



Eurocities 2025 Braga Programme

STRONGER CITIES, FAIRER EUROPE → 4-6 JUNE



EUROCITIES 2025 BRAGA
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EUROCITIES 2025 BRAGA
PROGRAMME

12:00 Registration

13:00 - 13:45 Newcomer Session

Room | Small Auditorium

14:00 - 16:00 Study Visits

Visit 1 | Human Power Hub – Social Innovation Center of Braga

Visit 2 | Viva o Bairro e Pulsar

Visit 3 | INL – Iberian International Nanotechnology Laboratory

Visit 4 | Gnracion e Startup Braga

Visit 5 | Municipal Market

Visit 6 | Walk with the National Capital of Culture Braga 2025

14:30 - 17:30 Eurocities Academy: Training Session on Building Safe Digital Cities (in Partnership with Nordic Safe Cities)

Room | Meeting Room 4

As digital spaces increasingly shape public discourse, social interaction, and democratic participation, cities are under growing pressure to address online harms such as hate speech, misinformation, and polarisation. While municipalities often find themselves on the front line, their role in the digital realm—and the tools available to them—remain unclear and frequently underutilised.

This training workshop will explore how European cities can take a more active role in fostering safer and more inclusive digital environments. Drawing on insights from the Safe Digital City programme by Nordic Safe Cities, the session will present practical strategies and lessons learned from addressing online risks and building digital resilience. Topics will include identifying the targets of online hate, understanding which issues drive polarisation, recognising the events that trigger online hostility, and exploring how city officials and municipalities can take effective preventive action to protect residents from harmful digital content.

With a strong focus on the municipal role and room for manoeuvre, we will delve into cross-sector collaboration and local prevention initiatives. The session is case-based and designed to inspire concrete action through real-world examples and peer-to-peer dialogue.



16:00 - 17:30

National Meetings

Non-EU Members Meeting

National meeting for German cities | Meeting Room 3

National meeting for Spanish cities | Congress Rooms 1 & 2

National meeting for Italian cities | Congress Rooms 1 & 2

National meeting for Swedish cities | Meeting Room 1

National meeting for Finnish cities | Meeting Room 2

Meeting for non-EU Members | Meeting Room 5

19:30

Welcome Party

Venue | Colunata dos Eventos, Parque do Bom Jesus, 4715-261 Braga, Portugal



07:00 - 08:00 **Walking and Running Session**

Participants can join a Walking and Running session, suitable for all fitness levels. This programme aims to provide technical guidance to all participants who wish to start running or simply engage in physical activity to combat a sedentary lifestyle. The session includes a brief warm-up, followed by coordination exercises focusing on running technique, and concludes with strength training exercises.

09:00 - 10:30 **Welcome**

Room | Grand Auditorium

Ricardo Rio | Mayor of Braga

Burkhard Jung | Mayor, Leipzig & President, Eurocities

Younous Omarjee | Vice President, European Parliament

Opening Panel Discussion

'Towards a New European Partnership for Cities'

Room | Grand Auditorium

Ricardo Rio | Mayor of Braga

Paulo Rangel | Minister of State and Foreign Affairs, Portugal

Younous Omarjee | Vice President, European Parliament

Jeanne Barseghian | Mayor, Strasbourg

Anacláudia Rossbach | Under-Secretary General, United Nations

Emil Boc | Mayor, Cluj-Napoca

Moderator | Rita Rodrigues, CNN Portugal

The 2025 Eurocities Annual Congress takes place at a defining moment for urban Europe, as a new EU policy agenda emerges that could reshape the role of cities in European governance. Against the backdrop of recent crises—including the pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and migration challenges—cities have proven vital in maintaining essential services and social cohesion. Yet, their political and financial empowerment remains insufficient. This panel will explore how EU institutions and city leaders can forge a new partnership, ensuring cities have direct access to funding, tools for private investment, and a stronger role in EU decision-making.

10:30 - 11:00 **Coffee Break**



11:00 - 12:30

Parallel Sessions

Open Cities: Unlocking Public Spaces for All

Room | Congress Room 3

Bailie Annette Christie | Deputy Mayor, Glasgow

Heather Mack | Deputy Leader of City Council, Bristol

Joana Menezes Fernandes | Head of culture & head of Braga PT capital of culture 2025, Braga

Finn Williams | City architect, Malmö

Moderator | André Sobczak, Secretary General, Eurocities

Investing in public spaces that are vibrant, accessible and sustainable is key to a good quality of life in cities. Local authorities have the power to transform urban spaces, making them greener, more inclusive, and ultimately more attractive. This is done through smart urban planning, urban regeneration with sustainability in mind, cooperation with various actors, and a good dose of cultural vibrancy.

From open squares to public libraries, from brownfields to new housing areas, shared spaces are multiplying, offering opportunities for more social interactions and for different uses, involving a diversity of people.

How do cities invest in quality, vibrant and inclusive public spaces? From new design and planning approaches to cultural approaches to urban planning, the session will highlight local practices while investigating enablers for vibrant public spaces, including innovative governance models, new partnerships and connections between different thematic public policies.

Ambitious Cities: Shaping Public Procurement to Boost Competitiveness

Room | Congress Rooms 4 & 5

Michiel Scheffer | Board President, European Innovation Council (EIC)

Mervi Heinaro | Deputy Mayor, Espoo

Mark Boekwijt | EU Representative, Amsterdam

Soo-Jin Kim | Deputy Head, Cities, Urban Policies, and Sustainable Development Division, OECD

Moderator | Valentina Schippers-Ooejko, Europe Coordinator, Haarlem

Public procurement is one of the key tools available to cities to implement their investment strategies and drive sustainable transformation. Its potential, however, remains hampered by the shortcomings and fragmentation of the EU and national legal frameworks, as well as a lack of resources and skills for the uptake of innovative approaches to public buying.

This session will discuss current city strategies to adopt new approaches to public procurement, leveraging purchasing power to promote environmental and social innovation; the most significant 'pain points' of the current EU legal framework as well as suggestions for improvement; and what kind of capacity-building activities need to take place for urban



11:00 - 12:30

public buyers to be able to fully embrace and implement an ambitious procurement strategy. The outcomes of the discussion will feed into Eurocities advocacy work on public procurement, including the upcoming revision of the EU Public Procurement Directives.

Thriving Cities:

Investing in homes, Investing in Europe

Room | Small Auditorium

Laia Bonet | Deputy Mayor for Urban Planning, Ecological Transition, Urban Services, and Housing, Barcelona

Hélène Duvivier | Vice-President responsible for European and International Relations, Decentralized Cooperation, and Tourism, Lyon Metropole

Diana Santos Lima | Press and Media Officer, Housing Task Force, European Commission,

Gavin White | Executive Member for Housing and Development, Manchester

Moderator | Thomas Lymes, Head of Advocacy, Eurocities

Across Europe, more and more cities are facing a dire housing crisis, affecting urban populations, from the most vulnerable individuals to essential workers. Local governments are using all available tools at their disposal to prevent housing from becoming a luxury that only a few can afford.

Given the multi-faceted nature of this crisis, collaboration between all levels of governments is essential and the EU has a key role to play. Besides revising legislation to create a favourable framework for sustainable, affordable housing, giving cities access to EU funds and investments is one of the most urgent responses required at the EU level. The session will address the following questions:

- What opportunities do the ongoing revisions of EU funding instruments, including InvestEU, present for cities in their fight against the housing crisis?
- How to ensure the next EU budget will secure some funding to tackle the housing crisis?
- How do we ensure that the future European affordable housing plan and its pan-European investment platform will provide tools that are targeted to local needs?

12:30 - 14:00

Lunch

12:30 - 14:00

On Invitation

Women Leaders Working Lunch:

Digital Threats for Gender Equality and Women Leadership

Room | Congress Room 1 & 2

Online hatred and polarisation are on the rise across Europe, increasingly shaping public discourse and threatening democratic participation. Women in political and leadership roles



are disproportionately targeted, facing gender-based abuse intended to silence, intimidate, and push them out of public life. This trend has serious implications for democratic engagement, public trust, and gender equality in city leadership.

For city leaders, this represents both a personal and institutional challenge: how to ensure safety, foster inclusive digital spaces, and uphold democratic values.

This interactive lunch session will explore the scale and impact of online abuse, drawing on recent data and key insights. Participants will be invited to reflect on their own experiences, share ideas, and learn about emerging local strategies to combat online hatred.

Organised in partnership with Nordic Safe Cities, the session will feature brief presentations followed by an open discussion to encourage peer exchange and clear takeaways.

14:00 - 14:30

Pulse check: past insights, future directions

Room | Grand Auditorium

Burkhard Jung | Mayor, Leipzig President, Eurocities

Mathias de Clercq | Mayor, Ghent Vice President, Eurocities

Moderator | André Sobczak, Secretary General, Eurocities

This discussion draws on insights from the Eurocities Pulse 2025 to reflect on shifting urban priorities, the evolving role of cities in the EU, and the future of city leadership. The mayors will share perspectives on managing complex challenges, the growing role of cities in EU policy, and strategies to manage complex urban agendas. They will also explore ways to deepen cooperation between EU institutions and city networks, while expressing their hopes and vision for Eurocities.

14:30 - 15:30

Eurocities Awards

Room | Grand Auditorium

The annual Eurocities Awards celebrate exceptional achievements by cities and individuals who are working to improve the quality of life for their residents and address Europe's most pressing challenges.

- The City Heroes award recognises politicians and city officials for their exceptional leadership or initiatives, whether at the local or European level.
- The Inspiring City Initiative award highlights cities that are setting the standard in creating equitable opportunities, fostering inclusivity, and investing in long-term prosperity for their residents.

15:30 - 16:00

Coffee Break



16:00 - 17:00

Political Track

Room | Congress Rooms 1 & 2

This session will provide the opportunity for politicians to exchange with representatives from the Young City Shapers programme on the broader political dimensions of urban decision-making.

16:00 - 17:30

Learning Loop:

Resilience in Action - Navigating Failures with Success

Room | Congress Room 3

Gianluca Saba | Head of International Relations Office, Genoa

Krista Kampus | Head of the EU and International Relations Department, Tallinn

Sandra Spöttl | Head of European and International Affairs, Munich

Felip Roca | Director of International Relations, Barcelona

Moderator | Nathalie Guri, Project Knowledge Sharing Director

Cities must often navigate complex and challenging decisions. They face difficulties and unforeseen events that can disrupt plans, leading to policies or projects failing or deviating from their original intent.

The bottom line is that challenges and failures offer valuable learning opportunities, especially when shared with others. This session is designed to foster this exchange - encouraging participants to learn from each other's experiences and mistakes, inspired by the Congress theme "Stronger Cities, Fairer Europe".

17:00 - 17:45

Restricted

Shadow Commissioners Meeting

Room | Congress Rooms 1 & 2

One year after the launch of the Eurocities Shadow Commission during the 2024 European Elections campaign, it is high time for the Shadow Commissioners to meet in person. The Shadow Commission has been a key body in leveraging the network's advocacy and influence on the EU political agenda. This session will provide an opportunity for Eurocities Shadow Commissioners to exchange experiences, recognise their achievements, and look ahead to the next milestones. This will also be an opportunity to look at the lessons learned by the Shadow Commissioners during their mandate and discuss ways for Mayors to be better involved in EU affairs. A family picture with all members of the shadow Commission will be taken on this occasion.

19:30

Conference Dinner

Venue | Torre da Naia, R. da Torre, Gondizalves, 4705-303 Braga, Portugal



07:00 - 08:00

Yoga Session

Participants are invited to join a Yoga session. This practice focuses on the connection between body, mind, and spirit through movement, breathing, and mindfulness. If weather and ground conditions permit, the yoga session may be moved to the nearby Parque da Ponte for an even more serene experience.

08:00 - 09:00

ExCom Meeting (ExCom Members Only)

Room | Congress Rooms 6

09:00 - 10:30

Speednetworking

Room | Congress Rooms 3, 4 & 5

An interactive networking session for cities to share their knowledge and experience.

Political Track:

Becoming a Eurocities Ambassador for the Next EU Budget

Room | Small Auditorium

As the EU prepares its next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), the direction of future funding is at a crossroads. Current proposals suggest a shift toward greater centralisation, with national governments set to control the majority of the EU budget—potentially sidelining cities from direct access to key funds. This session will explore the risks of this trend, including the potential merging of vital EU programmes into a single competitiveness fund. With cities on the frontline of delivering EU priorities, mayors must step up as advocates for urban interests. Join this session to understand what's at stake and how city leaders can influence the negotiations to secure a fair, inclusive, and future-ready EU budget.

10:30 - 11:00

Coffee break

11:00 - 12:15

Eurocities General Assembly

Room | Grand Auditorium



12:15 - 12:45

Closing Plenary

Room | Grand Auditorium

Young city shapers - highlights & lessons

Closing Words

Room | Grand Auditorium

Newly elected president of Eurocities

Ricardo Rio | Mayor of Braga

12:45 - 14:00

Lunch

14:00 - 19:00

Study Visits (Porto & Guimarães)

Porto **SOLD OUT!**

Porto is a forward-looking city, proud of its tradition, while committing to a sustainable future. As part of the city visit to this unique European city, embark in an opportunity to discover Porto's rich cultural heritage, active lifestyle, and dynamic entrepreneurial spirit: key drivers of its emergence as a global hub for innovation, as well as a magnet for talent and investment. Following a reception at Porto City Hall, carefully curated tracks aim to showcase the city's historical landmarks, vibrant cultural scene, and business ecosystem. Join us to explore first-hand how Porto seamlessly blends tradition with forward-thinking development.

Guimaraes

Guimarães is a historic City where our past is leveraging for green, digital and social innovation. As part of the city's visit to Guimarães, the 2026 European Green Capital, we invite you to immerse yourself in the new generation of NZEB public buildings that embody the city's "Do No Harm" vision. This includes the successful project of retention basins, which have prevented flooding that has affected our UNESCO heritage for many years, as well as the unique Landscape Laboratory: a research and development centre and hub for environmental education, representing a joint effort between the municipality of Guimarães, the University of Minho, and the University of Trás-os-Montes.



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