

## **From crisis to opportunity: how the Metropolitan City of Rome responded to the emergency**

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**Panellist 4: Metropolitan city of Rome** – Virginia Raggi, Mayor of Rome

### **From crisis to opportunity: how the Metropolitan City of Rome responded to the emergency**

The Covid-19 emergency enveloped our countries and forced us to quickly redefine the way we provide services to the public and implement new prevention and safety regulations on social interaction, from transport to mobility and digital access. It was also an opportunity to fast track processes to provide support to citizens. In response to the virus's social and financial impact, which involved imposing restrictions and closing businesses, schools and training services, authorities were able to respond swiftly, with determination and dedication, quickly introducing changes and intervening to balance inequalities, from digital divide to physical connection.

Since the acute phase of the emergency, the Metropolitan City of Rome worked to allow the quick restart of education and training activities, starting from removing the obstacles to digital access. A field we have long been focusing on, and the Metropolitan Wi-Fi Network Project, Italy's largest public network, is a good example. During lockdown, with the help of our metropolitan police, we delivered tablets and digital devices to high school students, making sure they had access to remote learning activities. We also developed and implemented, starting from our vocational centres (also closed during lockdown), an innovative e-learning platform, *Accade scuola*.

The Accade platform is the basis of hybrid learning, a new learning model that combines innovation and technology with traditional educational methods, providing virtual classrooms and opportunities to discuss, enriching the in presence as well as the online lesson experience. Accade is an innovative tool that we want to export and make accessible to schools across the territory: we are already working closely with headteachers and the mayors of our municipalities to identify technical and organizational solutions that will make the platform transferable and available to everyone.

At the same time, the City of Rome and other metropolitan municipalities have worked to facilitate a quick recovery and make people's everyday life easier, taking the opportunity to make our cities effectively more accessible and safe, adopting measures not only to protect vulnerable people from immediate threats but also build resilience for the looming climate crisis and other possible health, economic and social emergencies.

A concrete commitment in line with the sustainable development goals, and in particular with number 11 on the European Agenda: "Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable".

The current crisis is an opportunity to rethink the way we live in cities, the relation between cities and their inhabitants, the role of physical and virtual urban public spaces and intermediary private places that connect work with education, and ultimately the way we plan the cities of the future.

Even before the health crisis, cities had started redefining their identity and their priorities, to strengthen their risk preparedness and response capacity. Resilient cities means greener, smarter, and more inclusive cities.

To this end, when businesses reopened and travel restrictions loosened after the acute phase of the emergency, the City of Rome did its best to improve transport capacity, investing in alternative transport vehicles, providing more electric scooters, light and environment-friendly, as well as potentiating the

existing car and bike sharing schemes, helping citizens and encouraging public eco-mobility, while also investing in micro-urbanism projects, from extending cycle lanes – 150 km in total – *to other small-scale interventions* (rethinking the configuration of roads and public areas), and improving existing infrastructures, based on a careful study of mobility statistics.

During lockdown, micro-mobility projects were devised and delivered to ensure safer mobility for students and apprentices during phases 2 and 3 of the pandemic. The creation of new infrastructures is part of the urban and public mobility policies designed for those who live in our cities, especially workers and students.

**Learning cities, cities for learning: how local authorities can strengthen the connection between work, training and living areas, improving access and mobility and integrating them in the larger social and economic context.**

The Metropolitan City of Rome has tested new methods of training and active policies by connecting formal and informal networks, investing in the existing apprenticeship programmes, strengthening its role as facilitator and creator of exchange opportunities between demand and supply.

As the first to join the EaFa Alliance, the Metropolitan City of Rome has since developed the programme *Si, vale!* – Integrated Systems to Valorise Apprenticeships, Workplace Training and Experience Abroad promoting and supporting high-standard apprenticeships at metropolitan level. As we said in June, we want to invest in the opportunities offered by apprenticeship programmes, with the aim of defining and strengthening the connection between active labour market policies and the sustainable development of local communities.

To ensure the active involvement of various stakeholders in innovative and/or high social impact initiatives, with “Si, Vale” we promoted the inclusion of apprenticeship as a social criteria in public procurement, to encourage and support municipalities and public entities in the metropolitan area to use public procurement as a way of getting more employers to offer apprenticeships and other training programmes. We are starting a programme aimed at listening, raising awareness and engaging with small and medium enterprises and professionals: in October, we have scheduled the launch of a forum that brings together the representatives of different economic sectors, employer organizations, professional associations (Engineers Association, Accountants Association, etc.) and a road show in the metropolitan municipalities.

**The main objective is to build connections and form alliances between government, education/training, enterprises, and local communities, also thanks to the creation of local pacts for skills and apprenticeships.**

We think this is the right way to give a real impetus to the capacity of institutional actors at metropolitan governance level, bringing together the three pillars of sustainable development – economy, society and environment – in which high-standard apprenticeship plays a strategic role. Cities are “matchmakers”, they create connections between workers and employment opportunities, citizens and services, people and people. Cities can become even better matchmakers by creating tailor-made local policies: not only will they be more competitive, they will also be more inclusive and resilient.

**A more resilient future for training and apprenticeship: starting from city networks and sharing new inclusive and sustainable professional training models and high-standard apprenticeship programmes.**

Lastly, I want to highlight the main commitments and the importance of strengthening the network of European cities to get a wider perspective, exchange knowledge and experiences, and obtain the cooperation and internationalization of training and apprenticeships.

To achieve a more resilient future for education and professional training and apprenticeship, planning ahead is essential.

Cities should take advantage of their connections both within and beyond their borders. Creating these connections – with nearby communities, through networks that cover the entire city or connect rural areas with cities – is the key to our cities' recovery as part of an interconnected world that must work together to overcome the global crisis caused by Covid-19.

Cities acquire increasingly more power and responsibility to shape, define and drive recovery and economic growth. They all must invest in their existing key sectors and facilitate the exchange and connection with the opportunities of a global economy. To maximise the impact, they must start thinking and acting beyond individual areas, cities, and administrative territories. This means creating and increasing the opportunities for cities to meet and share, to make the most of the economies of scale and learn from each other's experiences. Collaboration networks between European cities already include the Covenant of Mayors against Climate Change and the city network for mobility, to guarantee efficient transport systems. In June 2020, in collaboration with the European Commission, the Metropolitan City of Rome launched the City4apprenticeship network, which will offer a template for how to do this in relation to job and skills, in relation to high-quality apprenticeship while supporting the green and digital transition and the European Pillar of Social Rights.