

Memorandum: **The Right to Time**, an urgent topic on the European Agenda

All over Europe, time of citizens faces acceleration, coordination difficulties, time squeeze, temporal inequalities and injustice. In this memorandum, we call upon the European institutions to provide for explicit time policies leading to better quality of life and healthier and sustainable society, to just relationships of genders and generations and to sustainable development. **We plead for the recognition of a “right to time”, enforcing time policies throughout the European Union and encouraging governments to implement time policies in order to confer a right to the time to European citizens.**

Now more than ever time policies are an urgent claim and need. The crises Europe has undergone recently – Covid-19, climate change, financial crisis, care-crisis, and social cleavages within European societies – show that Europe needs a re-equilibration of its values and resources. Time for care, time for human well-being, time for social cohesion and solidarity, time structures for a stable economy and the recognition of the times of nature have become more urgent than ever. **It is time for time policy.** Explicit time policies were first implemented in the early 1990s in Italy, when women demanded a user-friendly organization of local times – at work, in the domestic sphere, on the level of the city. This created momentum to local initiatives for citizen-friendly reforms of public and private time schedules and reorganization of urban planning, integrating space and time, urban time banks, etc. These initiatives have been implemented in several cities of Europe such as Bolzano, Barcelona, Strasbourg etc. “Tempi della Città” (times of the city) have spread in several European countries with the support of European programs (*Eurexcter* and *Equal*).

Time policies, implicitly shaping individual life-courses, collective rhythms of society and everyday life, have always existed. We plead for making time policies explicit and democratically legitimised. This means taking into account the implications for health of the circadian rhythms on any public policy, considering social uses of time and their impact on gender, race or other social differences when designing a new public service and including an analysis of time use and its impact on our environment when we design mobility, energy or other key policies. They require public discourse of temporal implications of policies which are normally seen in their specific context only (as labour, education, urban planning, traffic, tourism policies etc.), not in their temporal context.

An evident example is the pending decision on the change of seasonal clock time in Europe (Daylight Saving Time), which a final decision needs to be taken at the European level by 2021. The temporal organisation of society should not be structured either by state, economic power or traditions (alone), but rather by democratic decision, taking into consideration health impact. The high participation (more than 4.6 million replies) to the consultation launched by the European Commission on the consultation on ending the seasonal clock changes in the EU, show the strong interest of EU citizens of time related policies. **Therefore, we plead for public policies considering temporal aspects and impacts which means, in the first place, to make them visible by putting them in the political public agenda.**

The rising awareness of the significance of time in everyday-life lead to the emergence of a new key element of the modern welfare state: the right to time. The Council of Europe's Congress of Local and Regional authorities, in October 2010, adopted two decisions encouraging governments to implement time policies in order to confer a right to time to European citizens (*Resolution 313/2010* and *Recommendation 295/2010*). The right to time has five components:

- free determination of individuals over their time;
- no discrimination (gender, age, ethnic, or otherwise) in the use of time;
- no devaluation of times such as unemployment, training, time for care, for civic engagement;
- everyone's freedom to develop a proper culture of time-use;
- the right to common social times.

The modern welfare state and the European Social Pillar should no longer limit itself to guaranteeing a basic financial welfare, but equally integrate temporal wellbeing and self-determination.

Policies implementing the right to time encompass various areas. They reconcile the different spheres of daily life, different types of work, caring for others and domestic and voluntary activity, leisure, and different social milieus. They deal with conflicts between different temporal demands for infrastructure, the use of the night etc. They reshape the space-time of daily life with a view to sustainable healthier development and improving the quality of life. As democratic policies, they involve citizens providing for participatory co-construction of time-projects with different stakeholders; citizen-friendly cooperation between services of different public and private branches and levels; and reversible experimentation.

The instruments of time policies are multifold, based on broad experiences and expertise in European countries. They range from knowledge generating (monitoring of spatial rhythms, time-impact assessment methods), modes of citizen participation (including children, elderly, non-residents) in time-projects up to the integration of spatial and temporal planning. A time-political ‘tool-kit’ is at hand, experts (practitioners as well as academics) are available, all over Europe.

It is urgent that the EU institutions take action. What Europe needs in the current situation, is a powerful European stance in favour of the right to time enforcing time policies throughout the EU and encouraging governments to implement time policies – they should confer a right to time to European citizens and create a European “place” where time-political experience and expertise come together and can flourish.

We, the signatories of this memorandum, take the opportunity of the German EU Council Presidency to call on the members of the European Parliament, the European Council and the European Commission to put the following objectives on their political agenda:

- **to increase the awareness for the temporal implications of public policies and actions,**
- **to make the direct and indirect temporal implications explicit within policy-making, relating them with the Sustainable Development Goals and the Green New Deal,**
- **to design explicit temporally oriented and citizen-inclusive policies,**
- **to harmonise and share knowledge of teleworking initiatives, arising around Europe, specially with the arrival of COVID-19, and of other time flexibility measures.**

We plead to create a “**European Time Academy**” supporting and empowering time-policy Europe-wide, via pooling scientific work and practical expertise on temporal issues in the various spheres. Public Time Offices have been created at the local level (eg. Bolzano) and regional level (Catalan Office for the Time Use Reform, created in 2018). The Academy should serve as a hub of:

- linking, supporting and promoting the European and local time use policies
- collecting and distributing transnational knowledge, encouraging innovative research,
- raising public and private time awareness,
- exchanging of scientists and practitioners and performing advanced training and consultancy.

The European Time Academy could serve as part of the European Social Pillar and a laboratory including various stakeholders and as a respected part of public opinion in public deliberation processes. It could provide European recommendations, expert opinions on time policies and certificates for practical actors. The European Time Academy would show that the EU is willing to establish “time” as a key element of welfare in favour of quality of life of citizens, gender equality, health care and social cohesion, through subsidiary processes of participatory democracy.

Signed by:

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Zeitpolitik (Berlin), Association „Tempo Territorial“ (France), International Association for Time Use Research (IATUR), municipal time agencies in Bolzano, Bergamo and Milan (Italy), Barcelona Time Use Initiative for a Healthy Society (Spain).
