

B3 Resolution on Eastern European Smart Cities

Organization: CDN

Resolution date: 03/25/2021

Motion text

1 **Resolution on Eastern European Smart Cities**

2 We, the youth of the Eastern European cities see digital technologies becoming
3 an important aspect of our cities, and embrace their transformative potential to
4 our urban environments. We acknowledge that implementation of new technologies
5 in our cities can be beneficial if directed at improving everybody's life in the
6 cities. However, we are concerned that at the moment, digitalisation and
7 technologies are used to further increase inequality, racism, bureaucracy,
8 corruption, climate and social crisis under the pretence of neoliberal growth
9 narratives. We want to end this kind of abuse of new technologies, and take
10 ownership of their transparent implementation in our cities, making sure that
11 they are used to achieve green values.

12 • **Digital Economy**

13 Currently, cities are providing significant tax subsidies, repurposing urban
14 spaces, and taking loans to provide infrastructure for new tech based businesses
15 in hopes of them providing economic growth and raising employment. However,
16 these kinds of practices can create a race to the bottom between cities, and
17 make them hostages of large corporations and their threats to move their
18 operations elsewhere. Furthermore, despite investing into showing a friendly
19 face to the public, these corporations have proven to be hostile to workers'
20 unions, oftentimes banning them, as well as having a large turnover rate of
21 their workforces.

22 Even when these companies provide economic growth, which is not connected to the
23 general economic wellbeing of the majority, it is based on the extraction of
24 rare metals and high energy consumption which is especially problematic in
25 Eastern European countries which are still largely relying on fossil fuels, as
26 well as dependency on the global economic trends. When the latter take a turn to
27 the worse, like during the COVID-19 pandemic, the first ones to be affected are
28 the workers and their families. Accordingly, multinational technology
29 corporations often times keep their headquarters in their home countries, while
30 outsourcing manufacturing or customer support to EE countries, relying on their
31 low labour standards and leaving the highly qualified workforce with little
32 choice but to emigrate to rich countries.

33 We demand European level regulation of tech companies to stop competition
34 between cities. We demand the end of extreme surveillance software pushing
35 workers into top efficiency while having a negative effect on their mental
36 health. We demand for the tech companies to be obliged to create more
37 sustainable jobs which create value for the local urban community they are based
38 in. We demand a stop to the neoliberal narratives connected to the

39 implementation of economic growth, which push economic growth at any price, as
40 well as extreme consumerism. Instead we push for higher standards in labour laws
41 and implementing them in order to create decent, socially and environmentally
42 sustainable working conditions.

43 The new digital economy in our cities must provide clear benefits to all the
44 citizens. The benefits tech companies are given, must also oblige these
45 companies to assist in lowering inequalities and promoting a better standard of
46 living in cities in a meaningful way, by engaging in dialogue with the municipal
47 governments and citizens' organizations. They must take responsibility for the
48 environmental impact that they make and invest in sustainability, including
49 energy conservation, renewable energy production and sparing, circular use of
50 metals and other materials.

51 • **Environment and technologies**

52 As we are diving further into climate crisis, the neoliberal economy is trying
53 to adapt, instead of changing. This is creating a false solution of "green"
54 economy and "green" technology that more often than not avoids real climate
55 action and continues already existing approach to consumption which is not
56 feasible for the foreseeable future. We demand that new technologies and
57 innovations are used to systematically achieve our climate goals. Climate change
58 cannot be tackled without restructuring our economy, therefore, we demand that
59 green tech will not be used to advance consumption. Green tech should help us
60 reduce greenhouse emissions, foster democracy and reduce social and economic
61 inequalities. Our smart city should not be someone else's civil war or
62 environmental disaster.

63 We must put narratives of self driving, electric and/or private vehicles as a
64 solution to the environmental impact of a city to a stop. These means of
65 transportation are individualist, based on consumption, increase the need for
66 paved areas, raise the temperature of cities and produce negative environmental
67 outcomes in the places where the lithium, cobalt and other necessary metals are
68 mined.

69 We want the municipalities to streamline the processes of installing new energy
70 solutions that are cost-efficient and environmentally friendly alternatives. As
71 outlined in the 'Charter for the Smart City', local generation of renewable
72 energy offers a unique opportunity to create new commons. Collective solar
73 roofs, neighborhood heat pumps, collective batteries, and distributed smart
74 grids, managed by energy cooperatives, can speed up the energy transition,
75 democratize the energy system, forge new bonds between neighbors, and prevent
76 sensitive data on the energy use of households from coming into the hands of
77 large energy corporations. Renewable energy cooperatives deserve municipal
78 support.

79 • **Digital inclusion and democracy**

80 Nowadays, we see the implementation of new digital technologies in the Central
81 and Eastern European cities as concentrating hierarchies of power as well as
82 bringing dangers of excluding the most vulnerable groups from the society. The
83 implementation of new technologies is prone to be contained to the wealthy and
84 visible areas of the city and its access reserved for the wealthiest and most
85 privileged individuals.

86 Furthermore, the development of new 'smart city' neighborhoods must not be
87 simply a way to create huge areas of practically privatized land and a way to
88 further gentrify parts of our cities. We have to ensure that the public spaces
89 in our cities remain so. Implementation of new technologies should be made in a
90 way where it equalizes the living standards of the different parts of the city.

91 The implementation of new digital tools in municipal governments without a clear
92 view of how user-friendly it is for all the groups in the society can lead to
93 the exclusion of elderly people, immigrants, differently-abled and other
94 vulnerable groups. Implementation of these kind of technologies without
95 extensive public consultations and studies can turn out to create democratic
96 deficits in a city, and therefore, these kinds of practices must be avoided.

97 Procurement of digital technologies must be done in a transparent way, allowing
98 fair and objective public tenders as well as the debate of citizens regarding
99 the benefits of a specific technology. The data collected by these technologies
100 must remain in the hands of the public and its transfer to private companies
101 must be transparent and in the public's interest as well as based on clear
102 conditions. We demand for the benefits of the implementation of new technologies
103 to be clearly communicated to the public, that the advantages to be available
104 and accessible to everyone in the city, and in all areas of the city, rather
105 than being contained to the wealthiest groups.

106 • **Digital participation**

107 Digital tools can strengthen democracy in numerous ways, from facilitating
108 access to public sector information to broadening citizens' participation in
109 decision-making. Digital platforms and social media provide a forum for public
110 debate and for contact between elector and elected. There are good examples,
111 especially at the local level, of politicians who do not exclusively send, but
112 also receive. They reply to questions online, answer for their decisions and
113 pick up ideas, as outlined in the 'Charter for a Smart City'.

114 We want Eastern European cities to provide free and accessible education in
115 digital literacy, and equip the citizens with the knowledge on how to use any
116 new digital tools made available by the municipalities. Digitisation and digital
117 transformation have to become an empowering force for all citizens to make our
118 smart cities more democratic. Currently, many EE cities use digital
119 participation tools accessible only to the individuals who can afford their own
120 equipment, and have the technical and legal knowledge to include themselves in
121 the debate. We want for the urban governments to ensure, that digital tools are
122 used to help all stakeholders to have a better conversation in public debates on
123 the upcoming projects about the interventions planned and for the design
124 participation process to be more inclusive, agile and open. This should be done
125 by making these digital tools available in public spaces such as libraries, with
126 officials tasked with facilitating the participation of citizens.

127 **END**