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Sustainable Accessible Future Environments

T 4.9

**Compile policy recommendations
for urban areas**



SAFE

SUSTAINABLE, ACCESSIBLE FUTURE ENVIRONMENTS

The course is a collaboration between five European Universities

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T4.9 Compile policy recommendations for urban areas

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1 Introduction

This brochure outlines policy recommendations based on the experiences and outcomes of the SAFE Projects. These recommendations were developed as part of Work Package 4, which focuses on future scenarios and guidelines. The purpose of WP4 is to create future visions that provide guidance for stakeholders, offering information on how different actors can influence future developments and proactively create environments that are more equal, inclusive, accessible, and sustainable for citizens, and tourists. These recommendations can be seen as a framework of urban planning. The recommendations support policy development or modification, aiming for alignment with long-term goals such as accessibility, diversity, environmental sustainability, and safety. Policymakers and government officials are the primary audience for these recommendations, as they are key players in shaping policy and infrastructure. These recommendations are informed by various activities within Work Package 4, particularly the outcomes of the Intensive Study Programmes (ISPs) and the case studies, but also by city development plans and studies, and the Scenario Handbook.

2 Policy actions to promote on a local level

The brochure summarises recommendations for all participating cities in alphabetical order. In order to implement policy recommendations effectively, targeted actions must be adapted to the specific local context of each city. Addressing the unique characteristics enables local stakeholders, including government officials, community leaders and residents, to select the appropriate recommendations and adapt them to local needs.



- **Citizen Engagement**

Fostering citizen engagement can create a more inclusive and responsive urban environment. Involving residents in decision-making processes related to accessibility and safety empowers communities to contribute their insights and experiences, ensuring that the implemented measures address actual needs and priorities. This participatory approach allows residents to directly impact the shaping of policies and initiatives that affect their daily lives, fostering a sense of ownership and accountability. Engaging citizens in dialogue about accessibility and safety issues ensures that diverse perspectives are considered, leading to more comprehensive and effective solutions. By actively incorporating resident input into urban planning processes, the relevance and effectiveness of accessibility and safety measures can be significantly improved.

Policy recommendations for citizen engagement

- Involve residents in decision-making processes related to accessibility and safety.
- Organize forums and workshops to encourage open dialogue between residents and policymakers about local accessibility and safety issues, allowing for collaborative problem-solving.
- Provide educational resources on urban planning processes and the importance of their involvement to residents from target groups whose problems are to be solved, empowering them to participate confidently.
- Create an online platform or mobile app (e.g. the Bydgoszcz app) where residents can easily provide feedback and report issues relating to urban planning, safety and accessibility in real time.
- Organise safety walks for residents so they can assess the situation themselves.

- **Community Safety and Security Measures**



Safety and security play a crucial role in shaping the quality of life and overall well-being of communities. Implementing targeted strategies focusing on safety and security can significantly impact these areas, fostering healthier and more supportive environments. Addressing issues such as road offenses, drug use, and crime is essential in areas where these problems are prevalent. Establishing dedicated centers and support facilities, alongside surveillance systems, can provide necessary resources and interventions directly targeting the root causes of crime and addiction. By increasing social services in high-risk areas, communities can offer proactive support to individuals vulnerable to these challenges, thereby reducing the incidence of criminal activities and promoting healthier lifestyles. This approach not only enhances public safety but also aids in the social rehabilitation of affected individuals, contributing to greater community cohesion. Expanding facilities and increasing the presence of street workers can provide essential support for individuals experiencing homelessness, who are often at the intersection of these challenges. Street workers can facilitate access to social services, healthcare, and housing resources, helping individuals navigate their way out of homelessness. By creating a supportive network, communities can address the immediate needs of their most vulnerable residents, reducing the sense of insecurity and isolation that often pervades disadvantaged areas. Focusing on the underlying issues of crime, road offenses, and homelessness, these policies aim to create safer and more secure environments. In tourist areas, strategically increasing the presence of support staff and installing emergency call devices is essential to enhance safety. These measures, complemented by robust surveillance systems, ensure that assistance is readily available when needed, improving response times and increasing the overall sense of security for visitors (Universidad Granada, n.d.).

Policy recommendations for community safety and security measures

- Implement safety measures, including increasing police presence and training staff in assisting groups with special needs.
- Address drug use and crime, including dedicated centres and support facilities, and increase social services in high-risk areas.
- Expand facilities and increase the presence of street workers to provide support and resources for individuals experiencing homelessness.
- Increase the presence of support staff and emergency call devices at strategic points in high-traffic tourist areas.
- Install surveillance systems and implement evacuation plans.

○ Education and Childcare



Childcare and education support are important components for addressing socio-economic disparities in districts with significant migrant populations. Ensuring adequate availability of childcare and kindergarten spaces for all children is fundamental in facilitating early language acquisition and providing opportunities for comprehensive early childhood support. In disadvantaged districts, access to quality childcare and education facilities is crucial for levelling the playing field, particularly for children from migrant families. Early exposure to language learning and educational activities in a structured environment helps bridge language barriers and promotes integration, setting children on a path to academic success and socio-cultural inclusion. Moreover, having reliable childcare enables parents to participate in the workforce or further their education, improving their socio-economic status and contributing to overall

community well-being. It encourages social cohesion by fostering relationships among diverse groups, as children of various backgrounds learn and play together. This integration promotes inclusivity and cultural understanding from an early age, paving the way for a more unified community. Therefore, investing in childcare and education support is essential for the sustainable development of such districts (Moussié 2021, 122-125).

Policy recommendations for education and childcare

- Ensure adequate availability of childcare and kindergarten spaces for all children to facilitate early language acquisition and provide opportunities for comprehensive early childhood support.
- Develop language enrichment programs within childcare settings to support bilingual or multilingual development, catering to children from diverse linguistic backgrounds.
- Implement training programs for early childhood educators that focus on cultural competency and inclusive teaching practices to better support migrant and diverse families.
- Making sure the network of facilities covers different neighbourhoods sufficiently.

○ Housing



Affordable housing is a fundamental component in addressing socio-economic challenges within communities, playing a vital role in enhancing social stability and improving residents' quality of life. Expanding social housing is essential to prevent overcrowding and mitigate high rent prices, which can pressure residents to overextend

their financial resources. This ensures that community members remain part of their neighbourhoods and can invest in their personal development (Koetter; Kumar & Weiss 2021, 3). Maintaining housing conditions that are well-kept and free from issues such as mould is crucial for the health and safety of residents. Poor housing conditions can lead to health problems, increased healthcare costs, and reduced productivity, perpetuating socio-economic disadvantages. High-quality housing allows residents to enjoy healthier living conditions, reducing the public health burden. Affordable housing also enhances social cohesion by preserving community diversity and preventing displacement caused by rising costs. Addressing housing and financial support is essential for promoting community stability and resilience (Landeshauptstadt Kiel 2024, 12). Expanding financial support programs through increased subsidies and co-financing for market rents is particularly significant for individuals and families experiencing financial hardship. This approach alleviates financial pressure on these groups by providing access to affordable housing, allowing them to allocate resources toward other necessities, including education and healthcare. Developing partnerships with private developers to incentivize the construction of non-profit housing is another key strategy for addressing housing shortages. By fostering collaboration between the public and private sectors, communities can expedite the development of affordable housing options that meet their needs. Non-profit housing provisions offer long-term solutions that stabilize local populations, prevent displacement, and uphold the community's social fabric (Koetter; Kumar & Weiss 2021, 5).

Policy recommendations for housing

- Expand financial support programs by increasing subsidies and co-financing for market rents, particularly targeting young people and families in financial hardship.
- Develop partnerships with private developers to incentivize the construction of non-profit housing and mitigate housing shortages.
- Expand social housing to prevent overcrowding and high rent prices.
- Ensure that housing conditions are well-maintained, free from issues such as mould, to provide healthy living environments for residents.

○ Inclusive Tourism



Incorporating inclusive tourism into urban development is essential for promoting equity and ensuring equal access to cultural and recreational activities for a wide range of individuals, including those with disabilities, neurodiverse individuals, families with children, and elderly people. Ensuring that tourist attractions have physical infrastructure modifications, such as ramps, elevators, and accessible restrooms, is crucial to accommodate mobility-impaired visitors. Implementing guided tours and personalized services at tourist attractions represents a strategic initiative to provide all visitors, including those with specific needs, with a cohesive and informative experience (Verma 2024, 259). These services are designed to address the diverse requirements of visitors, facilitating their engagement with various attractions. Additionally, collaborating with healthcare providers to establish first aid points and medical services

at tourist sites is a proactive measure to enhance safety and mitigate health risks for everyone. By integrating medical support within tourist areas, health concerns can be addressed efficiently, creating a safer and more welcoming environment for all visitors. Such initiatives underscore a commitment to accessibility and equality, aiming to develop a tourism landscape that accommodates the needs of diverse populations. The adoption of these strategies not only enhances the overall quality of the visitor experience but also strengthens the principles of inclusivity and community well-being, positioning the area as a model destination for accessible travel (Vantaa master plan 2020, 13).

Policy recommendations for inclusive tourism

- Ensure that tourist attractions have physical infrastructure modifications, such as ramps, elevators, and accessible restrooms, to accommodate mobility-impaired visitors.
- Cooperate with healthcare providers to establish first aid points and medical services across tourist sites, enhancing safety and minimizing health risks.
- Develop easy-to-read materials and multilingual guides to ensure all visitors, including those with language or literacy challenges, can access information about the attractions and services available.
- Establish family-friendly amenities, such as stroller-compatible paths and child-friendly zones, to support families visiting with young children.
- Offer accessible and reliable transportation options to and from tourist sites, equipped with features for managing mobility impairments, families with children and sensory-friendly environments for neurodiverse individuals.

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- **Information and Technology**

Advancements in information and technology are vital for enhancing accessibility and ensuring an inclusive experience for all. With regard to the inhabitants, efforts to enhance digital inclusion focus on broadening access to technology and improving digital literacy across communities. Establishing digital literacy programs and technology training at smart community centres is crucial to ensure all residents, particularly seniors, are equipped with essential skills to effectively utilize digital tools in today's digital age. Expanding remote health services and creating virtual care hubs is important for improving healthcare accessibility, allowing convenient access to medical resources without geographical limitations. Additionally, transforming vacant properties into multifunctional community centres that offer tech training, co-working spaces, and support for intergenerational programs is a strategic approach to revitalizing unused spaces and fostering a community-centric approach to digital learning and collaboration. These initiatives collectively aim to bridge the digital divide, ensuring equitable access to technology and promoting digital engagement for all residents (Casado-Aranda et al. 2022).

In cities dependent on tourism accessible tourist information through applications featuring easy-to-read content, interactive maps, and audio guides is essential in making cultural heritage more available to a diverse audience. These digital tools cater to various needs by providing clear and user-friendly access to information. Implementing information panels with tactile maps, Braille signage, and other accessible formats further supports individuals with visual impairments or other disabilities, allowing them to navigate and engage with tourist sites independently (ibid 2022).

Policy recommendations for Information and technology

- Develop accessible tourist information through applications with easy-to-read content, interactive maps, and audio guides.
- Implement information panels with tactile maps, Braille signage, and other accessible formats.
- Develop and implement digital literacy programs and tech training at smart community centres to ensure all residents, especially seniors, can effectively use digital tools.
- Repurpose vacant properties into multifunctional community centres that provide tech training, co-working spaces, and support intergenerational programs.

○ Infrastructure



Infrastructural development is crucial for enhancing accessibility, safety, and community interaction through strategic urban planning initiatives (Nieuwenhuijsen et al. 2023, 247). The creation of pedestrian-friendly spaces, equipped with improved street lighting, plays a fundamental in boosting safety and mobility. This development encourages interaction among residents of diverse backgrounds, fostering a sense of community and belonging by ensuring that public areas are both secure and welcoming. Establishing barrier-free zones throughout urban environments is vital for ensuring that individuals with disabilities can fully participate in community life. By removing physical barriers, cities can demonstrate their commitment to inclusivity, allowing individuals with varying needs to navigate their environment with independence and comfort. Efforts to enhance inclusivity involve reducing noise pollution, minimizing car traffic, and expanding bike lanes while creating car-free zones. These measures contribute to a

more relaxed urban experience by improving environmental quality and providing safe spaces for cultural and social engagement. Upgrades to bus stops, including the addition of shelters and seating, offer protection from weather conditions and ensure comfort for elderly and disabled individuals while waiting for public transportation (Peña-García et al. 2025, 143). This consideration for diverse mobility needs highlights the importance of an inclusive infrastructure. Furthermore, strategic investments in infrastructure, such as the construction of barrier-free paths and ramps, and the creation of more accessible facilities, remove fundamental barriers to mobility and facilitate equal participation in urban life. Increasing the availability of lifts and seating improves accessibility, comfort, and inclusion by meeting different mobility needs. The development of clear signage, safe pathways, rest areas, and more public toilets reinforces a commitment to creating inclusive and user-friendly environments, ensuring that all individuals can explore and enjoy urban spaces independently and confidently. Improving public transport accessibility, incorporating innovations such as voice-controlled timetables and tactile navigation systems, enhances the usability of transit services for individuals with varying needs. Universal design principles in public areas, such as adaptive street lighting, further enhance accessibility and safety for all pedestrians. These infrastructural improvements consider modern accessibility requirements while preserving the historical character of places, ensuring a balance between tradition and modernity in urban environments (Nieuwenhuijsen et al. 2024, 247).

Policy recommendations for Infrastructure

- Enhance street lighting and install intelligent lighting systems.
- Upgrade bus stops to include shelters and seating, providing protection from the weather and offering a place for elderly and disabled individuals to rest while waiting for buses.
- Invest in innovations for public transport, such as voice-controlled timetables and tactile navigation systems.

- Improve public transport accessibility for visually impaired individuals through better signage, audio announcements, and on-board assistance features.
- Increase the availability of low-floor and barrier-free vehicles.
- Ensure city buildings are accessible to individuals with reduced mobility by installing elevators and ramps.
- Establish barrier-free spaces throughout the entire city district to ensure accessibility for individuals with disabilities.
- Promote inclusivity and reduce noise pollution by minimizing car traffic, expanding bike lanes, and establishing car-free zones.
- Adapt cobbled streets with improved paving and install accessible ramps while maintaining the historic aesthetics of the area, when necessary.



○ **Public Spaces**

Public spaces play a crucial role in shaping the accessibility, safety, and inclusivity of urban environments. Limited or no restroom accessibility can lead to discomfort for many individuals, including women, the elderly, and those with health concerns. This issue is especially pressing for trans, intersex, and non-binary individuals, who may face critical situations and risks of misunderstanding, hostility, or even violence due to a lack of all-gender toilets in public spaces. The absence of designated safe spaces for the LGBTIQ+ community further underscores a city's commitment to inclusivity. Without such spaces, members of the LGBTIQ+ community may feel unable to express themselves freely, facing potential judgment or violence. Ensuring the safety of women and girls in public spaces is critical. Specific design features can significantly enhance their safety and security. Thoughtfully designed public spaces can promote safety and inclusivity for all users. Essential features of these spaces include easy access and movement within the area, adequate lighting to ensure visibility, and clear, user-friendly

signage. Open, well-maintained paths encourage interaction and visibility, reducing potential hiding spots and fostering a sense of security. Offering a variety of uses attracts diverse groups throughout the day, with areas for socializing, walking, playing, eating, and exercising. Additionally, these designs consider seasonal needs, providing shade in summer and protection from the cold in winter. Understanding the caregiving often assumed by women, these spaces are well-equipped for young children and the elderly, incorporating wide, low sidewalks for strollers, wheelchairs, and walkers, and zones with slow-moving traffic for safety. Access to clean, secure, and easily accessible toilet facilities, including those suitable for changing children's diapers, underscores the importance of these comprehensive considerations (UN-Habitat, 2012, pp. 47-48).

Policy recommendations for public spaces

- Install all-gender restrooms in public spaces to ensure accessibility and safety for trans, intersex, and non-binary individuals.
- Create versatile spaces that accommodate diverse activities throughout the day to attract various user groups.
- Ensure public spaces are inclusive for children, elderly individuals and people with special needs with sidewalks and traffic zones designed to accommodate strollers, wheelchairs, and walkers.
- Prioritize cleanliness and accessibility of public restroom facilities to meet the needs of all users, including families with young children.
- Include gender-sensitive policies in urban planning to address specific safety concerns of women and girls.
- Implement emergency systems and dedicated safe zones for immediate assistance.



- **Sustainability**

Waste reduction, green spaces, and urban gardening collectively play a pivotal role in enhancing the quality of life and promoting sustainability within communities. Efficient waste management, such as timely rubbish collection, is crucial for controlling rodent infestations and improving public health and hygiene (Zaman & Lehmann 2011, 177). These practices minimize disease transmission risks and unpleasant odors, thereby contributing to a cleaner and safer environment for all residents. Holding landlords accountable for implementing rat-safe rubbish disposal methods, through the use of secure bins and maintaining clean communal areas, encourages responsible practices, which is reinforced by fines for non-compliance to ensure adherence to health and safety standards. Beyond immediate health benefits, waste reduction fosters community spirit and a shared commitment to sustainability, encouraging community-led environmental initiatives (ibid, 179). Simultaneously, the development and maintenance of green spaces and urban gardening can significantly mitigate urban heat through the reduction of the urban heat island effect. By implementing these green solutions, cities can reduce ambient temperatures, lower energy consumption, and foster biodiversity, enhancing the quality of urban life. Sustainability is essential for developing diverse, inclusive urban environments that are livable and equitable. Investments in modernizing water treatment and drainage systems enhance water quality and reduce pollution from agricultural and industrial activities, protecting environmental resources and ensuring access to clean, safe water for all, which is crucial for health and well-being. Traffic reduction strategies, such as promoting public transportation and establishing pedestrian zones, further reduce vehicle emissions and improve air quality (Umoh 2024, 85). These measures mitigate pollution-related health impacts, especially for vulnerable populations, and improve accessibility, supporting diverse transportation needs. Overall, sustainability initiatives that integrate waste reduction, green spaces, and urban gardening create urban spaces that are environmentally robust and socially equitable, providing all residents with a high quality of life. Integrating sustainable practices in city planning facilitates the inclusion and

participation of diverse populations in urban life, while simultaneously supporting community cohesion and environmental stewardship (Koprivnikar 2024, 23).

Policy recommendations for sustainability

- Develop and implement traffic reduction strategies, such as promoting public transportation and setting up pedestrian zones to reduce vehicle emissions and improve air quality.
- In order to reduce urban heat and enhance liveability, more green areas should be developed in the city.
- Enhance waste management practices by ensuring that rubbish is collected within a 48-hour timeframe to maintain hygiene and cleanliness.
- Enforce landlord accountability for implementing rat-safe rubbish disposal methods, applying fines as necessary for non-compliance to encourage adherence to health and safety standards.

3Conclusion

The policy recommendations presented in this brochure form a strategic framework for developing sustainable, inclusive, and accessible urban environments. While these guidelines are designed to be universal, they are informed by the examples of five European cities: Kiel, Bydgoszcz, Vantaa, Ljubljana, and Granada. By focusing on critical areas such as infrastructure development, safety improvements, economic growth, and community engagement, these recommendations aim to elevate the quality of life for all residents. Addressing challenges like housing shortages, social exclusion, and digital barriers, the guidelines provide cities with targeted strategies to build inclusive

communities. These efforts stress the importance of prioritizing safety, accessibility, diversity, and environmental sustainability within urban planning processes. By adopting these comprehensive recommendations, cities can enhance accessibility and effectively address the diverse needs of their populations, thereby fostering urban spaces that are resilient and adaptive to future demands. These efforts underscore the importance of collaborative, forward-thinking urban planning in achieving sustainable growth and development.

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