



POLIS

CITIES AND REGIONS FOR TRANSPORT INNOVATION

POLIS Manifesto for the European Elections

Local must lead!

Empowering Cities and Regions for Better Transport

February 2024

POLIS Priorities

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Introduction

The next term of the European Parliament will determine whether the EU can make a move to a more **resilient transport system**. Recent and ongoing challenges, ranging from the COVID-19 pandemic to the soaring cost of energy, have taught us that transport systems are at the forefront of crises and must adapt quickly to changing circumstances. No ideology can make the climate crisis magically disappear, and all viable solutions require choices and demand cooperation – across borders, levels of government, and party lines. We need all incoming Members of the European Parliament to contribute, with strategic vision and concrete action, to a sustainable, safe, equitable, and prosperous future for the citizens of Europe.

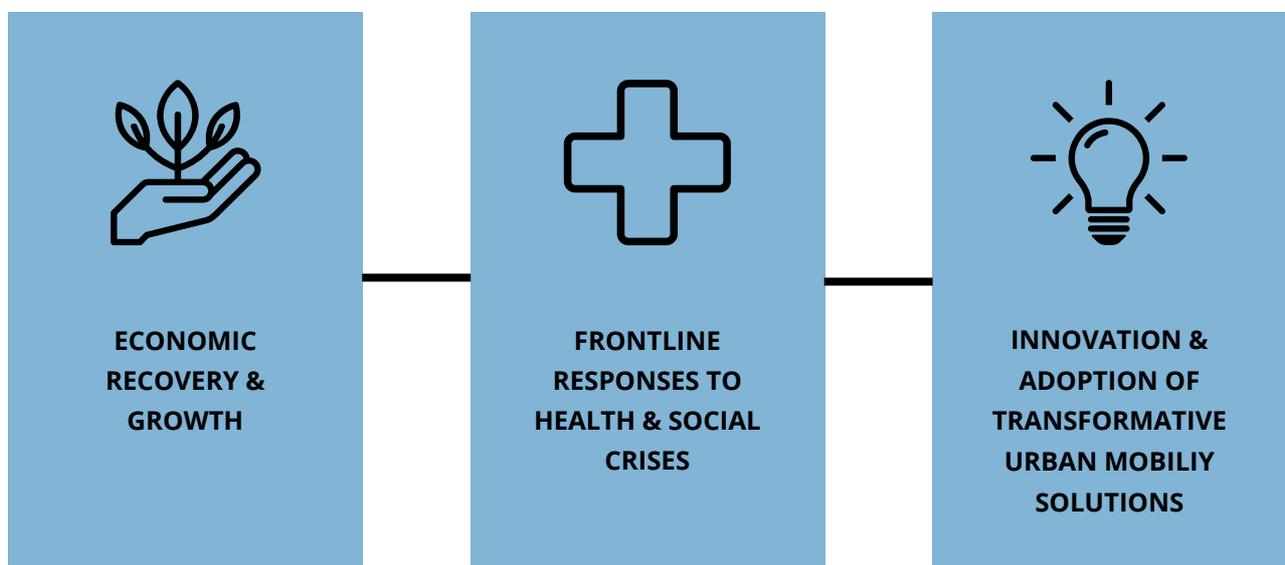
As the leading network of European cities and regions advancing sustainable mobility through transport innovation, POLIS calls on all candidates to take **urban and rural mobility** into account as a key sector for European action. Transport at the local and regional scales, managed by local and regional authorities, has the closest, widest, and deepest impact on the everyday lives of EU citizens. It is also a key building block for Europe's prosperity and competitiveness and must become an essential contributor to a just transition towards climate neutrality and zero pollution.

Many POLIS **member cities and regions** are bravely stepping forward and making their transport systems more resilient, sustainable, safe, and equitable. They are doing so in a quintessentially European way: working for the greater good and actively learning from and cooperating with each other. They are leading the way. Learning from their experience, supporting their efforts, and involving them in EU policy development is the best way to spread their work to the whole Union.

1. The local level matters: Empowering cities and regions

In the face of the climate crisis and the imperative for sustainable **recovery and resilience**, the coming decade will be critical. Local and regional levels of government are key, and it is here that swift and decisive actions will have to be taken. Empowering cities and regions ensures that decisions reflect the diverse needs and aspirations of our citizens.

Local mobility isn't something that can simply be set away from EU policy on the grounds of subsidiarity – there is a critical European dimension to the advancement of sustainable mobility. Our members (small, medium, and large cities, provinces, and regions) see an important role for the EU in enabling:



These require **legal and funding frameworks** tailored to the needs and capacities of cities and regions.



2. Urban and regional mobility as the key to connect communities and reduce the carbon footprint

In order to achieve a 55% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, we urge the EU to prioritise **sustainable urban mobility** as a key policy field within its urban, regional, and transport policies. Local and regional mobility is literally ‘close to home’ and can substantially contribute to European goals with regard to climate, air quality, road safety, and modal shift.

Local and regional authorities are committing to substantial changes in policies, methods, services, fleets, and infrastructure. With the right tailored support, their impact can be further increased. **Efficient and green transportation systems** will connect communities, reduce environmental impacts, and contribute to the success of the European Green Deal.

3. Bridging urban and rural divides: Inclusive policies for all territories

Local and regional governments understand the critical importance of **inclusive policies** in bridging gaps between urban and rural areas. We must ensure that no community is left behind in the pursuit of a greener and more connected Europe.

Urban and rural mobility systems are **interdependent**: rural residents need cities as activity centres, and cities rely on visitors, commuters, and goods from their hinterland. Urban residents need rural space and nature for tranquillity and recreation. A lack of mutual consideration and understanding will hamper economic, social, and environmental sustainability and progress on both sides.



4. Standing firm with the Green Deal: Now is the time for implementation

POLIS has been actively helping shape the European Green Deal's mobility actions by introducing the **views and capacities** of local and regional governments to the EU policy sphere while also raising awareness among cities and regions of Europe's ambitions and their role in bringing about change.

We stand firm with our commitment to making the Green Deal a success. We lead by example, capitalising on our networks for peer support and fast adoption of best practices. Now that the Green Deal policies have been defined and their implementation has become the next frontier, **tailored financial and technical support mechanisms** must be put in place.

5. A commitment to the Just Transition

POLIS has established a Just Transition Agenda for Urban Mobility, that supports local leaders as they reconcile the environmental, economic, and social dimensions of the mobility transformation. This Agenda can be of inspiration at the EU level. We emphasise **affordability, safety, and inclusivity** in our sustainable modes of transport, ensuring a fair transition for all citizens.

This requires a **new European approach** to tackling transition pathways, with a focus on 'phasing in' and 'reconversion' of local and regional economies. This approach can be achieved by an agile Just Transition Fund and an appropriate Social Climate Fund that respond to the needs of local and regional authorities and the mobility solutions required.

6. Focus on industrial policy... but not without local and regional public sector involvement!

POLIS understands and welcomes the renewed interest in an Industrial Policy for Europe. We emphasise that a Green Deal **Industrial Plan** will require co-creation and coordination with the local and regional public sector. For many industrial products and services, local and regional authorities can make a real difference through their own procurement approach. There are plenty of opportunities in automotive, infrastructure, and energy applications for transport.

We are committed to developing agile regulatory frameworks that enhance policy-responsive innovation, establish substantial and innovative public procurement mechanisms, and enable private sector innovation. A European **urban mobility funding facility** with a one-stop shop access for investment is needed. Clean buses, active-travel infrastructure, and EV charging infrastructure are priority investment areas.



7. Protect Europeans who walk and cycle: Deliver on the EU's commitments and strive for zero deaths

To be sustainable, mobility must be safe. We need Europeans to walk and cycle much more, and we cannot achieve this if we do not improve the safety of the EU's roads and streets. A growing number of EU cities have adopted (and some have already achieved) the goal of **zero deaths** in their road networks, proving that we must prioritise action over underlying structural factors (rules, roads, and vehicles), and stop blaming victims. Europe's Road Safety Policy Framework should be updated, taking speed reduction schemes into account, and should fund local action and capacity building.

The European Cycling Declaration is an important step in the right direction. Now, the EU must deliver on its political commitments, and the European Commission should prepare an implementation plan detailing how it will more **systematically integrate cycling** policies into other relevant EU policies. Such an implementation plan should build on the experience of cities in promoting and advancing cycling and be developed in collaboration with national and regional authorities.

8. Clean our air and fleets, green our streets

Understanding the profound negative effects of traffic-generated **air pollution** on the health of our citizens, we urge the EU institutional stakeholders not to fall short on the policies and regulatory and financial instruments we need to make local mobility cleaner, healthier, and greener.

The EU must establish the instruments necessary to phase-out **internal combustion engines** by 2035 and encourage vehicle owners and operators to transition to electric or less fuel-dependent options. The World Health Organisation's air quality standards must form the basis for EU policies in this field. The EU should install mechanisms to properly internalise external costs of transport and should enable local and regional authorities to regulate vehicle access to their territories.

9. Trans-European Transport Network: Urban nodes are a driver for competitiveness

Europeans have the right to barrier-free, safe, and sustainable **movement of people and goods** across the Union. Acknowledging the need to think globally and act locally, we call upon the EU to continue its efforts to fully include the urban level in making the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) a driver for the improvement of European mobility.

The importance of **urban nodes** has become clear. Making the most of their role requires sufficient funding and technical support, but also the necessary governance frameworks to fully build on local and regional initiatives, as well as structures to complete and improve the interface between trans-European and local mobility systems.

10. People make it happen: Skilled workforce, capable cities and regions

The urban mobility transition that cities and regions have put in motion requires **new skills** and high numbers of informed and trained staff. The war on talent rages in the public and private sector. The EU has the instruments to make a difference and bring about change: ERASMUS+, Horizon Europe, Cohesion Funds, and European Social Funds. There are great examples of how people working in 'old' industries find a future in new mobility industries. Local and regional authorities are close to people, companies, schools, and universities: they can act as a crucial agent of change.

Your actions matter, your contributions count – we urge the incoming Members of the European Parliament to provide the EU's local and regional leaders with the right tools and support to implement necessary changes and help achieve the goals of the European Green Deal.

About POLIS

POLIS is a registered international non-profit association under Belgian law with its secretariat based in Brussels.

POLIS is the leading network of European cities and regions advancing transport innovation and sustainable mobility. We cooperate to develop sustainable urban mobility solutions for the city of today and tomorrow. POLIS draws its expertise from a network of decision-makers, researchers, managers, and practitioners, working at the local and regional level across the European Union and beyond.

Building on the results of EU-funded projects and the input of thematic Working Groups that address key transport challenges, we link innovation and public policy guidance on urban and regional mobility with European policy development.

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