SHARING OUR PASSION FOR THE CITY

CONCLUSIONS
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A DESIRE TO RALLY THE LIVING FORCES OF THE CITY

Between November 2008 and April 2009, during the six months of the Citizens’ Forum, Brussels experienced a new democratic process of exceptional intensity.

It is now time for the ten organisations of the Brussels Civil Society Platform, which set up this process, to take stock and present their conclusions to the citizens of Brussels, to the population, to civil society and to the politically accountable.

Inhabitants of Brussels, Flanders, Wallonia, Belgium, Europe and the rest of the world for whom Brussels means something, we ask you to listen to what Brussels civil society has to tell you and invite you to utilise this information. We ask you, the people of Brussels, who it most concerns, to waste no time in taking control of your future, together with all those, in Brussels and elsewhere, that wish to help this city to rise to the challenges it faces and become a model for Europe and the Europeans.

The ten initiators were able to rely on the commitment of the universities, which mobilised fifty or so scientists in a very short space of time. Their sixty summaries paint an especially relevant fresco of the observations, issues and courses of action that this city could take to face up to the difficulties it is experiencing and firmly commit itself to the future. A great many special witnesses and economic, social, political, cultural actors from Brussels have also enriched the debates and shared their experience and expertise with other citizens. The balance sheet of the Citizens’ Forum is full of all these contributions. It is available to everyone, especially the politicians (1). We are also proud of having created a rare forum of dialogue between Dutch speakers and French speakers who, each in their own language, expressed themselves in a context of mutual respect.

We introduced a form and a spirit of serious, courteous democratic debate in which each party listens to the other. The Citizens’ Forum of Brussels was an enormous breath of fresh air. We can be proud of that.

However, we haven’t been able to avoid all deficits of participative democracy and overcome all the splits in the city. Inhabitants of Brussels from working class immigration and European Union people have participated too little. Ignorance of the other language has been an obstacle to communication. Young people must be mobilised more. We are aware of these deficits and we all intend to continue to work to rectify them.

The Citizens’ Forum of Brussels inspired a broad mobilisation. More than 2600 people participated in fifty hours worth of debates in 18 meetings, several thousands wanted to be kept informed, the minutes of these meetings were downloaded more than 25,000 times, a wide general public followed our debates in the media and online. There has never been a debate of such magnitude at the Brussels Capital Region level on the future of this city-region and its metropolitan area.

(1) see www.citizensforumofbrussels.be
The Citizens’ Forum of Brussels has in any event helped to restore the political debate, towards an interest in the affairs of the city. It brought together everyone with a passion for this city. It generated great hope. After having put this process in motion, we feel a responsibility not to disappoint anyone. We are committed, as the civil society of this city, to not relax the mobilisation, to keep this new forum of democratic debate alive and to expand it, to contribute to building credible public opinion in Brussels.

This new wind must be allowed to blow. The Citizens’ Forum of Brussels has provided us with a good account of where we stand. Here, we present the key ideas, matters of inescapable urgency, implacable logic. We call on all the organisations of Brussels, the participants in the process and all fellow citizens to take up the debate, to take a position on our conclusions. We would like this document to be widely circulated and shared throughout society. We especially hope that our governments, at all echelons of power, municipality, region, Community, federation and European Union, clearly hear this call and take it into account in future negotiations.

Many courses of action have been raised. Rather than cataloguing them, we give our conclusions in the form of five missions to define a vision for Brussels, a roadmap and a way for the city to be managed.

We are aware that this entails significant changes to how we do things. That is what the civil society of Brussels solemnly calls for.
FIVE MISSIONS FOR BRUSSELS

1. TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE CITY BOOM TO MAKE BRUSSELS A SUSTAINABLE CITY

Brussels is the biggest city in the country. After decades of decline, the Brussels population has recovered to grow at a steady pace over the past few years. We now have more than 1,050,000 inhabitants, not including the tens of thousands of unregistered people either seeking asylum or passing through (students, visitors, trainees and so on). And the Federal Planning Bureau estimates up to 150,000 new inhabitants by 2020 (without any measures to stimulate this). This is an opportunity because it concerns a young, ethnically diverse population, which enables us to contemplate a dynamic future for Brussels.

It is also a challenge because the city boom will inevitably increase the need for housing (certainly 50,000), jobs, infrastructure (childcare, schools, public transports and so on) and community fabric in a city that already barely satisfies current demand. And these new Brussels inhabitants (rich or poor) will not necessarily help to strengthen our region’s already inadequate tax base.

If Brussels is not properly prepared, there is a risk that the city boom will aggravate the ‘dualisation’ so rife in the population and compromise the ability of the public authorities to finance these many new needs.

This situation forces us to significantly speed up the pace and to change in the very short term how the city is managed and planned, so we are able to react much more effectively and turn this challenge into an opportunity.

1. BETTER PLANNING & INTEGRATING THE VARIOUS URBAN POLICIES

For historical and institutional reasons, integrated planning is not one of the strengths of Brussels. But the demographic challenge demands this be rectified without delay. A new Regional Development Plan (RDP) must spawn, very soon, an integrated strategic vision and programme that mobilise the population in a great exercise of participatory democracy. From day one, this plan ought to associate, under the aegis of the Brussels Capital Region, Europe, the federal state, the other two regions, the Communities and the municipalities and, beyond that, the neighbourhoods, the socio-economic world and the civil sector.

This RDP must be the arbiter of stability and not the sum of unconnected projects lacking an overall view. The Regional Land Use Plan, the Regional Mobility Plan IRIS and the International Development Plan must be aligned with the...
Regional Development Plan and must translate its city project. Urban development plans and neighbourhood contracts must also be associated to them.

We identify various structural stakes in an RDP, such as management of the urban density and the ‘urban centralities’, the environmental challenge or the fight against ‘territorial dualisation’. In this regard, you could for example transform a canal area into a link between the two halves of Brussels and into an opportunity to develop necessary functions of the sustainable city, by avoiding the perverse effects of gentrification.

Generally speaking, facing up to the city boom is about developing an integrated vision on urban development and linking up all the various policies.

2 STRENGTHENING HOUSING AND IMPROVING THE LIVING ENVIRONMENT

The average population density of Brussels is not very high (65 inhabitants per hectare), but it ranges from less than 20 to more than 200 inhabitants depending on the municipality. A general increase in population density is possible (for example, 85 inhabitants per hectare), provided it occurs in a differentiated way, together with the steadfast increase in population density in areas with good public transport links and, at the same time, the decrease in population density in some areas, especially in the centre, and a policy of free spaces. The increase in population density must also take account of the geography of Brussels (its sloping valleys and basins), without threatening the network of greenery and water in and on the outskirts of the region.

To tackle the urban exodus and accommodate new arrivals satisfactorily we must resolve the housing crisis and improve the living environment in Brussels.

Tackling the exodus demands the availability and fair allocation of sufficient housing that meets the qualitative and quantitative needs of the socioeconomic and family diversity, in socioeconomic and family terms, among citizens of the region. This must be achieved on the initiative of both public and private sector, as well as in public-private partnerships. Any social housing policy must promote upwards social mobility.

This increase in the housing stock can also be achieved by reconstruction of houses that are unfit for habitation, the renovation and reallocation of completely empty buildings (such as some offices) or partially empty buildings (such as floors above some shops) and must be renovated and built on ecological principles, which are economic sectors to be developed to preserve the future of the city.

Improving the living environment of Brussels is about integrating public services, soft mobility, functional mixing, biodiversity, public spaces for relaxation and meeting and combating all types of pollution (water, air and noise). Complementary to good housing, this significant improvement in the quality of urban life is essential to convince inhabitants and families to stay in Brussels and to move there.
3. STIMULATING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BRUSSELS JOB MARKET

Demographic growth will require the creation of jobs for this population, in the region or within commuting distance. Incidentally, it will be absolutely necessary to invest efforts to create new jobs in Brussels, adapted to the working profile of the underemployed population. It is also necessary to promote access (in every sense of the word) for jobseekers in Brussels to jobs outside the region. To this end, a metropolitan pact must be concluded with the two neighbouring regions.

Without a change of policies, the city boom will widen the existing discrepancy between the demand for unskilled jobs and the supply of essentially service sector jobs. To meet this challenge, we need to encourage economic development that is local, less prone to offshoring. This necessitates giving it a place in the urban fabric (shops, workshops, warehouses). It is also a matter of taking advantage of the ethnic diversity of the Brussels population, especially with respect to trade.

The globalisation of the city must not be solely based on a cosmopolitan approach, endured or encouraged, accompanying the arrival of populations from outside, but also on a multicultural approach taking advantage of the population that lives in the region. It is also a matter of developing the existing economy with the assistance and talents of working class immigrants.

Lastly, it is a matter of promoting an economy based on material cycles (bringing property back into use, recycling waste and optimising the energy cycle) and promoting mutualisation of resources (economy of functionality where use of material property is more important than possession).

4. DARING TO IMPOSE SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY

The ever-increasing demand for mobility in a limited area entails the necessity of rationalising this mobility, while reducing unnecessary motorised movements.

Brussels is a city with a large concentration of service activities that cause numerous mobility problems. These problems bring about car congestion that is harmful to the city’s economic activity and also produces pollution with known consequences for the health of its inhabitants (Brussels inhabitants live an average of 15 months less than national average due to this pollution). Promoting the sustainable city therefore demands the rethink of how the territory is developed and how functions are distributed. This must be done at the Brussels Capital Region level but also in the metropolitan area, in a partnership of trust with the other two regions.

To cope with the city boom, new investments will be necessary in the field of public transport, based on innovative financing models. But they must be based on objective data, taking account of all parameters and not biased to a given mode of transport or a given municipality.

The Brussels Capital Region must also do everything within its power to ensure that the
development of the Regional express network also serves as an important **intra-urban mode of transport** so that the city organises around it.

However, the short-term priority must be better governance and real efficiency of the Brussels transport system. It is not acceptable for self-evident measures (such as the remote control of traffic lights by buses and trams or the development of some public-owned sites) to take so long. This also entails the Brussels Capital Region gives itself the means to better coordinate, on its territory, all services (STIB, TEC, De Lijn, SNCB, taxis, car shares and bicycle shares), all public actors (regional administrations, municipalities, police and so on) and private actors (business, schools and so on) affected by mobility policy. It is also a matter of being more attentive to the **expectations of users** of public transport (for example, in terms of timetable frequency and continuity).

It is also necessary to develop a proper policy for urban logistics and **goods transport**: the sustainable city must promote the inter-modality of transport and encourage use of rail and waterways rather than roads.

[2]

**MAKING A SUCCESSFUL CITY BY REDUCING THE SOCIAL GAP**

Brussels is a city of great social and geographical duality. This dualisation manifests itself in various areas. For instance, there is a very large disparity in terms of access to education, health care and so on.

The lack of **integration through work** – 32% of Brussels children live in a wageless family – is the first cause of polarity and produces a large degree of poverty in the population. The average wage of inhabitants of Brussels is just 85% of the national average, whereas it was 160% of the national average fifty years ago. One inhabitant in four lives under the poverty line. One in every four users of Centres Publics d’Aide Sociale (CPAS, Public social assistance centers) in Belgium lives in Brussels. More than 20,000 households benefit from social schemes for gas and electricity. This dualisation is highly territorial: poverty is increasingly concentrated in the ‘poverty crescent’ of Brussels.

The economic development of the city – which has never offered so many jobs as it does today – is oriented to a highly skilled population, the majority of which lives outside the city. It does not solve a major social crisis characterised by very high unemployment (20% of the active population
or almost 100,000 jobseekers). While training and job market integration assistance clearly need to be continued, it is also very clear that there is a lack of activity directly linked to the existing skills.

So, structural underemployment plainly exists. The failure of supply to meet demand is the breeding ground for a strong informal economy, which leads to the underemployed taking on undeclared work, linked to unacceptable work conditions, and an alternative economy of reciprocity and community in some neighbourhoods.

1. STRENGTHENING NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY

Any development model that wishes to respond to the opportunities of globalisation and demographic growth must reduce the social gap based on the skills of inhabitants and real employment situations. This supposes that, as well as the development of ‘high’ economy and individual counselling programmes to promote socioeconomic integration, a territorial approach needs to be implemented. It is a matter of giving the requisite attention to existing survival strategies in the neighbourhoods and taking action so that this ‘low’ economy is able to maintain itself, develop itself and ultimately connect with the ‘high’ economy. In this regard, it is essential to preserve and encourage the mixing of functions in all neighbourhoods where it exists.

For example, we need to develop the spirit of enterprise to be able to invest in the opportunities that the city presents, although this will initially be less productive and less profitable. Small and mid-sized businesses need to be helped to meet the new needs of the population and enable them to provide the services increasingly provided by small businesses based outside the region.

The ‘neighbourhood contracts’ must be reoriented as levers of socioeconomic development of weakened neighbourhoods, alongside the essential renovation of buildings. More time must be invested in the development and quality of the overall project. Time is also needed to associate the inhabitants more. It would also be worthwhile to support local social economy projects, which integrate market resources, public assistance and voluntary participation.

The participation of all inhabitants of Brussels in the social, cultural and political development of their city will be possible only through the development of a permanent education programme. To better disseminate knowledge about Brussels, we suggest developing the idea of a ‘working class and cosmopolitan Urban University’.

The new economy increasingly entails networks between individuals. New tools, such as social networks, enable highly localised links between citizens and can promote contacts between skills. To this end, there is an urgent need to reduce the new digital divide by equipping working class neighbourhoods with free online access or making personal computers available to the most deprived families.

2. IMPROVING ACCESS TO THE JOB MARKET AND WORKING CONDITIONS

The blossoming service economy has substantial need of a workforce with very different levels of
training in the fields of hospitality, cleaning, people care, local business, security, logistics, public transport, building construction, renovation and maintenance, tourism, the cultural sector and so on.

It thus offers many Brussels inhabitants new job prospects, although it is important to guarantee quality and appropriate training must be provided.

Public funds used to facilitate the creation of service sector jobs (economy, employment, training) must guarantee equal treatment and non-discrimination, collective defence of workers and regulation of the job market.

Discrimination persists in Brussels, essentially based on the foreign origin of many inhabitants of Brussels. It is a constraining factor in employment, housing, schooling and leisure. It seriously undermines the region’s solidarity efforts to help the city’s social development. Campaigns to combat discrimination on the job market must be continued and intensified. This must be a priority for employers’ organisations and trade unions. Discrimination must be closely monitored.

Integration in an economy open to all is the best way to tackle the social divide.

3. STRENGTHENING COLLECTIVE FACILITIES AND PUBLIC SERVICES

The dualisation of the city has seriously damaged the capacity to house many inhabitants of Brussels, but also to care for them, to educate them, to transport them, to entertain them, to give them sports facilities, to train them and to enable them to earn a decent, steady wage. A high-quality response is needed to the housing crisis, which demographic growth risks aggravating further, in terms of investment and speed, so as to significantly increase the share of public housing. Over and above the investments needed to meet the other major needs mentioned above.

The mission is vast, because the coordination and development of collective facilities policy suffers from underfunding and the institutional tangle that Brussels finds itself in. The strategic planning of the city’s social development and social facilities in the neighbourhoods continues to be one of the main unresolved issues in the current Regional Development Plan.

Funding these new collective facilities must come from financial returns on efforts agreed to by inhabitants of Brussels in favour of the international development of Brussels and its economic attractiveness. It is a matter of forming a metropolitan pact for development and solidarity with the users from the two other regions and the EU machinery.

The public service is one of the essential actors in the development of the city. Its general principles (universality, impartiality, continuity) are essential to social cohesion. It is important to preserve the specific status of its agents and services. It is also important that this service be dispensed, according to the principle of subsidiarity, at the most appropriate level, with due consideration for the twofold necessity of proximity and effectiveness of the investment, while also ensuring that it is dispensed equally in all neighbourhoods.
A VISION FOR BRUSSELS: BECOME THE CAPITAL OF EUROPE

Brussels lacks an ambition that could rally and inspire the inhabitants of Brussels and all those in Belgium, Europe and the world that are interested in the future of our city-region or contemplate moving there. It is about so much more than a publicity or marketing exercise to attract tourists and investors. Rather it is about building a shared idea that represents a future that the present and future living forces of the city can adhere to. Such an attractive image must first and foremost mobilise the city’s talents and rally its energies. It must express the multiplicity of experiences of the inhabitants of Brussels and not simply confine itself to international development.

Furthermore, Brussels depends as strongly on its external functions and connections. A vision for the future of Brussels must situate the city positively in a competitive global context where the battle for investment and talent is fierce. But above all, without disadvantaging individuals, it is a matter of showing who we are: a population of diverse origins. We must represent and develop our singularity, without allowing ourselves to be confined by forms imposed by others.

Brussels has the following assets, which we should emphasise and make attractive:

*Brussels is an international, multilingual city.*
Over half the population has foreign origins; almost half of all households are multilingual. Brussels is a decisively international and cosmopolitan city by dint of its diverse activities, its status as a capital of many entities, the European composition of its population, its position at the centre of several major European hubs and its history and heritage, at the crossroads of great cultures.

*Brussels is a cultural, creative city.*
It fulfils the function of capital of the European Union and multicultural metropolis. It accommodates a rich artistic sector, which is diverse and internationally recognised. It markets an extensive culture offering bolstered by the presence of many artistic institutions and academies with international reputations. Its geographic location hugely facilitates the circulation of goods, services and people.

*Brussels is a knowledge city.*
With its many universities, colleges and research centres, and more than 70,000 high education students and more than 13,000 researchers and lecturers, Brussels is the country’s most important academic hub. This centre of choice for the knowledge society is strengthened by the presence of many venues of creation and production and a particularly dense network of clubs and associations. These activities bring considerable benefits, especially social and economic one.

On the other hand, Brussels still suffers from a deficit in three areas:
*It is not yet a model sustainable city*
*It is not truly a place of intercultural dialogue*
*It is not a place where there are equal opportunities for everyone.*
1. BUILDING AN IMAGE OF CULTURE MIXING AND CREATIVITY

The international, cultural and creative dimension of Brussels is not stressed enough as one of the assets that can drive the development of the city. Suffering from the fragmentation of levels of power and barriers between the various activity sectors, Brussels continues to be reliant on a Belgian model of representation. We must rethink the city by restructuring it so as to favour intercultural meetings and not simply multicultural juxtaposition. We must create a new model for telling the story of the city, its past, present and shared future. We must develop an ambitious vision that responds to the Brussels reality rather than the current institutional representation.

Developing the international dimension of Brussels must go beyond the establishment of institutions or the quest for new investors. It is also a matter of building a platform of integration for citizens from different backgrounds. We must develop a shared empowerment project for the entire population, in which the principles of top-down and bottom-up globalisation mix and strengthen each other.

Too many initiatives hit the wall of unilingual cultural policies. Why not enhance the status of the Mediterranean or Slav culture as an integral part of Brussels identity? Why not set up bi-Community dialogue on culture? Why do urban initiatives like Kunstenfestivaldesarts, BRXLBRAVO and the Zinneke Parade find it so hard to survive? Why is there no integrated policy to attract artists or develop a cultural sector?

The dynamics of the cultural, artistic and community sectors are not adequately relayed in the city’s imagination, which continues to be dominated by ethnically Belgian institutions. It is absolutely necessary, if the goal is to create a positive image of Brussels, to free the artistic energies and to coordinate them beyond the scope of institutions so that they contribute to a cosmopolitan image. We feel it is vital that the Communities be obliged to coordinate their policies on the territory of Brussels and to establish at regional level an integration and coordination body.

2. STRENGTHENING INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIVITY BASED ON THE KNOWLEDGE CITY

Brussels has a lot of highly skilled jobs, in university research and higher education. But these skills, which are managed at Community level, are neither integrated nor invested in the attractiveness of the city. We feel it is vital to open a regional cooperation structure between the various institutions and universities. A common policy for developing higher education at international level, a common policy on knowledge on Brussels itself, a genuine policy of developing applied research, a vision on the development of Brussels as a student city, taking our excellence in living and social sciences seriously, these areas are currently underutilised and sometimes not utilised at all.

And especially, it is necessary to enhance the status of research rooted in the unique context of Brussels: research on interculturality, multilingualism, urban dynamics, international relations and so on.

In short, contrasting the imaginary with the city’s reality and adapting its functioning to this reality can generate huge development possibilities.
3. BECOMING THE TRUE CAPITAL OF EUROPE

A capital city should not simply be home to institutions, it must also build its image as a capital. Brussels has everything it needs to be the human face of Europe, the place where new, sustainable, social, cultural and knowledge-oriented Europe invents itself every day, contrary to the bureaucratic dimension that is currently dominant. To do so, we need not only to better integrate European expats, but also to give a place to Belgian and immigrant populations in the EU capital and the international city. The European Union institutions themselves must take their responsibilities for developing and funding their host city and participate in a structural, continual dialogue with the various levels of power and the residents associations. Brussels must set itself the task of becoming this multilingual and cosmopolitan city of Europeanness, a sustainable and inclusive city, an example of attractive, empowering European integration. The Belgian presidency in the second half of 2010 could spearhead this ambitious programme.

To enable this, Europe’s place in the city must be attractive and motivating. The European district must become a new mixed, lively city centre with its own cultural image, always something going on, harmony between the inhabitants and Brussels users, and a link with other major European cities.

4. TRANSFORMING SOCIOCULTURAL INTEGRATION PRACTICES

To achieve this overhaul of the image of Brussels and make it an attractive international city, methods of social and cultural integration need to be totally revised. The socialisation of children, young people and new arrivals must be oriented in harmony with this cosmopolitan, mixed international idea.

This image must also be promoted and incarnated in high-quality projects, in architecture and urban planning, in artistic, cultural and event programmes, in the media and among those that shape public opinion. That can only be achieved in association with others territories in the world and, first and foremost, by investing in city networks. It can only be done if there is a relaxed attitude to other languages and a desire to make them more visible.

To conclude, Brussels is essentially a constantly evolving global city. Its population and activities make this ambition and status possible. It is not simply a matter of building and selling this image. More than anything it is a matter of getting to the heart of urban identity and adapting the policies, practices and institutions to this end. Imagining and identifying oneself is an active process that demands the mobilisation of the population and is part of the development model that needs to be built.
At the moment, management of the Brussels Capital Region is characterised by a lack of coherency between the seven different levels of power in the city, by the weak independence from federal and other federated entities and by competition with the region's municipal powers. These three characteristics are the cause of great inefficiency and make it difficult for citizens to understand what is going on.

The city’s institutional organisation – one region, 19 municipalities, two Communities, three Community commissions, one federal government but no municipal cooperation body – reflects the history of the country. However, it is unable to meet the challenges facing it and to give the necessary impetus to give substance to a genuine ambition. The fragmentation also leads to the dilution of the initiatives of city actors. It makes it impossible to conduct policies on a bigger scale, which leaves any development to the mercy of power struggles and management contradictions.

There must be a radical shift in the way Brussels is managed in order to meet today’s challenges.

Managing Brussels well demands an appropriate framework in terms of funding and institutions. But it also demands substantial efforts from the city actors. The inhabitants of Brussels have primary responsibility to making their city work and bringing order to their organisation. It is not necessary to wait for state reform or the revision of funding laws before taking action.

Taking the initiative to improve its own functioning, without waiting for help or interference from outside is a sign of self-confidence and confidence in one’s own plans, conveyed by a motivated administration, but also by a clear concern to be credible. Self-confidence and credibility are essential to the process of proving the added value that Brussels creates for its partners (the other Belgian federal and federated entities and the European Union) and its desire to engage in a dialogue of trust with them.

1. REFORMING THE BRUSSELS INSTITUTIONS

Responsibilities need to be clarified and Brussels political structures simplified.

Following a state reform or an internal reorganisation, the Brussels Capital Region ought to have either major powers of coordination or exclusive competence in the following areas: various business taxes, mobility, parking, tourism, local or regional campaigns in the bicultural and multicultural sphere, reception and integration of new immigrants, vocational training, museums, hospitals and sporting infrastructure.

A specific system must also be put in place for the Brussels training and education basin by especially promoting the development of bilingual and multilingual schools and innovative technical courses.
In the same context of optimisation, a debate should be started on the main options for re-evaluating the number of municipalities, redraw their boundaries and balance their relative weight. The transfer of sites and facilities with a regional interest to the region should also be contemplated. The same goes for housing associations and CPAS. The issue of combining regional and municipal duties (mayor, portfolio holder, CPAS president) should also be debated.

2. RENEWING TIES OF TRUST

Brussels cannot contemplate its socioeconomic development on its own. It is clear that the anticipated increase in population in the 19 municipalities (which will also be accompanied by demographic growth around the city) cannot be absorbed by the Brussels capital region alone in terms of creating new jobs, spreading urban services (greenery, schools) and the related mobility. The wider outskirts of Brussels must be involved.

Today, distrust predominates and the fears of one group are met with the fears of another. The inhabitants of Brussels fear co-management by the two other regions, the Flemish fear the extension of the boundaries of the Brussels Capital Region.

To break this circle of distrust, a modest policy of small steps needs to be developed. A single achievement can start a new virtuous circle of trust and success. To move towards the first cooperation in the Brussels metropolitan area, we propose that the programme of each government include a section on the areas where they feel cooperation with the other partners of the federation would be worthwhile. We then propose to determine selected actions, limited to one or two competences with clear prospects for the establishment of a win-win situation. The simplest, more efficient mechanism for achieving each of them should be identified, as well as the stakeholders to be consulted and the relevant geographic area.

The same process ought to be developed towards the EU institutions, which we expect to provide an increasing share of the funding of some aspects of development in Brussels and towards international functionaries, who we expect to contribute more to the funding of local services provided to them. The development of local areas where the European function is dominant can no longer be conceived without close dialogue on the needs of the European Union. Likewise, it is time to determine the EU’s possible sphere of intervention, given its budget structure.

Lastly, good management of the city requires permanent cooperation between the city actors: institutions, social partners and civil society.

3. GIVING A VOICE TO ALL BRUSSELS INHABITANTS, MOBILISING LIVING FORCES, STRENGTHENING PARTICIPATIVE DEMOCRACY

To mobilise the population and give it the taste for public participation, all citizens of Brussels must be given a voice in the context of regional and municipal elections.

The electoral system must better reflect the reality on the ground. Brussels is a multicultural, multilingual city and not the juxtaposition of two mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive linguistic Communities.
In that sense, the trilingual ID card and the extension of the right to vote in regional elections to non-Belgians are not only symbolic, but also a democratic demand and a rampart against the principle of sub-nationalities, which destroys the very essence of living together in the city. It is time to abolish the duality of electoral colleges to allow bilingual electoral lists, without abolishing protection for the Dutch-speaking minority.

Managing such a complex city with such a diverse population is no longer possible through simple representative democracy, especially when it produces governments composed of a mosaic of parties. In the field of territorial development, for instance, recent experience of participation (Flagey, urban development plans) should be evaluated and utilised to adapt and strengthen the terms of urban democracy in Brussels, both upstream and downstream of projects.

The participation of citizens must be at a higher level, through the consultation of inhabitants, civil society organisations and other powers with regard to large regional projects (RDP, IDP, urban development plans) and at a more local level through neighbourhood forums to be established in the hundred or so neighbourhoods that make up the Brussels Capital Region.

To transcend the most diverse divisions that coexist in a city, development coalitions should be set up in which the participants share common goals that go beyond their divergences.

Advisory bodies are channels of dialogue with civil society whose roles and missions must be reviewed. This is particularly necessary with regard to the Conseil Economique et Social (social and economic council) and the Comité Bruxellois de Concertation Economique et Sociale (Brussels committee for economic and social dialogue), with the extension of their competences to Community matters, on the model of the Sociaal-Economische Raad van Vlaanderen (socioeconomic council of Flanders) and the Comité Economique et Social de la Région Wallonie (social and economic council of the Walloon region). It is also necessary to guarantee the simplification and articulation of various procedures for dialogue between city actors, such as the Comité Economique et Social de la Région Bruxelloise (social and economic council of the Brussels region), the Commission Régionale de Développement (regional development committee), the Conseil de l'Environnement (environment council), the Commission Logement (housing committee) and the Commission Mobilité (mobility committee).

Nowadays, the institutions alone, without the contribution of major private actors, can no longer develop the city. A method of regulation needs to be set up in which politicians, armed with a clear and legitimate strategic project, retain control of public-private and public-public partnerships in a city project.

4. FUNDING AND TAXATION ADAPTED TO THE NEEDS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF BRUSSELS

For 20 years, despite institutional reforms, the Brussels Capital Region continues to be underfunded (500 million euros per year not including other monies). But Brussels ought to be granted fair funding to enable it to play its role as economic engine for the benefit of its inhabitants and the whole country.
The amendment of funding laws at federal level is desirable and regional reform is essential to help the sustainable development of Brussels and reduce its current vulnerability to large swings in its tax base due to economic fluctuations.

It would also be advisable to take measures quickly to limit road congestion and pollution. Clever forms of road pricing and city tolls may be contemplated if other solutions are not forthcoming, while ensuring greater neutrality of federal taxation with regard to the choice of means of transport.

5. FREEING UP
THE ADMINISTRATION’S POTENTIAL AND DEVELOPING A CULTURE OF EVALUATION

When it is well managed the administration is a force for society. Good governance entails strategic orientations clearly defined at the political level and the administration assuming its independence and responsibilities. Appointments made on political grounds rather than merit are deeply damaging to the motivation of functionaries.

The tendency to prioritise the outsourcing of studies and work to the private sector must be reversed. Reducing the size of ministerial offices, better utilisation of expertise and reducing the number of insecure jobs should also be contemplated to improve the administrative service.

The absence of a culture of evaluation and the lack of information and transparency does not encourage the good governance of policies. Their efficiency and the professionalism and transparency of approaches must be strengthened. For example, we need to expand the remit of the Institut Bruxellois de Statistique et d’Analyse (Brussels institute for statistics and analysis) and increase the production of data, especially at neighbourhood level, to gain a better understanding of the impact of the policies conducted. We also need to make available online, at a single address, the statistics collected by various Brussels bodies, together with all the complementary studies commissioned by the region and the municipalities, and the agendas and minutes of the Brussels government and the municipal executives.
Brussels is the youngest city and region in the country. One third of the population is less than 25 years of age and in some city centre neighbourhoods, young people make up the majority of the population. These young people come from very diverse backgrounds. According to the demographic forecasts this only becomes more true: there will be more and more young people and more and more young people from foreign backgrounds.

These young people are a huge asset for Brussels and for the two neighbouring regions, whose populations are growing older. They are our future. They must take the city in hand soon. We must give much more attention for young people, listen to them, respect the singularity of their history and give them real opportunities to participate in the city’s production.

We are well short of the target. Most of these young people live in an environment of poverty and in underprivileged neighbourhoods. One in three of the city’s children live in wageless families. The social origin of young people is a highly discriminating factor in an education system that is in crisis with too many children directed down dead ends and too many young people leaving the education system without qualifications. Employment among young people is at unacceptable levels. We run the risk of a large proportion of tomorrow’s working population being cut off from the stakes of urban development. As a result, there is a threat to social cohesion and law and order.

A city project, good governance, is only possible with a general policy and plan for young people. While these are primarily Community competences, any regional development project demands the research into original forms of socialisation and integration of the young inhabitants of Brussels. This is a major deficit that must be rectified as a matter of urgency. It demands a trans-Community vision. It demands municipal orientation, important resources and genuine commitment. Not doing anything is not an option. We stress the necessity of giving great attention to the knowledge of young people’s paths (especially between 18 and 25) so as to support changes in direction and orientation that will allow everyone to find their place in the urban society.

1. A CITY
WHERE CHILDREN ARE WELCOME

The city must provide a recognised place to even the youngest of its inhabitants.

Brussels must be a city that improves the opportunities of newborns and supports young parents that need it, that gives children a place to breathe and play outside the home. Brussels, a city that must be conceived in all of its aspects through the eyes of a child. Infant mortality has increased in Brussels. The city must become a better living environment for children, who are entitled to public spaces and places to play. The infrastructure and service plans (the childcare plan, for example) must
be strengthened. From the earliest age, special attention must be given to the link with native languages, and at the same time to learning the national languages, as well as to social integration in a mixed society.

Children must have the opportunity to become citizens of their neighbourhood.

2. AN EMERGENCY PLAN FOR HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATION

The most important mission is education and training.

Our education system ought to be a place where citizenship is built, where children are able to sharpen their critical mind and access universal knowledge for as long as possible.

It is a matter of forming spirits, but also of helping young people to understand the world and the society they live in, to exercise their passions from the youngest age, without pushing the realities of the job market too early. It is a necessary condition to ensure they can make a free and responsible choice of appropriate training with a view to their future integration in the world of work.

Clearly, the current organisation of education in Brussels is unable to meet these challenges, in quantitative or qualitative terms and in terms of its organisation or educational models. Outside the institutional context, the region must take responsibility for demanding high-quality teaching for the benefit of all the city’s young people.

To this end, it must mobilise the Communities, networks and competent authorities as part of a coherent and ambitious general plan, well adapted to the Brussels reality of the 20th century, especially when it comes to learning languages.

This plan will have to analyse all possible forms of cooperation between federal entities and between education networks without taboo.

To set up this plan and select the first steps, we should recognise the solutions already prepared and tested by the dynamic and motivated educational teams and by many civil society associations, including the organisations created by educators themselves and especially their unions, as well as by parents. In addition, we need to take account of the studies and recommendations of existing consultation bodies in Brussels and of the social partners. In spite of the evident gaps in data that need to be filled, there is sufficient knowledge of the problems on the ground. The first task of the political authorities will therefore be to put together methods that allow the gathering and sharing of knowledge held by various actors and by various levels of intervention and power.

Education and training is everyone’s business, so this plan must not only clearly state everyone’s responsibilities or it will be a dead letter. It must also mutualise these responsibilities and favour mechanisms beneficial to the mobilisation of parents (by taking account of inequalities from the outset in communication), the abovementioned associations, businesses and trade unions. It must dare to seek the convergence of other policies: with respect to families, neighbourhood life, youth assistance, art and culture – especially the role of the media – sport, housing and development of the public space.
We insist that the next regional government sets up a **Regional Conference on Education** that involves all partners, so as to elaborate a common plan and to integrate them in a responsible policy.

Massive investment is needed in working class neighbourhood schools, whose overfull classes and special needs create a breeding ground of inequality. This massive investment can be realised either through **special funding** for these institutions or through **specific funding** for every schoolchild, based on the prevailing educational difficulties (‘satchel cheque’).

Clearly, from a very early age, young inhabitants of Brussels, citizens of a multilingual city, must learn one or more foreign languages. Education must be **tailored** to effectively meet this necessity.

The main efforts must be oriented to access to high-quality schools and the abolition of flagrant inequalities between schools, while gradually introducing more mixing in the schools.

This should enable Brussels to transform itself from a multicultural, multi-Community city (groups coexisting) to an **intercultural city** (no isolated groups). This unquestionably represents a major investment today, but it will make it possible to avoid others later on, which will certainly be heavier and will be decided under force.

### 3. ADAPTING TRAINING

Clearly, the levels of training are maladapted to the needs of the highly skilled Brussels job market. Training programmes need to be developed to provide all opportunities to access the job market.

Adjustments are needed: rethinking collective and territory-based training schemes (for example, making sure the local office includes a training course tailored to a group in the neighbourhood contract); training for jobs in emerging markets; encouraging businesspeople to invest in the activities using existing capacities, including through the social economy, which remains underdeveloped in Brussels. The training programmes must also be better adapted to the complexity of the urban economy, which is **not entirely covered** by the formal job market. To this end, it is important to bring the multiple existing practises into the limelight, to enhance them and to integrate them in the broader partnerships that are better tailored to the necessary scale.

### 4. A CITY OPEN TO YOUNG PEOPLE AND WHAT THEY HAVE TO SAY

The young population is greatly strengthened by the new arrivals. There are also many different forms of reception policies, which are highly segmented. The region needs to set up transparent coordination and communication to meet the needs of new arrivals rather than the needs of institutions.

Most young people are concentrated in central neighbourhoods. This city centre developed around the canal, the symbol of the divide that must become a **symbol of social cohesion**. The development of the centre must be marked by the presence of young people, who must be approached on the basis of their existing capacities and wants, with a view to developing new activities. A local economy, a young people’s economy, can be a driver of city centre restructuring.
To achieve this, we must replace the stigmatisation of problematical young people with a dynamic of young neighbourhoods integrated in an urban project.

So, our approach must change. Brussels has a duty to be a city that makes itself with, for and by all the young people and gets organised to achieve that (transcending inequalities without denying them). It must be a city that enables all young people to develop their talents and their creativity, and to learn to work as a team. A city that encourages the building of all possible bridges between communities, neighbourhoods and social groups, that encourages multilingualism, that recognises the place of young parents and supports their irreplaceable role. Young people are not there to resolve the contradictions of adults. Adults and the city are there to offer hope and a future. While the young people of Brussels do not necessarily have a common past, we demand a city with the ambition and the passion to give them access to a common future, with due respect for everyone’s diversity.

We feel that a policy for the young people of Brussels is the keystone of a genuine Regional Development Plan. We want to see the emergence of a space of public speech and a ‘Council of Young People of Brussels’. It is a matter of giving young people’s associations responsibility by inviting them to co-produce a city project in dialogue with the regional government and to favour meetings between young people from different neighbourhoods and municipalities.

We invite the young people of Brussels to take control of their destiny and the future of their city.

Why not start a process of meeting? A kind of Young Citizens’ Forum based on schools, youth movements, neighbourhoods, businesses and clubs that bring local young people in contact with young people from elsewhere? Focusing on creation and the Brussels humour, focusing on the appropriation of the city by dance and music, the access of young people to the whole 24-hour city, to symbolically resist all forms of discrimination,

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BECAUSE WE ARE COUNTING ON THE DYNAMISM OF YOUNG PEOPLE TO MAKE BRUSSELS THE CITY WE DREAM OF, WE DEDICATE THE PROCESS AND THE RESULTS OF THE CITIZENS’ FORUM TO ALL THE YOUNG CITIZENS OF BRUSSELS.
ÉTATS GÉNÉRAUX DE RUXELLES RUSSEL RUSSELS

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