



## **Athens Pledge to the European Pillar of Social Rights**

A stronger Europe is possible if all stake holders take an active part in creating an effective social policy. The goal of Athens is to create an inclusive, sustainable and resilient city, with the participation and active involvement of all its residents. **Education, training and life-long learning and equal opportunities** regardless of gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, are crucial elements to achieve social cohesion.

### **Commitment to principle 1 on "Right to education"**

Within the context of the financial crisis, which has severely affected Greece's social, political and economic life since 2010, the Municipality of Athens, has had to, on the one hand, adapt to heavy austerity measures, personnel reduction, budget cuts reaching up to 60% of its staff and strict monitoring procedures, while on the other, to safeguard its vision for empowering global citizens.

The Municipality of Athens has since 2014 designed a multidimensional Action Plan promoting lifelong learning, while in 2016 the city was honored through joining the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities.

The vision of the Municipality of Athens is to transform as many municipal spaces as possible into learning, entertainment and sports spaces, through the implementation of customized initiatives after careful and up-to-date mapping of citizens' needs and skills.

To achieve this the Municipality designs, implements and supports small scale projects that are open and free to the public, respond to real time needs of the society, have an operational framework, follow evaluation and monitoring processes. These projects, in their vast majority, begin as grassroots initiatives, gradually gain support by local communities and sustainability and gradually acquire the following characteristics: participatory planning, community engagement, accessibility to all, social cohesion, integration, flexibility, innovation and sustainability.

### **Commitment to principle 3 on "Equal opportunities"**

The municipality of Athens is offering basic services to all residents regardless of gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation and is collaborating with a number of specialized organizations in order to ameliorate its capacity.

The creation of the Community Centers, the Centers for Migrant Integration and the Center for Roma Inclusion, funded by the European Social Fund, mark the willingness of the municipality of Athens to expand its service provision. Training municipal staff to be able to service different categories of citizens and residents is allowing us to adjust to new social realities. The collaboration with appropriate state actors and non governmental organizations has proven extremely useful and the municipality is planning to extent it in order to increase service delivery capacity.

Georgios Kaminis

Mayor of Athens

Athens, January 30<sup>th</sup> 2019