



# TRANS-URBAN-EU-CHINA

Transition towards urban sustainability through socially integrative cities in the EU and in China

Deliverable

## **D4.4 Web-based storylines illustrating the integrated transition pathways towards sustainable urban planning and governance (M36)**

WP 4 Integrated transition pathways towards sustainable urban planning and governance

Task 4.1 Scope, frame and illustration of integrated transition pathways towards sustainable urban futures



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## WHY THE TRANS-EU WEB STORYLINES?

The TRANS-EU web-storylines have a normative stance: they aim to support urban policies and practices through sharing understanding of available knowledge on urban challenges, visions of the future. To do so, we craft plausible and persuasive stories illustrating some of the main findings of the TRANS-EU-CHINA Project.

The socio-technological complexity of world challenges increasingly demands that researchers work with multi-disciplinary settings and engage a wide range of actors in the search for potential solutions. (Moser, [2010](#); Owen, Macnaghten, & Stilgoe, [2012](#)). It is increasingly recognised that a variety of multi-level leaders – from policy makers to activists and social entrepreneurs – are needed to make a difference and create urban experiments (Hambleton, 2014). However, research outcomes are often communicated with an information structure and on channels that are difficult for other stakeholders to access, understand and use. We aim to provide project results in a non-scientific language to improve the accessibility of the research and promote evidence-based actions and policies.

On carrying out this activity, we have explored the works in communicating research done, among others, by JRC and the World Bank and we have structured the storytelling around the following four sections:

- (i) *“Global challenges – urban impact”*: this section identifies six major global challenges that influence urban sustainability in the EU and China. Each challenge is linked with an indicator and its evolution over the past several decades is visualized with the creation of short videos to show the dynamic over time. We have then consulted database of major European and international institutions (OECD, UN, World Bank, EUROSTAT) in search of the availability of time-series of indicators that could represent the change over time of the variables for the two regions. In some cases, we had to use a proxy indicator (e.g urban sprawl we had adopted the indicator of “% of population living in urban areas” instead of “% of land take”) due to the lack of availability of similar data and time series for EU-China. As regard the this section, it is important to contextualise the different time of the urbanisation process in China and EU. China is still amid a rapid process of urbanization and urbanization policies have also been changing in the past ten years, while most of the EU member countries already see the stability of urbanization. This justifies the different countermeasures, and the shared solutions as well, for the future vision.
- (ii) *“Six words for promote socially integrative cities”*: This section compares visions and targets put forward by the European Union and by the Chinese government in 2020/2021 for the next five-ten years to tackle the six above-mentioned challenges. On the basis of the SDG 11, we have worked to imagine six words for the future of cities that could be shared for EU/CHINA and respond to the above-mentioned challenges. In choosing the words, we took into account the different territorial level (neighborhoods/city/urban-rural) of the research carried out in TRANS-EU China WPs. In order to build this section, we have cross-read the analysis conducted by CAUPD of 14th Years Plan with the EU vision “A clean Planet for All”, the Green New Deal and its follow-up documents.
- (iii) *‘Urban experiments’* The section –developed by EUROCITIES under WP5 – presents urban best practices and technical advice to promote collaboration and learning between Chinese and European cities.

(iv) *References.* This section contains contact and references

Three notes on the storylines:

- The storylines look at challenges and opportunities to create socially integrative/inclusive cities. Inclusive cities are defined as a “place where everyone, regardless of ... economic means, gender, race, ethnicity or religion, is enabled and empowered to fully participate in the social, economic and political opportunities that cities have to offer” (UN-Habitat, 2002). In line with this, TRANS-EU-China specifies that socially integrative cities are “socially mixed, cohesive, liveable and vibrant communities. Compactness, functional mix, and intra-urban connectivity as well as equal rights regarding access to municipal services play an important role. Environmental quality, the quality of public spaces and the quality of life contribute to the wellbeing of the population. Strengthening a sense of community and fostering a sense of place as well as preserving cultural heritage shape the city’s in- and outward-bound image. Investments into neighbourhood improvement, service delivery, infrastructure and the quality of housing are important supportive measures. Empowerment and participation of the population, as well as social capital, are indispensable” (TRANS-EU 6.6). This definition has framed the overall work structure. Generally, we have considered social integration and urban equity as key factors for urban sustainability.
- Secondly, the storylines adopt a transition perspective, and build upon the URBAN-CHINA foresight exercise carried out by ICS and ISINNOVA in 2015. “Transition”, from the Latin *transition*, is defined as – “the process or a period of changing from one state or condition to another”. The transition concept relates to the structural changes, societal process and mechanisms through which novelty in niches matures and becomes mainstream, heavily influencing dominant practices. Sustainable transitions ensure cities include long-term goals in their short-term actions and require urban governance which takes into account (Loorbach 2010) the following:
  - Long-term thinking
  - Thinking in terms of multiple approaches (multi-domain), different actors (multi-actors), different levels (multi-level)
  - Social learning as an important aim for policy
  - Keeping options open, exploring multiple pathways
- This work is for on-line communication:– it adopts a non-scientific language, paragraphs are extremely concise and pictures and graphs complement the text. Thus, the best way is to navigate in the web-site: <https://www.urbantransition-euchina.com/>

The overarching scope of the storylines is to support awareness-raising of existing lock-ins and promote the exchange and scaling-up of practices that can create pathways towards the set long-term goals (SDG11). Hope you enjoy them!

**GLOBAL CHALLENGES – URBAN IMPACT**



[Challenges](#)

[Visions](#)

[Urban Experiments](#)

[References](#)



## EU & China Opposite Worlds or Same Difference?

European and Chinese cities face the same challenges: this study explores how they are dealing with them – and proposes shared solutions.

**1. UNEQUAL INCOME, UNEQUAL HOUSING**

	<b>CHINA</b>		<b>EUROPEAN UNION</b>	
Indicator	China's Gini coefficient increased from 32.20 in 1990 to 43.70 in 2010, and then decreased to 38.50 in 2016		In the EU, the Gini coefficient increased from an average of 30.5 in 2010 to 30.6 in 2016	
Gini coefficient	2010	2016	2010	2016
	43.7	38.5	30.5	30.6
<b>Challenge</b>	<p><b>Who can afford decent housing in China? Everyone's income has improved, but the rich are speeding ahead of the pack, and it's creating trouble for low to middle earners struggling to find a place to live.</b></p> <p>China's economy is racing ahead – it is one of the fastest growing in the world. Over the last thirty years, more than 800 million people have pulled themselves out of extreme poverty in China. But paradoxically, wealth inequality has also grown substantially. While incomes have risen across society as a whole, those for high earners and in urban areas have escalated faster than for those at the lower end of the wealth spectrum.</p> <p>Housing affordability has emerged as a major issue as a result of this trend, which looks set to continue. Driven by the increasing wealth divide and real estate speculation, housing prices have soared in major Chinese cities in the last twenty years, making housing practically unaffordable for low to middle earners.</p> <p>Many people in this bracket, in particular rural-workers migrating to cities, turn to illegal private rentals on the urban fringe, which often provide only limited access to clean water and proper sanitation. Many of these urban villages fall outside the realm of urban master plans, meaning local authorities have little incentive to extend infrastructure and public services to them.</p>		<p><b>Is there a good average income across the EU? It might have increased, but the divide is wide in places. And as house prices creep up, it's pushing lower earners towards accommodation that can be fraught with issues.</b></p> <p>There are wide disparities in income levels across the EU, and the gaps have got even bigger since the global financial crisis of 2007. The top twenty per cent of earners take home 5.2 times as much as the bottom twenty per cent. As a result, social polarisation is increasing – not just between rich and poor, but between cultural and ethnic groups as well. Also on the rise is urban segregation, which sees different social groups unevenly distributed in urban spaces.</p> <p>In 2017, 112 million EU inhabitants were at risk of poverty or social exclusion, corresponding to 22% of the total population. Of this 112 million, 47 million people were living in cities. COVID19 has exacerbated economic inequalities: the rate of people in, or at risk of, poverty in Europe is expected to increase by 4.8%.</p> <p>Although average living standards have tended to increase over recent years, city house prices are growing faster than income in the majority of EU member states. People on low incomes or from marginalised groups often struggle to find decent, affordable housing.</p> <p>Areas in which accommodation does cost less frequently present multiple issues: inferior buildings standards and education facilities, unemployment, and reduced access to public services. This downward spiral leads to even greater segregation and exclusion.</p>	

## 2. THE RISE OF LONELINESS

	CHINA			EUROPEAN UNION		
<b>Indicator</b>	The percentage of elderly population in China increased from 8.40% in 2010 to 10.12% in 2016			The percentage of elderly population in the EU rose from 17.5% in 2010 to 19.30% in 2017		
% of elderly population	2000	2010	2016	2000	2010	2016
	6.91%	8.40%	10.12%	15.71%	17.50%	19.30%
<b>Challenge</b>	<p>Is a sense of community in Chinese towns a thing of the past? When income level is the only common denominator between residents, feelings of loneliness can quickly start to rise.</p> <p>A study of older adults in China showed that in 1992, approximately 16% felt lonely. Within eight years, this number had hit 30% - almost double.</p> <p>In the last five decades, China has seen drastic declines in fertility, changed social attitudes, and uneven rates of economic mobility, all of which have contributed to rapid increases in one-person and one-couple households. Currently, the “empty-nest elderly family” in China accounts for almost 25% of the households headed by older adults, and this number is expected to increase to 90% by 2030.</p> <p>In addition to this increase in solo living, rapid urbanisation is driving loneliness, as its dispersive nature often weakens social connections in urban spaces. Most urban communities in China, especially those of commodity housing, are made up of people with similar incomes, but this is often the only common denominator. The roots of neighbourhood relations have weakened, making community building difficult.</p>			<p>Does an ageing population equate to a rise in loneliness? Children flying the nest could be a contributing factor, but that’s not the only reason that people in the EU are feeling increasingly alone.</p> <p>Urban loneliness is growing in the EU. This is most apparent for vulnerable groups, such as the unemployed and the elderly, and it is being driven by multiple forces. Many people live alone – researchers call the current share of single-person households “wholly unprecedented historically”. There have been changes to the size and structure of families, with single parent families and childless couple households on the rise. On top of this, the population of the EU is ageing. Older people – defined here as those aged 65 years or more – are projected to increase in the next three decades, from 19.7 % of the total population in 2018 to 28.5 % in 2050.</p> <p>Capital cities tend to have the highest proportions of single-person households – 50% in Paris, and 60% in Stockholm, for example. So, is urbanisation to blame? Researchers argue that it can weaken family and community bonds. This may help to explain why there is generally a greater prevalence of mental health problems in higher-income, and therefore more urbanised, areas. Loneliness is emerging as a key concern for the EU, and the COVID19 pandemic is exacerbating the issue. A recent study of the Dutch population reveals that concerns about personal losses and the pandemic, as well as a decline in trust in societal institutions, were associated with increased mental health problems and loneliness.</p>		



### 3. MIGRATION AND THE FEAR OF STRANGERS

	CHINA					EUROPEAN UNION			
Indicator	Internal migrant worker movements.					Internal and external migration to the EU			
	Total population (2018)	Migrant workers	Local migrant workers	Intra-provincial	Inter-provincial	Total population (2018)	Residents of EU Member States born in another country	From other EU Member States	Born outside the EU
	1 415.05	286 million	115 million	96 million	75 million	513.18	57 million	20 million	37 million
<b>Challenge</b>	<p>Are people at the centre of urbanisation plans in China? When the country's cities are fortresses of general wellbeing and services, rural citizens struggling to obtain entry would disagree.</p> <p>China's Hukou system divides its population into two groups: urban citizens and rural citizens. But in 2013, rural migrant workers accounted for 44% of total employment in urban areas*.</p> <p>Urban citizens live in cities, and are granted access to essential social welfares, including education, employment, health care, pensions, and subsidised housing. Rural citizens live in smaller towns or villages, and whilst they are entitled to arable land, they cannot use urban services. Many rural migrant workers are struggling to obtain urban residency in big cities, and this division has led to poor integration of rural migrants, social exclusion and conflicts.</p> <p>However, some provinces, such as Guangdong, have introduced measures that enable migrants to move into its cities. Tianjin, Shenzhen, Wuhan, Chengdu and Chongqing are also deploying incentives to attract young graduates and talent.</p>					<p>Does an increase in migration mean an increase in challenges? Where cities promise work, jobseekers will follow, but with new cultural mixtures comes new potential for "the fear of the unknown".</p> <p>Of the 57 million people in the EU residing in a country different to that of their birth, roughly 20 million have come from another EU Member State and approximately 37 million from outside the EU. Of these, 1.8 million are recognised refugees. These migrant groups are unevenly distributed, and social integration levels vary. However, in contrast with general perceptions, mobility within the EU itself has increased at a much greater speed than that of non-EU migration to the EU.</p> <p>A large percentage of migrants move to cities, drawn in by their job opportunities and living standards. Today, nearly one in five migrants live in the world's twenty largest cities*.</p> <p>What challenges are emerging from this increased movement of people? Publicly financed goods and services face additional demands and there is an increased need for specialised approaches for vulnerable people, including a large number of unaccompanied minors. Public authorities are simultaneously required to set preparedness mechanisms against radicalisation or xenophobic protests. In terms of employment and social inclusion rates, non-EU citizens are facing tougher odds than host country citizens in most EU Member States.</p>			

**4. THE URBAN SPRAWL**

	<b>CHINA</b>		<b>EUROPEAN UNION</b>	
<b>Indicator</b>	The percentage of China’s population living in urban areas rose from 27% in 1990 to 60% in 2018		The percentage of the EU’s population living in urban areas rose from 63% in 1990 to 75% in 2018	
% of population living in urban areas	1990	2018	1990	2018
	27%	60%	63%	75%
<b>Challenge</b>	<p>What happens when cities are free to expand without restriction? When inner city areas are neglected at the expense of new developments, the consequences go further than bites being taken from arable land. Urban sprawl is just one of the factors that led to a 5.92 million hectare, or 3.31%, decrease in arable land in China between 2000 and 2010.</p> <p>The cities of China have grown steadily over recent years. Driven by government incentives, local authorities have boosted their revenues by auctioning off state-owned land outside cities and retaining most of the income.</p> <p>The flip side of this is the loss of high-quality arable land; the supply of properties outweighing demand, leading to largely uninhabited ghost towns; and existing urban districts being neglected, resulting in a degree of social disintegration and economic distress.</p> <p>What is being done to slow this rapid urban expansion? Reforms to the public finance system should help reduce dependency on land auctioning as a revenue base for local authorities. Changes are being made to local governments, and new regulations that restrict multiple property ownership for individuals are being introduced. Recent urban renewal regulations and activities show rising awareness on the potential of existing urban areas in developing vibrant, mixed, and liveable urban communities</p>		<p>What’s the answer to increased urban demand? As metropolitan populations grow, cities extend and sprawl to accommodate them. Land take in the EU28 amounted to 539km<sup>2</sup> a year between 2012 and 2018, with urban sprawl one of its many drivers. But pressure for more sustainable living is increasing.</p> <p>The median density of European cities sits at around 3,000 residents per square kilometre – almost twice that of their North American counterparts, but half that of Asian cities. The amount of urban space consumed per person has more than doubled over the past 50 years. This rapid increase has brought about some serious socio-economic and environmental consequences, including surface sealing, ecosystem fragmentation, land erosion, arable land loss, increased traffic and emissions. Urban sprawl is a major threat to sustainable development. With public transport services costly and harder to provide in suburban areas, dependence on and usage of private transport has increased as a result. Despite the EU’s efforts to tackle this issue, there is no common policy between nations.</p> <p>However, the EU is moving briskly forwards with urban renewal, which focuses on regenerating deprived urban areas, with a strong emphasis on citizen participation. Some governments, including the UK, Germany and France, have begun to reduce financial incentives that reward sprawl, and instead embarked upon redensification strategies to generate increased demand for local services and greater economic activity.</p>	

**5. EMISSIONS AND THE HOVERING CLOUD OF CLIMATE CHANGE**

	<b>CHINA</b>		<b>EUROPEAN UNION</b>	
<b>Indicator</b>	In China, metric tonnes of CO2 emissions per capita rose from 2.15 in 1990 to 7.18 in 2017		In EU metric tonnes of CO2 emissions per capita dropped from 8.46 in 1990 to 6.47 in 2017	
CO2 emissions (metric tons per capita)	1990	2017	1990	2017
	2.15	7.18	8.46	6.47
<b>Challenge</b>	<p>Should Chinese urbanisation continue unchecked, given it is a major driver of economic growth? Chinese cities are generating more than just financial gains – they also produce 85% of the country’s CO2 emissions.</p> <p>Growing urban populations bring growing demand for energy – research has shown that urbanisation has caused energy consumption and CO2 emissions to increase in every Chinese province. A study estimates that CO2 emissions from energy use in cities will grow by 1.8% per year between 2006 and 2030. But before devising a solution, it is important to fully understand the challenge. Some Chinese cities have conducted energy and greenhouse gas emission inventories, but the country lacks data that factors in detailed sectoral drivers, fuel mixes, and end-uses specific to urban areas. Affluent cities are shown to have systematically lower emissions per unit of GDP. Why? They are supported by imports from less well-off, industrial cities, which are in turn supported by local coal or oil extraction centres. Policies directly targeting manufacturing would drastically undermine the GDP of industrial cities, but consumption-based policies might allow emission reductions to be subsidised by those with greater ability to pay.</p> <p>One thing is clear - the cities of China will need to play an increasing role in helping the country to meet its energy and emissions reduction targets.</p>		<p>Are EU cities well-placed to reduce their emissions? The challenge doesn’t present itself on equal footing from one city to the next, but there is one common denominator – they need to take action.</p> <p>Cities might only occupy 2% of the planet’s landmass, but they account for over 70% of its CO2 emissions. With such a large disproportion, it has become apparent that the climate emergency needs to be tackled in cities – by, and for, their citizens.</p> <p>What does this mean for the EU? Buildings, transport, food and utilities are its main sources of greenhouse gas emissions, but the numbers vary greatly from one city to the next. Factors including population size, economic performance, urban infrastructures, legal frameworks, and vulnerability to the effects of climate change – flooding, heatwaves, forest fires and extreme weather events – all play a role.</p> <p>While cities are producing more emissions than any other area, they are also the best place to tackle the challenge. Infrastructure density is higher in cities, so there is greater potential for cross-sectoral integration and complex infrastructures such as smart grids. They can also access capital and know-how and can create the economies of scale that are necessary for the piloting and upscaling of new ideas and concepts.</p>	

**6. A CURRENCY IN NATURAL RESOURCES**

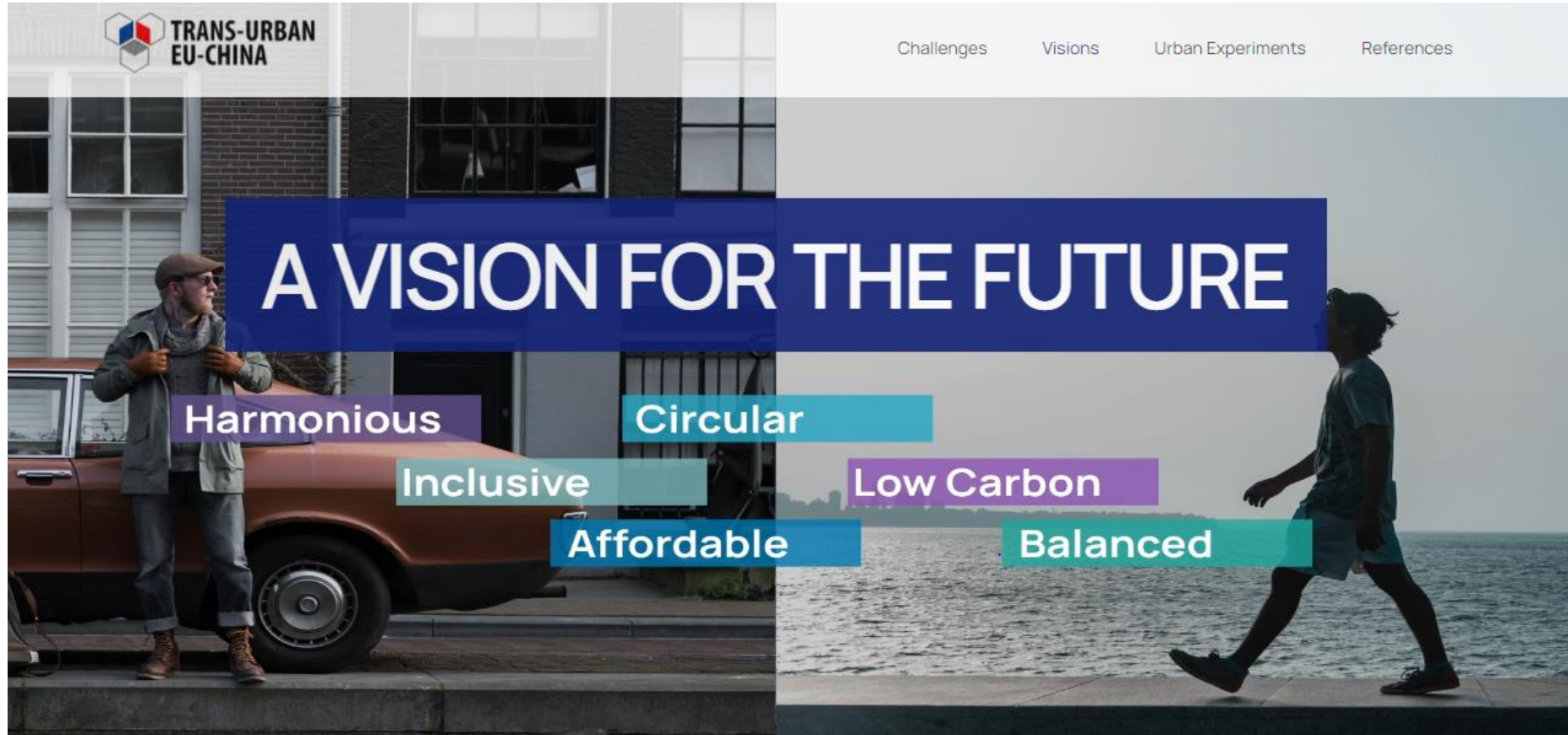
	CHINA		EUROPEAN UNION	
<b>Indicator</b>	<i>In 2010, China generated and treated 158 million tonnes of waste – by 2017, this figure had reached 215 million tonnes</i>		Municipal waste management operations in the EU dropped from 221 million in 2010 to 219 million in 2017	
Waste and waste management operation	<i>2010</i>	<i>2017</i>	2010	2017
	<i>158 million tonnes of waste</i>	<i>215 million tonnes of waste</i>	221 million waste management operations	219 million waste management operations
<b>Challenge</b>	<p><i>Are natural resources the currency that pays for urbanisation? The benefits of development have made themselves clear, but resulting issues surrounding air, water, and waste cannot be ignored.</i></p> <p>Urbanisation is happening at increasing speed in China. One of the results? A significant improvement in urban infrastructure and public services. The coverage and share rate of urban public facilities have both increased greatly: municipal water coverage rose from 53.7% in 1981 to 98.1% in 2015, and the urban wastewater treatment rate jumped from 14.9% in 1991 to 91.9% in 2015 and green coverage rate of built district increased from 16.9% in 1986 to 40.1% in 2015. However, there is a flip side – urbanisation consumes high levels of energy and natural resources. Not only does this mean it is costly, it is also inefficient and has led to a serious deterioration in urban ecology. Air, water, and waste pollution have all become very serious issues in urban China. In February 2012, two-thirds of China’s cities failed to satisfy air quality standards*, and in 2015, more than half of its cities experienced acid rain. The groundwater quality monitoring results of 4110 stations in 182 cities across the country showed that the monitoring points of poor and extremely poor</p>		<p>How does the EU dispose of its millions of tonnes of waste? Ensuring a good quality of life for its growing populations is a complex matter when fuel for the economy is detriment to its natural resources.</p> <p>The EU’s cities are the engines firing its economy. But they depend heavily on non-urban areas to meet their demand for resources – such as energy, water and food; and to dispose of their waste and emissions.</p> <p>The challenge is efficiently managing resources to improve quality of life for a growing economy whilst reducing correlated impacts on the environment. Because those impacts have become apparent. Just one example is that up to 15% of citizens living in EU cities are exposed to PM10 that exceed EU limit value regulations. There are disparities in resource management from place to place within the EU. 67% of waste is recycled or composted in Slovenia, in Malta, it’s 8%. Encouragingly, the EU average is 46% – demonstrating a distinct trend in a move away from landfilling*. The amount of municipal waste per capita per year also varies. In Romania, it’s 261kg opposed to 777kg in Denmark, and an EU average of 483kg.</p> <p>The quality of drinking water is generally very high in the EU – albeit water distribution is expensive. This is especially true in older cities, where water infrastructures are ageing and deteriorating, making leakage management a major challenge.</p>	

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	<p>quality accounted for 40.4% and 16.8%, respectively. China's cities disposed of 215 million of solid waste in 2017 –with an average annual growth rate of 4.8%.</p>	<p>In December 2015, the European Commission adopted a European Union Action Plan for a circular economy, followed by the adoption of a set of measures that support its implementation. This includes ways to integrate legislation on waste, consumer products, and chemicals.</p>
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A VISION FOR THE FUTURE



**1. HOUSING - AFFORDABLE FOR EVERYONE**

	<b>CHINA</b>	<b>EUROPEAN UNION</b>
Actions	<p>In 2008, China implemented an ambitious social housing programme for both rural and urban residents. By 2012, these programmes had addressed the housing needs of 12.5% of total urban households, and government grants for social housing increased from CNY 7 billion to CNY 235 billion.</p> <p>In 2021, China’s 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) started charting China's new journey towards building a fully modern socialist country. The Plan states that, “houses are not for speculation” and aims to “promote the balanced development of the financial and real estate sectors and the real economy”. These measures should ensure that quality become a primary focus, with more real estate built to be lived in and an increase in the supply of affordable housing and rentals.</p> <p>As consequence, it is now reported that China is entering a new era. One of its key goals is for affordable housing, starting in tier-1 cities. China has instructed the governments of Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Fuzhou and Nanning to build more public housing rentals for low-income groups and young people, both of which have found it difficult to own a home in one of the world’s largest housing markets. Ni Hong, the country’s deputy housing minister, said, “Cities with large population inflows and soaring home prices have to strictly implement the policy of developing public rental housing, and adhere to supply targets. Housing for young people and new migrants is a top priority”.</p>	<p>The EU has launched several specific initiatives to promote urban inclusion, including three Partnerships in the Urban Agenda for the EU that focus on urban poverty, housing and inclusion. The European Commission Communication, <i>Renovation Wave</i>, recognises that the COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the great significance of buildings, their importance in our lives, and their fragilities.</p> <p>In line with Green New Deal objectives, the document sets the targets of at least doubling the annual energy renovation rate of residential and non-residential buildings by 2030, and fostering deep energy renovations. One of key principles established in the Renovation Wave is to ensure “affordability” by making sustainable buildings with good energy performance widely available, in particular for medium and lower-income households and areas, as well as vulnerable groups. In light of the COVID-19 housing crisis, the European Parliament Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL) report, <i>Access To Decent And Affordable Housing For All</i>, stresses the need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create an Integrated Strategy for affordable housing by making investment in affordable, social and energy-efficient housing a priority for the EU budget and economic recovery.</li> <li>• Tackle the financialisation of the housing market by evaluating the impacts of EU rules on financialisation. This aims to ensure better transparency on real estate transactions and ownership.</li> <li>• Enact mechanisms to ensure that renovation processes financed by the Renovation Wave do not lead to increased housing costs or gentrification.</li> <li>• Set an EU goal to eradicate homelessness by 2030.</li> </ul> <p>Link <a href="https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/video/I-195844?lg=EN">https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/video/I-195844?lg=EN</a></p>

**2. NEIGHBOURHOODS – INCLUSIVE, NOT LONELY**

	<b>CHINA</b>	<b>EUROPEAN UNION</b>
Actions	<p>China’s 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) aims to optimise the country’s overall economic structure while simultaneously improving people’s living standards. To reach this objective, social governance structures should drive increased participation of citizens in local policies and measures. For example, urban resident committees could play a significant role in improving social cohesion and civil participation in neighbourhoods.</p> <p>Urban resident committees are bottom-level, autonomous organisations comprised of residents that provide assistance on public welfare, civil disputes and public order. These organisations also act as an intermediary with local authorities on matters that affect the local area, and provide a communication channel to those authorities for residents. During the COVID-19 crisis, these committees offered important public welfare assistance, and in the future, they could play an increasing role in enhancing social integration within the framework of urban planning and development of new neighbourhoods.</p>	<p>Social infrastructures are coming to the forefront as key in addressing and preventing some of the most pressing concerns of contemporary urban life in the EU: countering social isolation, negotiating differences, and creating places for all—regardless of age, race, gender, sexuality, or income. Sociologist Eric Klinenberg argues in his 2018 work, <i>Palaces for the People</i>, that a range of infrastructures, such as libraries, parks, sports facilities, schools, and community centres play a vital role in facilitating social connections.</p> <p>The Lonely Places project, run by the European Commission’s Joint Research Centre, studies how loneliness, which is usually associated with individuals, can be applied to places. It looks at the distribution of amenities in cities and how this can contribute to the number of people in a given area at a given time of day or week, and how this affects the vibrancy and vitality of cities.</p> <p>States, cities and regions across the EU have recognised the importance of inclusive, people-centered urban design that promotes diversity and ensures that marginalised groups – be it economically, culturally or technologically – have access to urban opportunities. The New European Bauhaus initiative connects the European Green Deal to our living spaces and establishes a creative and interdisciplinary platform to design new ways of living together. Its overarching goal is to test new sustainable, beautiful and accessible living solutions by bridging the world of science and technology with the world of art and culture.</p> <p>Link: <a href="https://europa.eu/new-european-bauhaus/about/about-initiative_en">https://europa.eu/new-european-bauhaus/about/about-initiative_en</a></p>



### 3. MIGRATION FLOWS – BUILDING A HARMONIOUS NETWORK

	<b>CHINA</b>	<b>EUROPEAN UNION</b>
Actions	<p>China’s 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-2020) includes targets that seek to shift the balance of rural and urban citizens. Its goal is to provide 100 million rural migrants with the right to urban residency or urban Hukou status by 2020. China’s Ministry of Public Security announced that it had issued 28.9 million new urban residency permits in 2016 alone, however, the government recognised the need to deliver a range of supporting policies to achieve its final goal.</p> <p>The 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) continues and intensifies the previous reform of the household registration system (Hukou) and aims to elevate the status and incomes of migrant workers. Barriers within Hukou will aim to be lower, with urban social services more accessible—above all social security, healthcare and education. Some of the measures that will promote the citizenship of the rural population include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make the household registration system more liberal (excluding some areas)</li> <li>• Ensure access to basic urban services for long term residents – instead of only household registered citizens</li> <li>• Develop housing and employment reforms to facilitate integration of migrants into urban life</li> </ul>	<p>A new balance needs to be struck with regards to migration in the EU. Although the cities of the EU continue to attract people in search of work, its natural population is in decline. The EU is taking a fresh stance on migration, with the focus on solidarity and responsibility. Together with liveable, sustainable cities that foster social integration, this may prove to be the cornerstone to building a new, more inclusive sense of network between the EU’s inhabitants.</p> <p>In November 2020, the European Commission presented “The Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion for the Period 2021-2027”. The action plan promotes inclusion for all, and proposes four lines of action that address barriers to participation and inclusion of people with a migrant background, from newcomers to citizens:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education – improved language programmes, educational participation and recognition of qualifications</li> <li>• Employment – increased labour market inclusion, promotion of migrant entrepreneurship and facilitation of assessment and validation of skills</li> <li>• Health – promote migrant access to health services and prevention programmes</li> <li>• Housing – ensure access to adequate and affordable housing and integration services, fight discrimination in housing markets, reduce residential segregation and support autonomous housing schemes for asylum applicants</li> </ul>

**4. URBAN EXPANSION AND RENEWAL – A BALANCED EQUATION**

	<b>CHINA</b>	<b>EUROPEAN UNION</b>
Actions	<p>The promotion of people-centred urbanisation is at the heart of China’s 14<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan (FYP). The 14<sup>th</sup> FYP also calls for the elimination of major demolition and construction, which is a significant source of primary material extraction, energy consumption, and carbon pollution. Instead, it favours the renewal of older neighbourhoods, and previous approaches related to urban expansion, population densities and spatial structures could also be reconsidered.</p> <p>City renewal programmes are being promoted on a nationwide scale in China. In 2017, the government chose 58 pilot cities to trial a transformed approach to urban renewal, with the goal of building enhanced quality – and sustainability. Renewal strategies could help to enhance historical and cultural preservation, and offer opportunities to revitalise old urban residential areas and neighbourhoods.</p> <p>The 14<sup>th</sup> FYP recognises the need to make cities more resilient to climate change, and it supports ecological restoration and the adoption of nature-based solutions, such as restoring the natural flow of rivers to reduce urban flood risk.</p> <p>Reforms to the public finance system should help reduce dependency on land auctioning as a revenue base for local authorities.</p>	<p>The EU is moving briskly forwards with its goals for urban renewal, inclusion of green infrastructures in cities and the improvement of urban-rural links.</p> <p>The European Commission’s <i>Renovation Wave</i> aims to at least double the annual energy renovation rate of residential and non-residential buildings by 2030, with a target of 35 million building units renovated by 2030.</p> <p>The recent COVID-19 pandemic has reiterated the importance of protecting and restoring urban ecosystems and promoting balanced urban-rural developments. The European Commission’s Biodiversity strategy calls on cities with at least 20,000 inhabitants to develop an ambitious Urban Greening Plan by the end of 2021. The plans should include measures to create biodiverse and accessible urban forests, parks and gardens; urban farms; green roofs and walls; tree-lined streets; urban meadows; and urban hedges. To facilitate this work, the Commission will set up an <b>EU Urban Greening Platform</b> in 2021, under a new ‘Green City Accord’ with cities and mayors, working in synergy with the European Covenant of Mayors.</p> <p>Urban renewal and urban greening plans could mobilise policy, as well as regulatory and financial tools. Communities, citizens and other external inputs are crucial to successful, socially integrated urban projects. However, there are still some challenges that need addressing, such as how to involve the broadest possible range of participants.</p>

**5. ENERGY - MAKE IT LOW CARBON**

	<b>CHINA</b>	<b>EUROPEAN UNION</b>
Actions	<p>China has two carbon targets: to hit peak greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2060. In line with these, 14<sup>th</sup> China’s Five-Year Plan (FYP) sets out several important commitments, which are also relevant for urban development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mandating a national standard for energy efficiency that covers products and equipment. This should lead to a 40% reduction in energy related GHG emissions over the next two decades;</li> <li>• Setting national renewable energy at 20% of total use;</li> <li>• Prioritising mitigation efforts to reduce non-CO2 GHG emissions, notably methane and hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs).</li> </ul> <p>These targets will also impact the urban landscape. In the last decade, there have been a total of 1,028 smart city and eco-city construction pilot projects in China, distributed over 193 cities in 31 provinces. 527 of these pilot programmes are closely related to Smart City development, whereas the remainder relate to eco-city development, including the National Garden City, the National Ecological Garden City, the National Climate-Smart City, the National Sponge City and the National Low-Carbon City.</p> <p>Building on this, the 14<sup>th</sup> FYP puts forward multiple actions to promote green urbanisation, including electrification of public transport, expanding urban green spaces, building green corridors, and mandating green building material. Technology and digitalisation will play a key role in the road towards urban carbon neutrality.</p> <p>City councils are also making significant investments in technology – in 2017, pilot projects were launched in more than 500 cities, all of which leveraged digital innovation and intelligent design to help drive sustainability and high quality living. And for cities, going digital is not just about collecting data. Enhancing the way existing urban data is used can provide opportunities for new tools and services that will enhance the way cities are run.</p>	<p>In the last decade, several programmes and initiatives in the EU have demonstrated that it is possible to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions whilst maintaining social and economic sustainability at city level.</p> <p>More than 10,000 cities have signed the European Covenant of Mayors and implemented strategies to reduce GHG emissions by 40% by 2030, and the EU Horizon2020 Programme, Join URBACT III programme, and the Joint Programming Initiative Urban Europe have all financed smart city projects.</p> <p>The H2020 Lighthouse Programme, which asks cities to demonstrate clean mobility solutions, energy-efficient districts with a high share of renewables, and ICT-enabled, smart-integrated infrastructures, has deployed 17 projects backed by EUR 18-25 million in funding. To ensure subsequent replication and scaling-up, a small number of “lighthouse cities” are closely followed by three to five fellow cities. Five years into the programme, there are now a total of 46 lighthouse cities and 70 fellow cities.</p> <p>The EU Mission Board on cities has raised the bar for the next decade, setting the goal of creating 100 Climate-Neutral cities by 2030 – by and for citizens. The aim is for these cities to be experimentation and innovation hubs setting examples for all cities, and leading on the European Green Deal to become climate neutral by 2050. In order to achieve the mission, a multi-level and co-creative process will be formalised in a Climate City Contract. Citizen participation is recognised as crucial, and cities are invited to catalyse and support bottom-up initiatives and new forms of governance.</p>

**6. RESOURCES: A CIRCULAR ECONOMY**

	<b>CHINA</b>	<b>EUROPEAN UNION</b>
Actions	<p>The approval of the Circular Economy Promotion Law by the National People’s Congress in 2008 marked China as a frontrunner in circular economy legislation. The law was primarily focused on traditional 3R solutions (reduce, reuse, and recycle), such as municipal waste management, further use of industrial by-products (industrial symbiosis), and reducing emissions from production processes. The 2017 Circular Development Leading Action Plan builds on this, proposing important steps towards systematically tackling the root causes of environmental and societal externalities.</p> <p>China’s Five-Year Plan demonstrates its will to accelerate a transition from an export-led growth model towards a domestic, consumption-based model. The Plan aims to “boost the modernisation of industrial chains and supply chains, and maintain a stable proportion of the manufacturing sector”.</p> <p>China could become a manufacturing powerhouse, leveraging innovation, technologies, research and connectivity within the manufacturing industry to promote high-quality economic development.</p> <p>The Ellen MacArthur Foundation report, “The circular economy opportunity for urban and industrial innovation in China”, identifies opportunities across five focus areas: built environment, mobility, nutrition, textiles and electronics, showing that applying circular economy principles at scale could save businesses and households approximately CNY 70 trillion by 2040 – 6% of China’s projected GDP. This would enable more of China’s urban dwellers to enjoy a middle-class lifestyle, while at the same time, by 2040, see China’s cities reduce emissions of fine particulate matter by 50%, emissions of greenhouse gases by 23%, and traffic congestion by 47%.</p>	<p>The EU has seen the potential of the circular economy for its cities, and has made the Circular Economy Action Plan a key part of the European Green Deal. This scheme aims to promote circular economy processes, foster sustainable consumption, ensure products that last and reduce waste significantly.</p> <p>According to a recent Eurobarometer survey, the growing amount of waste is a top three environmental concern for citizens. The plan foresees the introduction of measures for waste prevention and reduction, increasing recycled content and minimising waste exports outside the EU. In addition, a EU model for separate collection and labelling of products will be launched. The plan has identified the sectors and measures with the highest potential for circularity, which include electronics and ICT, plastics, textiles, construction and buildings, water and nutrients, and food.</p> <p>In 2020, major cities including Budapest, Copenhagen, Helsinki, Ljubljana, Oslo, Prague and Tirana signed the European Circular Cities Declaration, which recognises the EU’s need to accelerate the transition from a linear to a circular economy. Cities and regions that sign commit to act as ambassadors and champion a circular economy that will lead to a resource-efficient, low-carbon and socially responsible society, in which resource consumption is decoupled from economic growth.</p> <p>In 2021, the European Commission set the circular cities and regions initiative as part of its new circular economy Action Plan. It will fund demonstration projects and circular solutions at local and regional scale and help deliver on the European Green Deal and the EU bio-economy strategy.</p>

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