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A New European Bauhaus
S&D Position Paper
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1. Background

Commission proposal

The "**New European Bauhaus**" initiative was officially launched on 14 October 2020. In the words of President Ursula Von der Leyen, "*the New European Bauhaus movement is intended to be a bridge between the world of science and technology and the world of art and culture*". The seed of this proposal was born on 16 September, when Von der Leyen mentioned in her speech at the **State of the Union Debate** her desire to create "*a new European Bauhaus, a co-creation space where architects, artists, students, engineers and designers work together*" stating that "*this is not just an environmental or economic project: it needs to be a new cultural project for Europe*". As stated by Commissioner Gabriel regarding the launch of the Bauhaus initiative, "we can only move forward if sites become cultural sites".

The European Commission intends to use the funds of the European Recovery Plan (Next Generation EU) to promote a "**Renovation Wave**" of 35 million buildings across the European Union, built from the second half of the 20th century, which are greatly facing the problems of energy consumption, as well as indoor environmental quality, combining sustainability, the comfort, air quality, thermal insulation, healthy conditions and many other aspects.

The initial design of the Bauhaus is intended as follows:

- a design phase, to explore ideas and shape the project;
- a delivery-phase starting with 5 New European Bauhaus projects in different EU Member States. it is proposed that these projects are committed to sustainability, combined with art and culture, adapted to local conditions and with specific focus such as energy efficiency and structural safety, future-oriented e-mobility or resource-efficient digital innovation;
- a dissemination phase.

From the original Bauhaus to the New European Bauhaus: a progressive initiative all the way

The Bauhaus was founded in 1919 by the architect **Walter Gropius** in Weimar and was a forerunner of the **Modern Movement** in arts, crafts and architecture. Its appearance, in the heart of Europe, was a response to the renewal impulses of an artistic and educational context in the progressive field as a reaction to the end of the WWI and the will to overcome the old regime.

Today, we are also facing an epochal change. The uneasiness of citizens regarding environmental change, the economic crises of the last fifteen years now compounded by the pandemic, and the need to re-think our modes of governance call for radical innovation on all fronts. The spirit of the original Bauhaus is still relevant today, for our Europe, which is a project in permanent construction, to which the Bauhaus must contribute.

Throughout its existence, Bauhaus, this "**house of construction**", anticipated a new conception of architecture, arts and design, aiming for an equal status between artists and craftsmen "without class distinctions", in the words of his founder. The most relevant example of this legacy is the optimisation of the **form-function relationship** in the designs, which constituted a radical innovation and reflected a real change of cultural and societal paradigm through the **values of social democracy**.

From the Bauhaus of the 20th century to the present day, it is a fact that today European architecture and urbanism enjoy very important prestige and recognition worldwide, with the Mies Van Der Rohe Awards, the EU Prize for Contemporary Architecture, awarded every two years to recognise and reward the quality of architectural production in Europe. This is why this initiative of the New European Bauhaus is an opportunity to highlight the role of the high quality of European architecture and to put it at the service of a real improvement of citizens' lives. Moreover, The New European Bauhaus will help establish a larger context where the science, technology and the arts jointly work on innovation towards sustainable living and a sustainable future of cities and their rural surroundings.

2. New European Bauhaus: S&D for a forward-looking initiative for society, architecture, culture and the arts

The Bauhaus initiative could represent a major policy shift if the following **principles** are maintained and reinforced:

- **Innovative analysis framework and debate:** This initiative provides a timely opportunity to reinterpret Bauhaus, as a preliminary phase to the Renovation Wave, and to foster deeper synergies between different European programmes and actions with a view to harnessing the quality, innovation and creativity of our architecture, cultural sector, designers and artists. We can re-think and re-imagine our cities and rural areas, our neighbourhoods, our buildings and even our way of life towards a more stimulating and sustainable future. The initiative can create opportunities for exchange of best practices and science development between related sectors. Furthermore, smart and efficient solutions are a key factor in developing sustainable, energy efficient and intelligent cities and rural areas, and to foster the uptake of advanced, digital technologies in the construction and renovation sector. The way to foster renovation in a manner that favours the energy system integration of renewables uptake in buildings, zero-emission mobility, installation of e-vehicle charging infrastructure, thermal storage and connection to smart grids should also be considered taking into account that buildings are going to be integrated in the energy system with their increasing role in e-mobility and in greater deployment of charging points.
- **Sustainability:** The New European Bauhaus has to make the Green Deal a positive, tangible experience for people. Decarbonisation of the building sector should be a priority, in view of the Union's climate commitments, notably that of achieving climate neutrality by 2050 at the latest. Similarly, it is key that the construction sector, future renovations and the Bauhaus initiative are all fully in line with and promote circular and

sustainable bioeconomy principles. We should aim at a decarbonised building stock in line with the objectives expressed in the Climate law. The initiative should also push forward the access of all people to green spaces and streamline the use of green infrastructure, contributing simultaneously to the well-being of citizens and to the objectives of the 2030 biodiversity strategy. Increasing the use of wood in construction can bring multiple benefits. Replacing fossil-based building materials with sustainable bio-based materials such as sustainably sourced wood could help reduce emissions. Both in our buildings and in our cities: to bring nature closer to people, it must be part of their lives to promote sustainable living conditions by ensuring that benefits do not go mainly to companies but primarily to citizens. This will be done through massive quality job creation in the building and restoration sector as well as the cultural and creative sectors, both in cities and in rural areas, with a special focus on valuing our natural spaces, regions and practices. The New European Bauhaus movement should be coupled with the Commission's Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas in order to contribute to the strategies tackling the ever more pressing challenges of population loss and declining quality of infrastructure in rural areas. In order to reach this aspect, the Commission needs to put forward efficient measures to facilitate citizens' active involvement in projects' design and development, improvements of quality of life and indoor well-being and increase of energy efficiency in major energy savings, paying particular attention to accessibility and affordability to ensure social fairness and inclusiveness.

- **Transversality and interdisciplinarity:** recognising that architecture, art and the cultural and creative sectors as a whole can be easily combined with other sectors, such as sociology, geography and urbanism to create a valuable source of knowledge and practice. Uniting architects, designers, artists, musicians, writers, sociologists, engineers, environmentalists, geographers and other professions, this new approach should develop joint practices overcoming unconscious limitations and give birth to novel ideas and innovation. The New European Bauhaus should have the ambition to promote inclusion of artists in all research and innovation activities in Europe and in particular to promote an alliance of art and technology for a sustainable future. Moreover, to best align with the Renovation wave initiative, it is important to combine different elements, especially when looking for construction and other materials, and for reuse, circular approach in design and architectures. Given the fact of the increased use of renewables integrated in buildings system and deployment e-mobility infrastructure it will offer opportunity to best merge innovative nature of Bauhaus with the new technological uptakes in order to have buildings as much integrated in energy system. At the same time, the upcoming revision of energy legislation, precisely EPBD and MEPS (minimum energy performance standards) could offer a good synergies and opportunities for Bauhaus to take an active role in combining different sectors and their practices. The New Bauhaus should also take advantages of digitalisation and data as a source of social innovation. The strengthened connectivity targets and ambitions for the deployment of high capacity networks for communication infrastructure are also crucial aspects in accelerating the readiness of smart buildings, the application of smart technologies and smart cities.
- **Bottom-up, open participation:** enabling citizens to become active agents in a non-directed manner. Without culturally-based social dynamism (involvement of citizens, cities and towns), the Bauhaus will not act as a catalyst for a true pan-European movement and could fall only into the hands of "elite actors". Architectural, artistic and cultural movements can

only arise from the base up and never artificially imposed from the institutions down. It would also be important to involve SMEs and other business directly from the first steps as the opportunities of the Renovation wave should be better promoted among small and medium firms, bridging the “knowledge gap” many of them still suffer from. Public fora stimulating open, inclusive and transparent debate need to be created to allow citizens and local communities to reflect and share best practices on the physical transformation of our living spaces, homes and public venues.

- **Global reach:** At a time when some advocate for hermetic borders and inflame the fear of difference, the inclusion of participants beyond the borders of the Union must be reinforced. Bidirectional exchange, and the recognition that the solutions we want to find can be nourished by other points of view, as well as their necessary adaptation to different realities at a global level, must also be strengthened. The creation of all-inclusive *ateliers* in partner countries, acting as focal points between EU and partner countries social entrepreneurs, can be an innovative way to promote EU fundamental values. In this way, the New European Bauhaus could be considered as a new instrument in the EU’s external action toolbox. To have a major impact, this initiative should seek to develop and fund all viable and conceptually sustainable pilot projects, with at least one pilot project in each member state. If it remains at only 5 projects in this first year, this initiative will not achieve its intended impact, as it will generate disappointment in those territories it does not reach.

In the design phase, it is paramount to consider what has already been developed in the past and can be considered as a starting point. There are many examples of sustainable architecture and urban planning, such as the eco-districts developed all over Europe in the last three decades, where residents were involved in their design. There is also established cross-disciplinary artistic research and practice aiming to foster social and individual change to build greater ecological and social awareness to the challenges we face as Europeans. If the Bauhaus aspires to be a true bottom-up movement, this recognition should not limit the harvesting and subsequent considerations of new, innovative ideas.

Moreover, based on the principle of bottom-up, open participation, the SD believes that the topics covered by the Bauhaus in phase 2 should not be pre-defined. Instead, they should arise from the design phase through the inputs provided by citizens’ and the different professional engaged with the project.

3. S&D key demands of S&D towards the new Bauhaus initiative

- The New European Bauhaus initiative must be a new starting point for the creation of a pan-European **network** of architectural, urban and rural, artistic and cultural research centres, related SMEs and sectoral industries in the construction and renovation sector. Their task will be to contribute to reflection and creation that will serve as a basis for living together better, improving both the spaces and cities we inhabit, as well as the environment around them, and interrogating the challenges identified in the design phase, embedding them in a European perspective. They must provide the guidelines for the Renovation Wave initiative, in order to make it energy-efficient, sustainable and more adaptive to the new ways of living, considering its cultural and social dimension and additionally serve as an accelerator for socially promising green and digital solutions, technologies and products for which Europe should aim to become a worldwide industrial and economic leader. They must also enhance the circular and sustainable use of raw materials and promote the use of green infrastructures. The new European Bauhaus should create

a momentum towards an alliance of science, technology and the arts that goes beyond the realm of renovation of buildings. All innovation activities including technology innovation should include artistic thinking as a step towards a distinctly European approach to innovation that puts the human at the centre and integrates art as an integral part throughout a development cycle, be it that of a product or an urban or rural project.

- The new Bauhaus initiative should create a momentum to **foster new employment for** architecture, design, cultural and creatives sectors: architects, urban sociologists, building and restoring workers, designers and artists, including writers and musicians and all those involved. These new jobs have to be quality jobs and, as much as possible, public investment should go into projects that can create stable, long-term jobs with decent wages thus ensuring the quality of employment and securing the legal environment. It should provide equal opportunities as well as evident benefits for the workforce, include upskilling/reskilling opportunities; develop renovation building techniques combining innovative methods and traditional crafts; promote skills and craftsmanship; and trigger new investments to support these sectors throughout Europe, urban and rural areas alike. It should, therefore, also be closely linked to educators and the younger generation as well contribute to the much-needed cultural recovery. Nevertheless, it is essential to upgrade the skill base of construction workers and other workforces in sustainable construction, building energetics, energy efficiency measures, and working with renewable energy through a sustainable training programme. However, in line with such reskilling programs, the Commission should put forward respective tools to inform occupants and homeowners on energy efficiency measures.

- The new European Bauhaus should unapologetically be based on **European values** and its work aspire to embody them. Architects, designers, artists and cultural workers require creative freedom and are nurtured by plurality and tolerance. In this way, their praxis is, intuitively, based on European values and thus, they naturally become ambassadors of Europe. The new European Bauhaus should, therefore, empower local communities and citizens to tackle social innovation, social justice and environmental challenges, promoting democratic participation, including at EU level, to re-imagining public spaces which bring people together, such as public buildings, schools, libraries, heritage buildings, community centres, local hubs for smart workers, etc. to ensure public spaces promote togetherness, embrace diversity and are truly accessible to all: children, young people, people with disabilities and ageing population. The SD calls for the establishment of an annual pan-European cultural and ideas' festival to be celebrated on, or close to, the 9th of May, Europe's day, to promote citizen's engagement with Europe as a project in permanent construction through arts, culture and debate.

- **The new Bauhaus initiative should be inclusive and linked to affordable and accessible housing:** Lack of decent housing affects health and the environment, while damaging the right to proper education, professional evolution and even involvement in public life. The New European Bauhaus initiative should support a universalistic model of housing: promoting public housing policies for all and protecting the most vulnerable, promoting social mixing and preventing segregation based on socio-economic factors. This means providing adequate funding for lowest-income groups and taking into account the living conditions inside of those buildings. Additionally, preventing gentrification must be prioritised order to maintain the livelihoods of local communities. It is also important to invest in neighbourhood's recreational and sport facilities, community centres, parks and green spaces to improve living conditions. In short: **green social housing** needs to be introduced into the national housing investment plans.

- To ensure the **bottom-up and inclusive** character of this initiative, S&D calls for the selection criteria for the initial projects to be clear, transparent and to promote a geographical balance within the EU, ensuring the participation of small- and medium-sized countries; interdisciplinarity and gender balance. Culture and creativity are important drivers of innovation, entrepreneurship and regional growth. The New European Bauhaus should be a project for all regions, cities, towns and villages and should break boundaries between urban and rural, reflecting on how thinking “local” can enable global solutions for a more sustainable society, in environmental and socioeconomic terms. In doing so, it could contribute to mitigate and reverse the negative effects of demographic change as well as further consolidate EU cohesion, without discrimination between urban and rural areas. The initial venues should lead to the creation of a Bauhaus network spanning urban and rural areas and integrating the gender perspective that ensures the parity of those who want to join the adventure of re-building Europe, encouraging specially the participation of women and girls in STEAM, as interdisciplinary projects such as artistic and cultural can help attract more women to this areas. For the New European Bauhaus to be truly inclusive, it must integrate fully the gender perspective, reflecting the everyday experience of all women, including mothers, in urban planning and public transportation. This also means taking into account commuting patterns, feeling of safety or lack thereof, accessibility and affordability for families with young children or strollers. It must also take account of the needs of persons with disabilities. It is not enough to respond only to the needs of those with limited mobility, it is paramount to use simple solutions to improve accessibility and user-friendliness for people who are visually impaired or deaf or have mental disabilities.

- **Funding** should reflect the interdisciplinary character of the initiative and come from new appropriations as well as enhanced synergies between different programmes (such as Recovery and Resilience Facility, Horizon Europe, cohesion funds) and notably funds allocated to the "Renovation Wave" where appropriate given its R&D&I nature, without impacting the financial envelopes of the already stretched-thin Erasmus+ and Creative Europe programmes. Additional co-financing by the Member States of each of the sites of the New Bauhaus should be considered. S&D proposes to use a label system, along the lines of the good practice developed during the European Year of Cultural Heritage or that developed by the S+T+ARTS initiative, to facilitate the blend of funds from different actions to finance projects contributing to the objective of the New European Bauhaus Initiative

The European Bauhaus initiative is a project for regions, cities and towns of the EU. As it aims at physical transformation of our houses, living spaces and public spaces, the involvement of towns, cities and regions is of crucial importance, if this renovation wave is carried bottom-up and not selectively imposed to-down. By combining arts and cultural collaboration with technology and industry beyond the strict realm of buildings' renovation, the New European Bauhaus will boost a new approach to European innovation towards a sustainable and inclusive future.