



Global State of National Urban Policy 2021:

Achieving Sustainable Development Goals and Delivering Climate Action



Global State of National Urban Policy 2021

ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS
AND DELIVERING CLIMATE ACTION



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Preface

The OECD, UN-Habitat and Cities Alliance are delighted to introduce the *Global State of National Urban Policy 2021: Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and Delivering Climate Action*, the second edition of the joint report developed as part of the National Urban Policy Programme (NUPP), launched in 2016 at the Habitat III Conference in Quito, Ecuador, to share experiences in NUP and support countries through the expertise of the three organisations and partners.

The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly affected the health, lives and work of urban dwellers, magnifying and exploiting, in turn, many persistent urban challenges. But it also triggered paradigm shifts in considerations of how to plan and design cities to deliver resilient and sustainable growth, inclusiveness, well-being and opportunities for all. Lessons from the accelerated experiences with teleworking, accessibility, mobility, public space, local services, green amenities, the built environment and city governance pave the way towards a ‘new normal’ for the cities of tomorrow. Local and national governments share responsibility to shape green, smart and inclusive cities that can be more resilient to shocks and pressures, notably in the face of global megatrends such as climate change, demographic shifts and digitalisation.

Long before the pandemic, our three institutions called for ambitious and integrated national urban policy (NUP) to enable cities to thrive and drive national prosperity through government-led processes co-ordinating various actors in the move towards a common vision and goal of urban development. Policy instruments to harness high quality and polycentric urbanisation exist in many countries. However, Habitat III’s New Urban Agenda and other global agendas adopted in 2015 – the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) elevated the momentum. COVID-19, which has seen cities on the frontline of the crisis, further reinforced the importance of NUP in the multi-level co-ordination needed for integrated recovery strategies.

This report showcases and analyses state-of-the-art knowledge about NUP in 162 countries, highlighting how governments across the world use NUP to address the challenges that COVID-19 has now spotlighted and amplified. This edition reveals the remarkable progress since 2018 in mainstreaming environmental objectives, the SDGs and other global agendas into NUP. The report also identifies remaining challenges where action is needed, included in addressing policy siloes, and data and capacity gaps.

We believe that NUPs and this report provide valuable instruments to guide, develop and implement short-, medium- and long-term urban reforms and, ultimately, to deliver better urban policies for better lives for all in an urbanising world.



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Foreword

Global State of National Urban Policy 2021: Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and Delivering Climate Action provides a comprehensive review of national urban policy (NUP) in 162 countries around the globe. This global monitoring report, produced by the OECD, UN-Habitat and Cities Alliance, showcases how countries use NUP to enhance sustainable urban development, advance global agendas and address challenges magnified or revealed by the COVID-19 crisis. It also provides ten recommendations for NUP to build better cities, and develop an integrated, multi-level and strategic vision for cities after COVID-19.

This report is the second edition of *Global State of National Urban Policy*. It builds and expands on the first edition launched at the 2018 World Urban Forum, to compare key NUP trends, characteristics and evolution since 2018. In doing so, the report introduces a refined and more robust data collection process, in particular, a dedicated country survey on NUP extended to 86 countries, complemented by desk research on another 76 countries. Moreover, the report features two new thematic strands offering more specific evidence in relation to the role of NUP in (1) advancing the Sustainable Development Goals and other global urban agendas, and (2) spearheading a systems approach to build low-carbon and climate-resilient cities.

The report is an outcome of the 2019-20 Workplan of the National Urban Policy Programme (NUPP), which aimed at strengthening knowledge and capacity in countries to develop, implement and monitor NUP in an effective, efficient and inclusive way.

Looking forward, the NUPP Workplan for 2021-22 asserts global monitoring of NUP as an ongoing activity, alongside three other priorities: (1) thematic studies, (2) enhanced knowledge exchange, and (3) stronger engagement and collaboration across NUPP partners.

Acknowledgements

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Tadashi Matsumoto (OECD) and Remy Sietchiping (UN-Habitat) led the research team and co-ordinated the overall work, under the supervision of Aziza Akhmouch, Head of the Cities, Urban Policies and Sustainable Development Division in the CFE (OECD), Shipra Narang Suri, Chief of the Urban Practices Branch (UN-Habitat) and Rene Peter Hohmann, Acting Head of Programmes (Cities Alliance).

Lead authors of the report include a core team of policy analysts and experts comprised of:

- Joshua Drake and Keith Mudadi (Cities Alliance): Chapter 1 and 4
- Lucie Charles and Jonathan Crook (OECD): Chapter 2, 5 and 7
- Michael Kinyanjui (UN-Habitat): Chapter 3 and 6

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- International Society of City and Regional Planners (ISOCARP) (Elisabeth Belpaire and Mahak Agrawal): Chapters 2, 4, 5 and 7
- United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) (Edgardo Bilsky and Anna Calvete Moreno): Chapter 4
- Coalition for Urban Transitions (Sarah Colenbrander and Catlyne Haddaoui): Chapter 7

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December 2020. Interim findings were also presented at the twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth meetings of the OECD Working Party on Urban Policy in April and November 2020. The report was approved by the OECD Regional Development Policy Committee on 5 May 2021 under the code CFE/RDPC/URB(2021)6.

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