



The Bursa Commitment

*Adopted by the mayors and political leaders
of the WHO European Healthy Cities Network
at the launch of phase VIII (2026-2030)*





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Background

The Bursa Commitment builds on the legacy of the Copenhagen Consensus of Mayors (2018) by reaffirming the values of peace, equity, inclusion and sustainability while adapting them to today's complex realities. Grounded in the experience of cities over the past five years – including the COVID-19 pandemic, rising inequalities, geopolitical instability and accelerating climate risks – this commitment reflects the evolving role of local governments and cities as frontline leaders. It refines the existing topics from Phase VII and introduces new topics aligned with Phase VIII of the WHO European Healthy Cities Network, emphasizing preparedness, digital transformation, gender equality and the transition to well-being economies. This is a call to collective local and regional action – deepening the shared vision of thriving, resilient and fairer cities for all.

It introduces forward-looking priorities aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals, the WHO Fourteenth General Programme of Work, the WHO European Framework for Action on Emergency Preparedness and Response (WHO Preparedness 2.0 Strategy), and the region's Second European Programme of Work 2026–2030: United Action for Better Health. As cities move into Phase VIII of the WHO European Healthy Cities Network, the Bursa Commitment provides a clear political mandate for transformative, locally led action – rooted in community needs and supported by integrated planning across sectors. Aligning city development strategies to produce health and well-being as shared outcomes in everyday life is central to this vision.

At the same time, we acknowledge that cities operate within broader governance and policy systems. In many cases, national governments play an important enabling role in supporting local implementation – through legislation, regulatory frameworks and financial resources. Recognizing the shared responsibility and importance of alignment across levels of government would further strengthen the political foundation of the Bursa Commitment and its potential for sustained impact. We emphasize the value of national policies that promote, support and enable action for health and well-being at the local level. Strengthening this shared commitment can help advance coordinated progress and create the conditions needed for inclusive and sustainable urban development.

The Bursa Commitment reflects the outcome of a consultative process involving a group of mayors who participated in our last Annual Business Meeting and Technical Conference, held in June 2025 in Bursa, Turkey. The purpose of this consultation was to align on the new values and priorities that will guide the work of the WHO European Healthy Cities Network in its upcoming work cycle known as Phase VIII which will begin in January 2026.

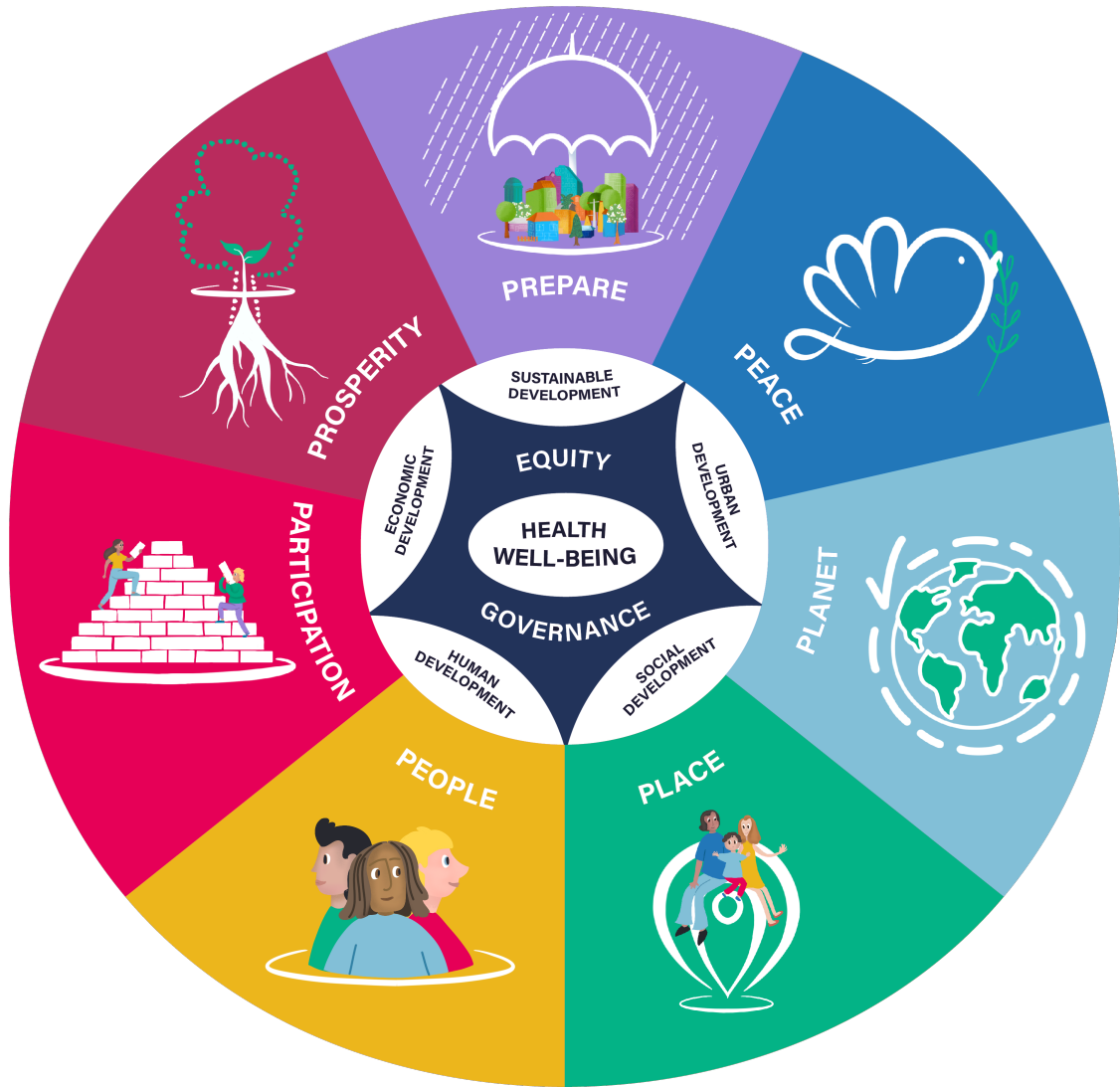
Preamble

We, the mayors and political leaders of the WHO European Healthy Cities Network, convened in Bursa, Türkiye, on 17 June 2025 at the launch of Phase VIII of our shared journey, reaffirm our commitment to building thriving, inclusive and sustainable cities in which everyone can live with dignity and well-being. Building on the legacy of Phase VII and the Copenhagen Consensus of Mayors, the Bursa Commitment signals our collective action for a transformative new phase.

Guided by seven interlinked themes—People, Place, Participation, Prosperity, Peace, Planet, and Preparedness— we are laying the foundations for cities that can thrive in the face of future challenges, while ensuring the health, equity, and well-being of generations to come (see Fig. 1).

- ▲ We affirm that people are the foundation of thriving cities. We are committed to supporting individuals and communities – regardless of age, gender, background or circumstance – to live with dignity, enjoy good health and contribute meaningfully to society. Cities will lead the way in ensuring access to health and well-being through adapted services and opportunities across the life-course, preventing discrimination and social exclusion.
- ▲ We affirm that the places we design reflect the societies we aspire to build. Cities have the power to foster well-being by creating healthy, inclusive, sustainable and resilient environments in which people of all ages and backgrounds can live with access to culture, nature and a healthy environment that prevents pollution exposure and enhances biodiversity. Through thoughtful planning, we can reduce environmental inequalities, strengthen community connection and ensure that all residents feel safe, welcome and supported.
- ▲ We, as mayors and political leaders, recognize that inclusive participation and meaningful partnerships are essential to building trust and strengthening democracy and are determinants for health and well-being. When people are given a voice in shaping the decisions that affect their lives – and when local governments collaborate across sectors and communities – cities become more resilient, responsive and equitable. We commit to creating physical and virtual spaces and systems that welcome participation, include a diversity of people and build lasting partnerships for shared progress.
- ▲ We, as mayors and political leaders, recognize that true prosperity is not only measured in economic growth but also in the health, opportunity and dignity of all our residents. A well-being economy puts people and planet first – giving priority to equity, sustainability and community well-being. Cities are uniquely positioned to enhance this shift by fostering inclusive growth, supporting local public services and stakeholders, supporting meaningful employment and working towards economic systems that contribute to health, cohesion and shared success.

Fig. 1. Seven core themes (7 P's) of the framework for Phase VIII of the WHO European Healthy Cities Network



- ▲ We, as city leaders, recognize that peace is built through inclusion, justice and environments in which everyone feels safe and belongs. Cities have a unique responsibility to build environments in which everyone feels included, respected and valued. By ensuring inclusive governance, preventing violence and strengthening community ties, we commit to advancing human security, protecting fundamental rights and creating space for dialogue and healing. We recognize how conflict, displacement and migration affect communities and commit to fostering peace-building efforts that support integration, reconciliation and social cohesion. We will combat discrimination, injustice and violence in all forms.
- ▲ We, as city leaders, acknowledge that the health of people and the health of our planet are interconnected. With cities responsible for the majority of global emissions and vulnerable to the growing risks of climate change, we have both the duty and the opportunity to lead transformative action. Through sustainable urban development, innovation and community-led solutions, we will protect natural ecosystems and support access for everyone, preserve biodiversity and safeguard the well-being of current and future generations.
- ▲ We, as city leaders, have witnessed first-hand how crises – whether health-related, environmental or humanitarian – disrupt progress, widen inequalities and test the strength of our communities. We commit to building cities that actively prepare for crises, are responsive in the face of disruption and resilient in recovery, with systems in place to protect the most vulnerable people and ensure the continuity of care and essential services and inclusion. By investing in preparedness, risk communication and coordinated response mechanisms, we can reduce harm and build trust in times of uncertainty.

We recognize that realizing this vision requires integrated strategies that are grounded in the lived realities and priorities of local communities, ensuring that policies and plans are aligned to deliver well-being outcomes at the local level.

1. Investing in the people who make up our cities

A healthy city leads by example by focusing on its people and giving priority to their well-being and quality of life through efforts that promote equity.

We will advance health and well-being by addressing the social, commercial and environmental determinants of health. We commit to taking people-centred action through the following actions.

- 1.1** Investing in early childhood care, education and family support to ensure that all children have the best possible start in life. Our cities will be places where every child can grow up healthy, safe and supported.
- 1.2** Strengthening policies that promote active ageing and removing age-related barriers to health and social services. Cities will be spaces in which older adults can age with dignity, inclusion and continued participation in community life.
- 1.3** Expanding opportunities for young people to lead, learn and work through education, mentorship and employment initiatives. Young people's voices will be heard and valued in shaping our cities' futures.
- 1.4** Promoting mental health services in community settings such as schools, homes and social spaces. Cities will work across sectors to create supportive environments that reduce stigma and promote emotional well-being.
- 1.5** Implementing policies that promote healthy living, regulate harmful products and protect children from targeted marketing is central to preventing noncommunicable diseases. Cities should take responsibility for creating environments that reduce exposure to tobacco, alcohol, poor nutrition and physical inactivity.
- 1.6** Giving priority to investment in housing, health care, education, sustainable transport, food security and decent employment. Cities will act boldly to break cycles of poverty and support all residents in living healthy, secure lives.
- 1.7** Advancing gender-responsive policies that uphold bodily autonomy, promote safety and ensure equal access to services and decision-making. Our cities will be safe, inclusive and empowering for women, men and gender-diverse people.



2. Designing urban places that improve health and well-being

A healthy city leads by example by shaping its social, physical and cultural environments to be inclusive and sustainable and to support the health and well-being of all.

We believe that the places where people live, move and gather will reflect our shared values of health, dignity and inclusion. We commit to aligning local development strategies across departments and transforming urban environments through the following actions.

- 2.1** Protecting and expanding access to green and blue spaces as essential for health, climate resilience and community well-being. These spaces will be designed for all residents to enjoy and benefit from, regardless of where they live.
- 2.2** Investing in public transport, walking and cycling infrastructure to support healthy, affordable and sustainable mobility for all. Our transport systems will connect people safely to services, opportunity and each other.
- 2.3** Adapting public infrastructure and services to support older adults to remain active, independent and socially connected. In accordance with WHO's eight interconnected domains of age-friendly policies and practices, we commit to creating enabling environments in which people can age with dignity, inclusion and care.
- 2.4** Designing child-friendly neighbourhoods that foster safety, play and early development. Children will feel protected and valued in the cities they call home.

- 2.5** Giving priority to access to high-quality, safe and affordable housing as a basis for public health and social inclusion. Housing policies will be responsive to the varied needs of residents across all life stages and circumstances.
- 2.6** Strengthening neighbourhood safety by investing in inclusive design and engaging local communities in reimagining public spaces. Everyone deserves to feel secure and welcome in the places in which they live and gather.
- 2.7** Investing in cultural, recreational, virtual and community spaces that promote creativity, belonging and healthy lifestyles. These spaces will reflect the identity of our communities and contribute to collective well-being.
- 2.8** Embedding universal design principles into all aspects of urban development to ensure accessibility, independence and inclusion for all. Public spaces will work for everyone – with particular attention to people who have historically faced barriers or felt unsafe, including women and girls, older adults and people with disabilities.
- 2.9** Implementing proactive measures to prevent injuries in public and private spaces, including roads, homes and workplaces. Cities will lead in creating environments that protect the safety and lives of all residents.



3. Promoting greater participation and partnerships for health and well-being

A healthy city leads by example by ensuring that all individuals and communities can meaningfully participate in decisions that affect them and the places in which they live, work, love and play. This includes fostering diverse and inclusive forms of participation that reflect different voices and experiences while building partnerships that strengthen collective action for health and well-being.

We believe that true participation means more than being heard – it means having power to shape decisions and spaces that reflect our shared values of equity, dignity and belonging. We commit to our collective action through the following actions.

- 3.1** Strengthening civic engagement by creating inclusive opportunities for all residents – especially young people, women and marginalized groups – to participate in local decision-making. Cities will reflect the voices and values of their people.
- 3.2** Championing cultural and recreational initiatives that promote belonging, celebrate diversity and support mental and social well-being. Art, culture and creativity are powerful platforms for inclusion and community healing.
- 3.3** Creating and supporting platforms that bring together communities, civil society, businesses and public institutions to co-create solutions. Effective governance relies on structured and ongoing collaboration across sectors and disciplines.

- 3.4** Facilitating the exchange of good practices across cities to foster peer learning, inspire innovation and amplify the impact of effective local policies. Sharing what works can build momentum, motivate leaders and strengthen the collective capacity of the healthy cities movement.
- 3.5** Nurturing inclusive communities in which everyone – especially newcomers and marginalized groups – feels valued, connected and safe. Intercultural dialogue, mentorship and local support networks will be key to this effort.
- 3.6** Engaging residents in identifying and shaping priorities related to housing, mobility and local infrastructure to ensure that city planning reflects community needs and aspirations.
- 3.7** Promoting accessible, culturally relevant communication to improve health and digital literacy and support informed decisions. Cities will equip people with the information they need to stay safe, healthy and engaged.
- 3.8** Deepening community-building and transparent governance to strengthen trust between residents and institutions. Social trust is essential to public health, collective action and the resilience of our cities.



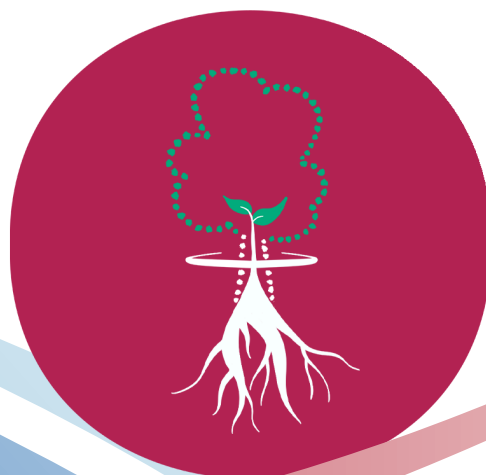
4. Advancing community prosperity through a well-being economy

A healthy city leads by example by promoting an economy that serves people's well-being and not just financial growth.

Recognizing that economic choices reflect our values, we commit to advancing an inclusive economy that is powered by the people and serves the planet through the following actions.

- 4.1** Broadening access to education and training that prepares people of all ages for meaningful participation in society and the economy throughout their lives. Learning will be accessible, inclusive and aligned with local opportunities and community needs, enabling individuals to grow, adapt and contribute at every stage of life.
- 4.2** Promoting decent, stable and fairly paid work that supports health, dignity and security. Cities will play a leading role in supporting fair employment and inclusive local growth.
- 4.3** Promote access to decent housing for everyone, including by adapted programmes for renting and investment for people with low income, to prevent the gentrification of cities.
- 4.4** Reinforcing social protection systems that safeguard residents during times of crisis or transition. Everyone should have access to basic supports such as food, housing and health care when they need them most.

- 4.5** Innovating and adopting new economic models that promote sustainability, equity and long-term well-being. Cities will be bold in rethinking how economic development can serve both people and the planet, achieving health and well-being through approaches such as the circular economy, the silver economy and the green economy.
- 4.6** Closing gender gaps in employment and income by supporting inclusive hiring, affordable childcare and women-led enterprises. Shared prosperity will be built on fairness, opportunity and participation.
- 4.7** Regulating harmful commercial practices and incentivizing those that protect and promote public health. Cities will act to ensure that local markets and business environments contribute to community well-being and sustainability.
- 4.8** Realigning public investment and procurement policies with the values of equity, sustainability and health. Public resources will be directed toward outcomes that advance social value and long-term well-being for our communities.
- 4.9** Strengthening political leadership and internal coordination to give priority to healthy city work, including by allocating the time, resources and visibility needed to sustain and scale well-being initiatives across departments at the local level.



5. Promoting peace and security through inclusive societies

A healthy city recognizes that fostering peace and security is a continuous process built through inclusive policies, strong social connections and actions that promote safety, trust and community resilience. From our local efforts to global solidarity, we will foster environments in which everyone feels safe, valued and at home.

We are committed to advancing local policies and partnerships that prevent harm, resolve conflict and protect the well-being of all residents through the following actions.

- 5.1** Creating safe urban environments and providing survivor-centred services for the people affected by gender-based violence. Our cities will lead in prevention, protection and behavioural and cultural change to end gender-based violence in all its forms.
- 5.2** Protecting children through policies and programmes that promote safety at home, at school and in virtual and public spaces. Every child has the right to grow up free from violence, harm and fear.
- 5.3** Addressing discrimination and organized crime through fair laws, trusted institutions and inclusive enforcement. Cities will invest in restorative and preventive approaches that focus on healing, accountability and reducing harm.

- 5.4** Protecting women and survivors of domestic violence through adequate services, community support, legal and psychological support and housing solutions for them and their children and supporting women's expression and inclusion in policy-making processes and other city activities.
- 5.5** Advancing collaboration between cities, international partners and civil society to advance shared solutions for peace and sustainability. Local diplomacy and partnership are critical to building bridges and responding to global challenges.
- 5.6** Cultivating social cohesion and dialogue across diverse communities to prevent tensions and foster peaceful transitions. Cities will be spaces in which people can listen, reconcile and shape the future together.
- 5.7** Creating pathways for migrants and displaced people by ensuring access to shelter, services and opportunities for integration. Our cities will be welcoming places in which human rights and dignity are upheld for everyone, regardless of status.
- 5.8** Honouring recovery, remembrance and community-led reconciliation is critical after conflict or trauma. Healing will be part of our public commitment to justice, peace and rebuilding trust.



6. Protecting the planet from degradation

A healthy city leads by example by placing environmental protection at the heart of all its policies and actions, recognizing the interconnectedness of human, animal, and environmental health through a One Health approach.

Recognizing our shared responsibility to future generations, we commit to implementing policies that restore and protect ecosystems, reduce pollution and integrate environmental justice through the following actions.

- 6.1** Integrating climate resilience into urban design and planning and social protection plans to protect communities from extreme weather, floods and heat and to protect vulnerable and isolated people. Our cities will be built to withstand and adapt to the realities of a changing climate.
- 6.2** Using smart technologies to monitor and manage environmental risks, resources and emissions. Digital tools will support transparency, efficiency and climate-conscious decision-making to protect our planet and future generations.
- 6.3** Scaling up green infrastructure and ecological restoration to protect biodiversity and support ecosystems. Cities will champion nature-based solutions that benefit both people and the planet.
- 6.4** Mobilizing communities to lead local climate and environmental initiatives, from urban gardens to waste reduction. Shared stewardship builds stronger cities and deeper public commitment to sustainability, drawing on local knowledge, lived experience and cultural practices to shape just and inclusive environmental action.

- 6.5** Taking bold steps to reduce air pollution through cleaner transport, greener streets and regulatory measures that reduce emissions and protect public health. Cities will work towards a future in which breathing clean air is a basic right.
- 6.6** Driving circular economy solutions that reduce waste, encourage recycling and limit reliance on landfills. Cities will lead by example in reducing consumption and valuing resources.
- 6.7** Safeguarding water, sanitation and hygiene services through sustainable infrastructure and responsible water use. Every resident will have access to clean water and a healthy environment.
- 6.8** Supporting local food systems that reduce emissions, increase food security and promote healthy diets. Cities can strengthen community resilience through urban farming, reducing food waste and sustainable procurement.




7. Building resilient cities to prepare for, prevent and respond to health crises and emergencies

A healthy city leads by example by being forward-looking, building resilience to effectively prepare for, prevent and respond to health crises and emergencies, safeguarding the well-being of all residents.

As city leaders, we recognize our responsibility to build resilient communities that are prepared not only for emergencies but also for a healthier and more secure future through the following actions.

- 7.1** Strengthening local preparedness plans through cross-sector coordination, regular risk assessment and sustained investment in public health infrastructure. Cities will be ready to act early and effectively to protect their populations from pandemics and other public health threats.
- 7.2** Developing real-time monitoring and digital tools to detect and respond to emerging threats, including those driven by climate change. Reliable, secure health data systems are vital to rapid and coordinated emergency response.
- 7.3** Safeguarding the continuity of essential health, food and social services continues during crises, especially for vulnerable people. Strong supply chains and integrated care systems will ensure that no one is left behind.
- 7.4** Empowering communities to co-design and contribute to public health responses, supported by timely, transparent and culturally appropriate risk communication. Building trust and local ownership will be central to emergency preparedness.
- 7.5** Equipping and protecting health-care workers through comprehensive training, adequate resources and access to mental health services. A resilient emergency workforce will be at the heart of effective local response.
- 7.6** Integrating mental health and psychosocial support into all stages of emergency preparedness and response. Crises affect emotional well-being as much as physical health, and our cities will be ready to respond to both.





The Bursa Commitment reaffirms our collective responsibility to lead with vision and purpose in realizing the goals of Phase VIII of the WHO European Healthy Cities Network. As mayors and local leaders, we recognize the urgency and opportunity of this moment. We are ready to navigate megatrends, from climate change to demographic shifts, by championing policies and actions that are adaptive, equitable and resilient. Through the lens of the seven themes of people, place, participation, prosperity, peace, planet and preparedness, we commit to act collectively with other cities across the WHO European Region and globally to future-proof our cities, drive progress on the Sustainable Development Goals and strengthen local systems to protect health and well-being for current and future generations.