

Scheduled intervention Karen Vancluysen, Secretary General, POLIS

POLIS is the European network of cities and regions on sustainable urban mobility and innovation. Over the past year, we have helped our cities **navigate** the health crisis from a transport perspective.

Cities stepped into the frontlines to keep things moving and provide **essential transport services** for those who needed them.

This crisis comes with many **threats**, but also **opportunities**. Threats include the collapse of public transport and the risk of a rise of the private car as “safety bubble”. Opportunities are offered by the active travel boom and the massive respacing of city streets in favour of cycling and walking.

At the same time, **other crises** facing cities haven’t gone anywhere and are equally dangerous, even if less tangible: air pollution, climate change, congestion, road safety. We cannot afford to compromise on the **targets** set in these fields and go from lockdown to gridlock in our cities.

This requires being **proactive**, locking in the benefits of the temporary measures introduced during the pandemic, and investing heavily in the recovery of public transport.

There is no other mode that offers the level of efficiency, sustainability, inclusivity and affordability that public transport brings. As we will come out of this health crisis, we will be facing a severe **economic crisis** as well, which makes the recovery of public transport even more instrumental to secure access and mobility for all.

Public transport and active travel are the **backbone** of any sustainable urban mobility ecosystem. To safeguard this, beyond COVID-19:

- We need to **better integrate sustainable modes** so that they together offer a valuable and competitive alternative to the private car. This includes a better integration of public transport and shared mobility services in a way that the latter complement PT and meet service gaps that cannot be met by mass transit. This will require new forms of public-private cooperation, new business models and subsidies, and better integration of these modes to facilitate **intermodality**, both digitally (through MaaS) and physically (through interchanges and mobility hubs);
- We need a continuation and further acceleration of **space redistribution** in cities in favour of sustainable modes – which was long overdue anyway;
- We need to further promote **Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans** to help cities develop long-term visions with clear targets and make them more resilient – those cities with good SUMP in place, performed the best during the pandemic;
- We also need **innovation**, but not just of a technological nature. Public sector oversight to align innovation with policy goals is very important to make new technologies deliver on their promises;
- We need **sufficient funds** to help public transport recover – the local level needs to be empowered by the other levels of government and recovery & resilience funds should be properly allocated.

We call upon **national, European and international levels** of government to support the cities in their endeavour to make urban mobility **more sustainable** and to **secure a green recovery** out of the health crisis. Our cities hold many keys when it comes to the **much-needed transformation and decarbonization of the transport sector**.

Thank you for your attention.