



Municipalize Europe!



**If we're capable
of imagining a different
Europe, we have the
power to make it happen.**

We're living in a Europe held hostage by fear. The European population are feeling, in our daily lives, the effects of years of open attack on rights and freedoms. Evictions, precarious work, utility cut-offs, unpaid care work. Over 116 million people live at risk of poverty in Europe today.

Without a doubt, the most worrying consequence of this state of insecurity is the rise of the far right across the continent. The parties of Salvini, Orbán and Le Pen are taking advantage of people's legitimate fears with a xenophobic narrative that turns migrants into the scapegoats of every problem. The so-called 'refugee crisis', and the death of thousands of people at Europe's borders, is nothing less than a genocide perpetrated in our name.

In the face of this monster that is advancing in the face of a passive EU and national governments, our best response is to create solidarity, community and hope from the bottom up, through municipalism. From large cities like Barcelona, Madrid and Naples, to smaller municipalities like Carcaboso, Saillans and Riace,

we're proving through action that there is an alternative that can improve people's lives. That we can uncover corruption, stop evictions and improve working conditions. And, above all, that it's at local level that we can best create collective identities, and models of citizenship, that go beyond national and ethnic logics.

But we know that we can't solve all our problems at local level. The challenges and adversaries of municipalism cross borders and, as such, require joint responses. That's why Barcelona En Comú works to create networks of collaboration among municipalist movements around the world.

At the same time, it's clear that European politics has a direct impact at local level, and that it affects our ability to win battles like the right to housing, the democratic management of the commons and improving working conditions.

In this regard, the European elections of May 2018 are a great opportunity to take the voice of our neighbourhoods and municipalities to the European Parliament and put our priorities on the table. But the battle won't be easy; the lobbies will keep pressuring for the status quo and the far right is mobilizing to increase its numbers in the institutions. We can't allow it.

Municipalists have the responsibility to continue to take an active role in the fight against fascism. We don't have all the answers, but in recent years we've learned that we have more power than we were made to believe. We know there's an alternative. And we've proved that it's through small victories that we can build another Europe. A Europe that overcomes the old logics of the nation state. A Europe that defends life and the common good. That's why we're sharing our municipalist agenda for a Fearless Europe.

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From the neighbourhoods to Europe

In a EU created by and for national governments, it's essential that municipalist priorities are listened to. We'll amplify the values and demands of Cities of Change in the European Parliament and call for more and better mechanisms to represent towns, cities and regions in European decision-making processes.

"Manuel Valls is Le Pen's greatest victory; he bought the political agenda of the French far right."

Miguel Urban, MEP

Cities vs Lobbies

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The institutions of the EU are opaque and tend to respond to the interests of lobbies. We'll uncover and denounce the activity of companies in Brussels that operate in our cities, calling for a compulsory register of lobbies, transparency of meetings and democratic oversight of European institutions.

"In Barcelona we've approved a code of conduct and created an office of transparency and a whistleblowing platform, making efforts to use secure technology to protect those who report corruption."

Gala Pin, Councilor for Participation, Barcelona



It's estimated that there are over 37,000 people working as lobbyists in Brussels, without any obligatory transparency rules. (Source: Transparency International)

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Promote local democracy

As municipalists, we believe in the politics of proximity. We'll work to protect local autonomy at all times, demanding that all Member States comply with the European Charter of Local Self-Government. We'll call on the EU to promote participatory local democracy by investing economic resources at local level.

"We have to look for levers and shortcuts in the EU that allow for transformative politics at local level."

Rita Maestre, Councilor
and Spokesperson, Madrid



Housing is the largest expense for households in Europe; on average, we spend a quarter of our income on housing. One in ten households in Europe spends over 40% of its disposable income on housing. (Source: Housing Europe)

Put housing on the agenda

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The housing emergency is one of the biggest priorities of citizens but it hardly figures on the European agenda. We commit to highlight the issue and push for investments in public and affordable housing, as well as public housing programmes for young people and initiatives to promote affordable housing in historic city centres and underpopulated areas.

“Nobody in Brussels cares about the right to housing in our cities. It’s a huge challenge which requires us to build alliances at a European scale.”

Ernest Urtasun, MEP



In just two years, Airbnb’s European lobby has increased its spending from under €100,000 to over €500,000 (Source: Corporate Europe Observatory)

5 Protect renters and people with mortgages

One of the aggravating factors of the housing crisis, especially in Spain, is the lack of legal guarantees in relation to loans and abusive contracts. We'll call on the EU to use the competencies it shares with Member States in this area to sanction states that don't comply with European consumer protection directives.

Fearless housing policies.

The report 'The State of Housing in the EU' (2017) by Housing Europe, highlights the fact that housing has become the biggest expense for Europeans. This phenomenon disproportionately harms people on low incomes. ¶ In this context, national

governments have responded by reducing public spending on housing and trusting the private sector to increase supply. By contrast, cities are at the forefront of public housing policies in the EU: *"increasingly we find local authorities/cities coming up with solutions rather than national policies, ranging from making land available at reduces cost for social/affordable housing, demanding private developers to contribute to the development of affordable housing and social infrastructures, bringing vacant premises back into use, promoting initiatives to increase social inclusion, education and employment opportunities in poor neighbourhoods and enhancing mixity."*

"We need to strengthen the alliance between cities to pressure national governments to react and help us to protect the right to housing and regulate tourism."

Janet Sanz,
Fourth Deputy Mayor, Barcelona

Stand up to tourist industry speculation

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Mass tourism is stoking the housing crisis in the cities of Europe by stealing housing from the residential rental market. We'll oppose the pressure exerted by Airbnb's lobby in Brussels with the goal of bypassing local democracy, on the basis that they attack the principle of decentralization that the EU claims to defend.

Airbnb against local democracy.

In 2018, Corporate Europe Observatory published a report entitled 'Un-fairbnb', which revealed how Airbnb and its European lobby, the European Holiday Home Association, have been pressuring European institutions with the goal of undermining the efforts of city governments to protect the right to housing. ¶ As a consequence, in 2017, the European Parliament approved, with a large majority, a resolution 'condemning' local authorities that seek to restrict the offer of tourist accommodation via online platforms, demonstrating how out-of-touch they are with the reality of the rent crisis.

¶ For its part, the European Commission repeatedly interprets EU rules

in favour of tourist rental platforms. Significant concessions have already been made to the European Holiday Home Association, which has reported Berlin, Paris, Barcelona and Brussels to the European Commission, in a case that could end up in the European Court of Justice.

¶ We want to uncover and denounce such practices, which form part of an opaque and anti-democratic lobbying system. We have to change the rules of the game in Europe so that local democracy isn't subjugated to global economic interests.

Refuge Cities

Asylum may be a national competence, but it's municipalities that give refuge. We'll support the proposal of allowing local governments to receive EU funds for each refugee welcomed, which are currently assigned exclusively at national level. We'll also continue to call for a direct relocation system between municipalities at European level.

"It's essential for cities to work together as a network to stand up to states when they deport people seeking refuge."

Laura Pérez,
Councilor for International
Relations, Feminisms
and LGBTI, Barcelona

Cities of Refuge. Municipal governments have been active in the fight for the rights of people seeking refuge in Europe, often despite the resistance and obstacles put in their way by national governments. ¶ In September 2015, just a few months after Barcelona En Comú took office, the Barcelona City Hall activated the 'Barcelona, City of Refuge' plan to

respond to the humanitarian crisis of the previous summer, prepare the city to welcome refugees and call on the Spanish government and the European Union to relocate people and establish a safe and legal migration passage, as well as to tackle the root causes of the problem. ¶ In March 2016, Barcelona and Athens agreed to establish a city-to-city cooperation programme to

Face up to the climate crisis

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It's cities that have the most to lose from the effects of global warming, such as heat waves and rising sea levels. We'll call for mechanisms and investments to support cities to adapt to this reality and promote the ecological transition to revert it.

welcome refugees. The planned pilot project was to relocate 100 people living in camps in Athens to Barcelona. This proposal was vetoed by the government of Mariano Rajoy, even though, at that point, Spain had only taken in 18 of the 17,337 refugees that it had committed to relocate. ¶ In October of the same year, municipalities took up, once more, the idea of direct

cooperation between municipalities by setting up the 'Solidarity Cities' network, an initiative that seeks to promote mutual support between municipalities on issues relating to refuge. The network has become a tool for municipal exchange and has allowed local governments to raise their profile before the European Commission.

Breathable, healthy cities

The EU's directive on air pollution is too permissive and Member States aren't even forced with comply to it. We'll work to bring the directive in line with the limits set by the World Health Organization and to ensure effective enforcement measures, including sanctions.

"I celebrate the fact that we've put air pollution on the public agenda, it's the main public health problem in Barcelona and Europe. It kills 250 people a year in Barcelona."

Mercedes Vidal, Councilor
for Mobility, Barcelona

"Spain has gotten out of a European fine for air pollution precisely because of the measures taken by *Cities of Change*, which the PP harshly criticized."

Estefanía Torres, MEP



Air pollution kills 520,000 people every year in Europe, 31,000 of them in Spain. (Source: European Environment Agency)

Democratize water and energy

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Access to water and energy is a human right. We'll promote initiatives to recognize them as such and to protect them as affordable public services. We'll seek to widen the participation of all sectors of society in the definition and implementation of energy and water policies. We'll call for the creation of a European legal framework to prevent household utilities from being cut off.

"We need to work as a network at every level: local, national and European."

Eloi Badía, Councilor for
Water and Energy, Barcelona



Between 2005 and 2015, 235 cities in 37 countries around the world remunicipalized their water management, improving the lives of over 100 million people. (Source: Transnational Institute)

Oligopoly Off

Our ambition is to end the private energy distribution oligopoly and to replace it with a self-sufficient model of energy production and distribution as localized as possible. We'll call for the municipalization of distribution networks, with citizen participation and oversight.

"The fact that you created a public energy company in Barcelona opened up the door for us to think about doing the same in Iruña."

Armando Cuenca,
Councilor, Iruña



Over 50 million European households suffer from some form of energy insecurity. In the case of Spain, the problem affects over 5 million households, or 11% of the population. (Source: European Commission)

Regulate platforms 12 that rely on precarious working conditions

We want decent, quality jobs and we're worried by companies like Deliveroo and Uber that worsen working conditions in our cities. We'll defend policies that end the 'gig' economy and recognize and promote initiatives from the pro-commons collaborative economy.

Uber and the false “sharing economy”. Uber is a multinational that threatens to undermine the working conditions of taxi drivers and passenger safety around the world through the externalization and precarization of the trade. In 2014, the Professional Association Élite Taxi of Barcelona lodged a complaint against the company for unfair competition. Uber said that it wasn't obliged to comply with the rules of the transport sector because it was a mere digital platform, offering

an intermediation service but, in December of 2015, the EU Court of Justice (CJEU) ruled in favour of the taxi drivers. The CJEU determined that Uber is a transport company and that, as such, it has to have a licence to operate and must comply with national and local rules. ¶ The sentence is important because it opens up the prospect that the same criteria could be applied to other digital platforms, such as Airbnb and Deliveroo.

Values-based municipal procurement

We want a fair, plural local economy but right now the EU limits the ability of public institutions to include these criteria in public procurement. We'll call for directives relating to public procurement to be revised in order to differentiate between national and municipal contracts, giving municipalities greater flexibility to include social and environmental clauses.

“We have the capacity to change things despite states and corporate interests. We can change the rules of the game by contributing from the local to the global level.”

Florent Marcellesi, MEP

Ethical banking

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We need to create alternatives to the speculative financial system that acts without roots in any place or community. We'll seek defend the development of new instruments at local level that promote local saving and investment, such as ethical banks and financial bodies focused on the common good.

15 Force multinationals to pay their taxes

We can't allow for large companies that operate in our municipalities to escape their responsibility to contribute to our communities. We'll call for the creation of a European list of tax havens, with reliable inclusion criteria and enforcement mechanisms.



A trillion Euros are lost to tax evasion every year in Europe, a figure equivalent to the GDP of Spain.
(Source: Committee of Inquiry into Money Laundering, Tax Evasion and Tax Avoidance of the European Parliament)

Decentralized, democratic culture

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We believe that culture should be active, democratic, and based in the realities of local communities. We'll push for European investments in culture to be directed to the promotion of culture as a right, rather than a commodity.

Real democracy

We support direct and participatory democracy wherever possible. We'll call for the reform of the European Citizens' Initiative to make it easier to make and approve proposals, and we'll request the introduction of mechanisms that allow for greater citizen participation in EU politics more broadly.

"Barcelona and Madrid are spearheading the fight against corruption and giving other cities the strength to follow in their footsteps."

Ana Taboada,
Deputy Mayor of Oviedo

Feminize politics

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We want to change how politics is done. We'll continue to push for a politics that's sustainable and compatible with daily life, that questions patriarchal models and that values the knowledge and practices that have traditionally been excluded from the public sphere due to their association with femininity.

"It's extremely important that cities that prioritize life and rescue people from the sea come together to stop the far right and combat prejudices, rumours and lies."

Giuseppe Grezzi,
Sixth Deputy Mayor, Valencia

Goals ahead of party identity

Municipalism has taught us the power of diverse people and organizations working together in the pursuit of shared goals. We'll seek broad alliances at European level to strengthen our capacity to achieve concrete changes.

Over 3000 municipalities in Europe supported the campaign against TTIP and CETA. A network of municipal governments was created that we can reactivate at any time."

Lola Sánchez, MEP

TTIP Free Zones. In September 2015, Barcelona declared itself a TTIP Free City, the TTIP being a free trade agreement that affects municipal sovereignty and the ability of local governments to take decisions on issues such as public contracting and the municipalization of services, such as water. Madrid did the same in March 2016 and, in total, over 3000 local authorities

from across Europe supported the 'TTIP Free Zone' campaign, often through motions supported by various political parties. ¶ While the campaign didn't manage to stop the TTIP, it was the most important joint mobilization of municipalities and regions at European level to date, demonstrating their capacity for political leadership and collaboration with social movements.

Work as a network

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We're aware that the power of the European Parliament is limited. For this reason, we'll continue to weave networks of collaboration with municipalities from across the continent to work towards our shared goals.

"We can't win the battle for Barcelona on our own. We need alliances with other cities and transnational movements in order to take on Airbnb and other lobbies."

Gerardo Pisarello,
First Deputy Mayor of Barcelona

barcelonaencomu.cat/municipalize-europe

‘Municipalize Europe’ is the fruit of a collective, six-month process initiated by Barcelona En Comú with the participation of other Cities of Change, activists who work at European level and MEPs from different parties.

During the first half of 2017 we held a series of six public debates in different neighbourhoods of Barcelona, with the name ‘From the Neighbourhood to Europe’, in order to reflect on the relationship between municipalism and the European Union. The events covered issues that are priorities for cities, such as housing, water and energy and radical democracy. The debates demonstrated the great interest that European politics generates when it’s linked to the priorities of local communities.

The proposals in this document are drawn from the workshops held in the framework of ‘From the Neighbourhood to Europe’, and include contributions from municipalist organizations from across Spain. They aim to be the starting point of an open process, in constant evolution, in which we also want to include municipalist organizations from other countries.