



## Press Release

# Efus' local and regional authorities sign the Brussels Declaration for a comprehensive and integrated approach to making public spaces safer and more inclusive

**Brussels, 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2022** – Gathered in Brussels, Belgium, on the occasion of the closing event of a 4-year EU-funded project for safer public spaces (Protect Allied Cities against Terrorism in Securing Urban aReas - PACTESUR), Efus' local and regional authorities reaffirmed their key role, as the level of governance closest to citizen, as well as the importance of multi-stakeholder cooperation in securing urban public spaces. This culminated in the signature of the Brussels Declaration, which draws on 30 years of Efus' work, and key learning of four years of cooperation within the PACTESUR project.

Through the Brussels Declaration, the signatories call on national governments and European institutions to better support local and regional authorities, by developing harmonised standards in regards to available tools and access to funds, to allow for sustainable cooperation of all relevant stakeholders, including for actors on the ground at the local level, such as local police forces.

To date, the Brussels Declaration was signed by the cities of Nice (France), Liège (Belgium), Turin (Italy), Gdańsk (Poland), Riga (Latvia), Xàbia (Spain) and Piraeus (Greece), the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI Piemonte (Italy), Safe Brussels and Efus.

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The signature of the Declaration came at a symbolic timing during the opening of the final conference of the PACTESUR project "*Inclusive & Safer Public Spaces: Rethinking Tools & Practices*", co-organised by Efus and Safe Brussels. Led by the City of Nice, the PACTESUR project aimed to empower cities and local security actors, mainly in the face of terrorist threats, but also against other risks. Its implementation was marked by the remarkably fruitful cooperation of Efus, the Cities of Nice, Liège and Turin, and the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI Piemonte).

Over the course of four years, they organised a wide range of activities, including the deployment of pilot security equipment in the project's partner cities, police academies for various European local police forces, and European Weeks of Security that aimed to give a voice to European local stakeholders, police representatives, experts and civil society. This

successful cooperation between cities, technical directors and the local police has brought about a set of innovative tools and recommendations, as well as a strong desire to continue this cooperation dynamic.

Through the Brussels Declaration, local and regional authorities call on European institutions to provide appropriate means and support to allow for cooperation in a sustainable way, including at the local level, in particular for local police forces. Notably, it encourages to organise practical exercises and joint training among local authorities, and to contemplate an Erasmus programme for local police forces.

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Public spaces are vulnerable to a series of inherent threats. Ensuring their protection remains unsurprisingly one of the top priorities of local and regional authorities. It is one of the most paramount pillars of Efus' work for more than 30 years, striving to involve all relevant actors, including citizens, in co-producing tailor-made security policies.

Local and regional authorities, as the level of governance closest to citizens, have a key role to play in protecting public spaces, and as such should be better supported by national governments and European institutions. Improving and/or strengthening the security of public spaces should always be done while preserving their inherent openness, thus the possibility for all groups of the population to access and use them.

*“Based on these two basic principles, the Declaration suggests several ways in which local and regional authorities can intervene to better protect their public spaces, which all rely on multi-stakeholder partnerships, i.e. the involvement of all relevant stakeholders, whether they are the local police, local businesses, the creative sector or, above all, citizens themselves. We will continue to work in close cooperation with European institutions and bring citizens closer to the European Union through exchanges and enhanced collaboration between local, regional and European levels of urban governance,”* Elizabeth Johnston, Executive Director, Efus.

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### **About the European Forum for Urban Security**

The European Forum for Urban Security (Efus) is the only European network dedicated to fostering discussion, cooperation and support among local and regional authorities in the field of crime prevention and urban security. Founded in 1987, it brings together nearly 250 cities and regions from 17 countries.

Recognised for its expertise by national and European institutions, Efus is a network that represents the diversity of territories and promotes the exchange of experience between local and regional authorities beyond political affiliations, according to the principle of ‘cities helping cities’.

More information: [www.efus.eu](http://www.efus.eu)

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