustainable mobility and access to housing.

The mayors of Europe have made it clear that a better future for the people of Europe starts in its cities,” says Sobczak. “With 75% of Europeans living in cities, mayors are asking the EU to invest in infrastructure that will reduce inequalities, strengthen public services and build a just, green and prosperous future for Europe.

The biggest challenges faced by mayors in 2023 were:

- 29% climate change: Mayors highlight issues such as access to water, the effects of extreme heat and the challenge of promoting climate adaptation measures, as well as advancing efforts to reach decarbonisation and climate neutrality goals.
- 26% housing crisis: Housing, in 10th place in mayors' challenges in 2022, moves to second place in 2023. Mayors highlight that providing access to affordable housing to low income, as well as middle-income workers, is increasingly difficult.
- 22% public budget and administrative capacity: Mayors say the long-term effects of inflation, coupled with a shift in prevailing monetary policy and higher interest rates, had a noticeable effect on public budgets and financing.

Other significant findings from the survey are:

- Mayors' main strategies to achieve their priorities are sourcing additional central government or EU funding for their city (85%), focusing on innovation to implement new cutting-edge solutions (61%) and establishing better ways to cooperate with national governments (49%).
- Mayors say the priorities of the next European Commission should be more investment in sustainable urban mobility (55%), more accessible to quality, affordable housing (54%) and a long-term strategy and vision for the EU and cities to work together (49%).
- 49% of cities said they lack sufficient tools and capacity to meet their climate commitments and targets, and 54% will struggle to meet the current housing needs of the most vulnerable people.
- 70% of mayors say the majority of their constituents want action on decarbonisation policies and climate action. However, 50% of mayors are concerned about local backlash about their climate policies.
- While the impacts of both the Russian war in Ukraine and the Covid-19 pandemic have dropped out of the top ten challenges for mayors, many mayors continue to be vocal on their steadfast support for Ukraine.

- 85% of mayors believe that government innovation is essential. Mayors say the top innovation activities that benefit cities are data driven analytics and evidence-based policy making (72%), developing new services and solutions based on digital technologies (60%) and the human-centred design of public services and policy interventions (57%).

1. The second edition of the Eurocities Pulse Mayors survey is based on research conducted among mayors from the 204 member cities of the Eurocities network. Between December 2023 and February 2024, mayors were invited to reply to an online survey. The survey consisted of six open-ended and nine closed questions, available in the annex. For the closed questions, the results are presented at an aggregated level with no further manipulation. For some of the questions, such as top challenges and top priorities for 2024, Eurocities used open-ended questions to allow mayors to respond freely without predetermining their response.

You can download a pdf of the Eurocities Pulse Mayors Survey here: <https://monitor.eurocities.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Euroc...>

2. The Eurocities Pulse Mayors Survey is a major element of the, which presents all the most interesting data and insights gathered throughout the year by Eurocities' Brussels-based staff, and via input from our network of more than 6,000 city officials from all over Europe. The Eurocities Monitor therefore presents all the results of the Eurocities Pulse, as well as other information presented via essays on each of the Eurocities working areas. It is available online here: <https://monitor.eurocities.eu>

3. Adding to this overwhelming evidence, Eurocities has launched its manifesto for a better Europe – A better Europe starts in cities– which calls on the next European Commission to harness cities' transformative power to develop strong policies that will ensure a green, just and prosperous future for people living in urban areas.

4. Eurocities wants to make cities places where everyone can enjoy a good quality of life, is able to move around safely, access quality and inclusive public services and benefit from a healthy environment. We do this by networking more than 200 larger European cities, which together represent some 150 million people across 38 countries, and by gathering evidence of how policy making impacts on people to

inspire other cities and EU decision makers.

Connect with us at <https://eurocities.eu/> or by following our Instagram,

2. The second edition of the

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