

Aachen

Short Manifesto for the
Municipal Election
2025

For an Aachen at the heart of Europe

Volt

INTRODUCTION



Dear citizens of Aachen,

Volt has been represented in Aachen's city council since 2020. In these years, we have shown that fresh ideas can bring real change:

- ☆ Sustainable urban planning is being realised in Aachen through our proposals on sponge city concepts and cold local heating.
- ☆ A permanent Citizens' Council has been established.
- ☆ Free menstrual products are available in many schools.
- ☆ An open data portal now strengthens transparency.
- ☆ With the vision of an edible city

...and with practical proposals on digitalisation, we have started to reshape Aachen.

This short manifesto sets out our next steps: concrete, solution-oriented oriented and focused on Aachen. Our goal is to face challenges directly. We act locally while learning from successful models across Europe. Because good European politics always begin on our doorstep.

Unsere Statements

- ☐ Housing instead of Monopoly
- ☐ More trees, fewer concrete heads
- ☐ Not just participation but real decision-making
- ☐ Equal means equal. Full stop

Volt combines social justice, a European perspective, and digital opportunities. We invite you to shape Aachen together with us, in your neighborhood, in the council, online, or on-site. The future is not a task for individuals. It belongs to all of us.

Symbols

Some parts of this program are marked with symbols. Their meaning is:



Crisis resilience: Climate crisis, extreme weather, energy shortages, cyberattacks. Crises often strike suddenly and hit those with fewer resources the hardest. Municipal resilience must therefore be a priority. This means:

- Well-equipped fire brigades, civil protection and aid organisations
- Functional emergency plans
- Cooperation between citizens and administration

Aachen needs people who are prepared.



Volt is the party that thinks **European**, also at the local level. We cross borders, apply solutions from across Europe, and connect Aachen with its partner cities and neighbors. What works in Vienna, Utrecht, or Copenhagen can also work here.



This symbol marks issues important to us, but where responsibility does not always lie with the City of Aachen itself, but with the **Städteregion**.



This symbol shows where Volt Aachen has already submitted a proposal to the city council. We will continue to push forward and develop our ideas.

Best Practices

- At the end of each main chapter, we highlight “best practices”. They show that our proposals are already working elsewhere. Whether in Vienna, Münster, or Düsseldorf, we learn from places where good ideas are already a reality.
- These examples guide us. They encourage us to keep moving forward. Good politics does not need to reinvent the wheel, but it must know where the wheel is already turning.

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Our Top 12 for Aachen

Demands for the City and the Städteregion

1. 🏠 Transform empty shops into housing
2. 🌳 Plant more trees and expand green façades to reduce heat
3. 🪑 Create more consumption-free seating areas with shade
4. 🚰 Install drinking water fountains at Elisenbrunnen and Ponttor
5. 🚲 Ensure safe school routes and wide cycle paths in all districts
6. 🚊 Establish a regional tram for stress- & traffic-free commuting
7. 🎫 Introduce 1€ ticket
8. 📶 Provide fast Wi Fi across the entire city

For an Aachen that lives with Europe

9. 🇪🇺 Enable easy travel to Maastricht, Vaals, or Liège
 - for shopping, working & living
10. 🇪🇺 Strengthen cross-border cooperation
 - multilingual, accessible & with less bureaucracy
 - cooperate in: energy, heating, climate, science and economy
11. 🌈 Create spaces for diversity & stand against discrimination
12. 💶 Strengthen independence from non-EU software

Chapter 1: Shaping Aachen



1.1 Housing in Aachen

1.1.1 Create housing in a targeted way

- ☆ Establish a municipal housing company that builds affordable & climate-friendly flats
- ☆ Use sustainable materials and efficient construction methods

1.1.2 Active land policy

- ☆ Secure land in a targeted way through preemptive rights, leasehold, and long-term cooperation with cooperatives or social organisations
- ☆ Introduce Property Tax C to bring unused, buildable land into active use

1.1.3 Make use of existing structures

- ☆ Activate vacant properties and gaps between buildings, further develop existing buildings
- ☆ Allow densification only where it makes sense, with consideration for the social environment and existing infrastructure

1.1.4 Shape neighbourhoods together

- ☆ Promote urban planning that encourages short distances and creates consumption-free public spaces with the involvement of residents
- ☆ Recognise Forst as its district

1.1.5 Enable diversity in housing

- ☆ Support community housing, multigenerational houses, and inclusive housing projects
- ☆ Support care communities and age-appropriate housing within neighborhoods

1.2 Digitalisation in Aachen

1.2.1 Strengthen schools and educational institutions

- ☆ All schools in Aachen should have stable internet connections, Wi Fi and modern media technology
- ☆ Pupils should have access to digital devices
- ☆ Expand continuing education opportunities in the digital field for adults

1.2.2 Smart City with participation

- ☆ Develop a smart city strategy, including traffic management, environmental sensors, and digital citizen services
- ☆ Ensure that everyone can understand what is planned and how it is implemented

1.2.3 Make administration digitally accessible

- ☆ Administrative procedures should also be possible online, accessible, and multilingual
- ☆ Gradually expand digital services and provide city administration staff with training in digital transformation and IT security

1.2.4 Open data and digital independence

- ☆ Create a municipal open data platform that publishes public data in a transparent and machine-readable way, preferably multilingual
- ☆ Strengthen digital sovereignty by relying on open source solutions

1.2.5 Network expansion and Wi Fi spots

- ☆ Expand fibre optic infrastructure and establish a municipal Wi Fi service under the name AachenWifi

1.3 Innovation hub: Science and economy



1.3.1 The European AI Gigafactory

- ☆ Establish a European AI Gigafactory as a real-world laboratory, supported by the city, universities, business, and civil society
- ☆ The goal is to develop AI systems that are democratic and serve the common good, for example, in mobility planning or healthcare

1.3.2 Make start-ups easier and innovations usable

- ☆ Create simpler conditions for start-ups and innovation through multilingual advice, affordable premises, and targeted support for local, euregional, and international talents and graduates
- ☆ Specifically promote business models that are sustainable and oriented towards the common good

1.3.3 Connect city, universities, and economy strategically

- ☆ Build long-term cooperation between the city administration, universities, research institutions, and companies in real-world laboratories with direct local impact, for example, in energy supply, mobility, urban development, and education

1.3.4 Prepare for the Einstein Telescope



- ☆ The Einstein Telescope could become one of the most significant research projects in Europe, located here in the Euregio
- ☆ Start early with spatial planning, public communication, and a strong dialogue between citizens and science

Best Practices

- **Vienna (AT):** For decades the city has relied on social housing
- **Bochum Laer (NRW):** A barrier free neighborhood shows how fair housing can work.
- **Amsterdam (NL):** The city uses digital tools to identify unused spaces
- **Hamburg (DE):** Through the project Digital macht Schule Hamburg has connected schools and provided digital learning resources
- **Barcelona (ES):** Uses smart city strategies for sustainable urban development and civic participation
- **Estonia (EE):** Demonstrates how digital administration can make access to public services easier and more efficient
- **Leuven (BE):** Europe's most innovative city. With the network Leuven 2030, it connects administration, research, and civil society, supports start-ups, and drives social innovation towards a sustainable future
- **Munich (DE):** Through the Munich Startup platform, the city supports young companies with advice, networking, coworking options, and funding. A municipal start-up office secures long-term local ties
- **Barcelona (ES):** With the open source project Decidim, the city demonstrates how digital participation, technological sovereignty, and support for local tech start-ups can go hand in hand. Digital tools are used for democratic urban development and innovation

Chapter 2: Moving Aachen

2.1 Climate protection and sustainability

2.1.1 Climate-friendly construction and renovation

- ☆ Introduce a CO₂ budget for municipal building projects
- ☆ Plan new municipal buildings to be energy efficient and renovate existing ones through serial refurbishment with sustainable materials
- ☆ Provide support and advice for private property owners

2.1.2 Expand urban greenery and heat protection



- ☆ Increase unsealed surfaces, green roofs and façades, and plant more trees
- ☆ Create small natural areas such as tiny forests or greened courtyards in densely built-up districts



2.1.3 Sponge city – use rainwater



- ☆ Promote rainwater infiltration through permeable surfaces, retention areas, and greening to prevent flooding

2.1.4 Sustainable consumption and resource protection



- ☆ Develop municipal strategies for resource conservation through recycling, reuse, and sustainable procurement
- ☆ Strengthen reuse and recycling in the construction sector

2.1.5 Nutrition and regional production



- ☆ Promote short supply chains, regional weekly markets, and community gardens
- ☆ Ensure nurseries and schools are supplied with regional food

2.1.6 Education and participation in climate protection

- ☆ Expand educational programs on climate adaptation in schools and across the city
- ☆ Introduce participation budgets for concrete local measures

2.2 Energy and heating

2.2.1 Solar panels on municipal roofs



- ☆ Equip as many municipal surfaces as possible with photovoltaic systems
- ☆ Support balcony power units, especially for households with low incomes

2.2.2 Expand district and local heating in a climate-friendly way



- ☆ Promote the expansion of district heating and cold local heating networks
- ☆ Examine new technologies such as deep geothermal energy
- ☆ Plan and implement in close cooperation with municipal utilities, the housing sector, and neighborhoods

2.2.3 Generate and store regional energy

- ☆ Produce and store energy as locally as possible to relieve the grid and increase supply security, with public buildings setting an example

2.2.4 Think of energy in an efficient and social way

- ☆ Provide targeted support for low-income households through energy advice and tailored funding programs

2.3. Mobility in Aachen

2.3.1 Mobility as part of public services

- ☆ Ensure that everyone can travel safely and reliably, preferably on foot, by bike, by bus, or with other forms of public transport

2.3.2 Strengthen and make cycling safe

- ☆ Develop a continuous, safe, and comfortable cycle network for Aachen
- ☆ Create wide, physically protected cycle lanes along all main routes and safe junctions with priority for cyclists
- ☆ Provide cycle stations, parking facilities, and good links to public transport to make cycling a real alternative in daily life

2.3.3 Improve public transport



- ☆ Increase service frequency, expand accessibility, and make bus and rail transport climate neutral
- ☆ Further develop night services, on-demand buses, and flexible routes, including in less densely populated districts

2.3.4 Distribute space fairly

- ☆ Allocate traffic space fairly, with more room for walking, cycling, leisure and urban greenery
- ☆ Reduce parking spaces in public areas where urban space is particularly tight

2.3.5 Enable socially fair mobility

- ☆ Introduce a 1 € ticket for local public transport
- ☆ Provide additional services for people with mobility impairments

2.3.6 Overcome borders and think mobility across the Euregio



- ☆ Cooperate with Liège, Maastricht, Kerkrade, and Vaals to expand crossborder bus and rail services without language or tariff barriers

Best Practices

- **Xanten (NRW):** With a front garden regulation against gravel gardens the city
- **Kerkrade (NL):** Schools actively involve pupils in waste separation and teach sustainable behaviour
- **Kornelimünster (DE):** The weekly market combines regional quality, an attractive atmosphere, sustainable measures and cultural offers
- **Münster (NRW):** Supports balcony solar units with a funding program and a social bonus, showing how fair climate protection can succeed locally
- **Freiburg (DE):** The energy district uses buffer storage to deploy renewable energy efficiently and balance peak loads, ensuring stable local supply
- **Utrecht (NL):** Demonstrates how wide, protected cycle lanes and green waves increase safety and cycling use
- **Vienna (AT):** Shows how dense, affordable and emission free public transport can combine social justice and climate protection
- **Maastricht (NL):** The Aachen Maastricht connection shows how regional cooperation can strengthen mobility shows how even small areas can contribute to climate protection

Chapter 3: Connecting Aachen

3.1 Europe and the Euregio

3.1.1 Aachen as a European city



- ☆ The borders with Belgium and the Netherlands are not edges, but a centre
- ☆ Aachen should actively shape its role as a European city

3.1.2 Mobility without borders



- ☆ Better coordinate local transport with Liège, Maastricht, and the Städteregion
- ☆ Simplify ticket offers, coordinate timetables, and develop new cross-border lines with a focus on education, culture, and employment

3.1.3 Think of administration and everyday life in European terms



- ☆ Menschen aus EU-Ländern das Ankommen erleichtern mit einem EU-Welcome-Desk

3.1.4 Expand cooperation



- ☆ Establish an EU Welcome Desk to make it easier for people from EU countries to settle in Aachen

3.2 Shaping Aachen together

3.2.1 Permanently anchor the Citizens' Council

- ☆ Volt initiated the permanent Citizens' Council in Aachen. Selected by lot, people come together to advise on concrete topics
- ☆ Provide the Citizens' Council with sufficient funding and ensure transparent implementation of its results through good preparation

3.2.2 Create diverse participation formats

- ☆ Promote citizen dialogue through neighborhood meetings, digital platforms, youth forums, and targeted outreach in different languages

3.2.3 Introduce a participation budget

- ☆ Establish a participation budget that allows citizens to decide directly, for example, on playgrounds, traffic calming, or public spaces

3.2.4 Transparency through open data

- ☆ Strengthen the open data portal so that information on administration, environment, mobility, and finances is publicly accessible, up to date, and easy to understand

3.3 Diversity and anti-discrimination

3.3.1 Protection and visibility of queer life

- ☆ Establish a queer centre in Aachen as a place of encounter
- ☆ Provide long-term support for events such as Christopher Street Day

3.3.2 Remove barriers

- ☆ Ensure accessibility in all building projects
- ☆ Make political communication accessible, including in different languages, digital formats, easy language, and sign language

3.3.3 Actively counter discrimination

- ☆ Expand counselling services and strengthen networking with associations and organisations

Best Practices

- **MAHHL cities (DE):** Maastricht, Aachen, Hasselt, Heerlen and Liège show how municipal knowledge transfer can work across borders
- **Aachen (DE):** In 2024 the city received the EU Mission Label for its Climate City Contract and thereby gained access to European funding
- **Luxembourg (LU):** Introduced 9 May as a public holiday, while Brussels demonstrates commitment with large scale Europe Day events
- **Bonn (DE):** Operates a digital participation platform called Bonn macht mit with active involvement of citizens
- **Wuppertal (DE):** Offers citizens' budgets in which residents decide directly on projects and spending
- **Nuremberg (DE) and Düsseldorf (DE):** Show through youth offices and youth councils how young people can achieve genuine co determination
- **Düsseldorf (DE):** A community run queer centre with municipal subsidy demonstrates how sustainable infrastructure can be built
- **Hamburg (DE):** Implements 90 concrete measures for inclusion and equality as part of its diversity strategy
- **Bonn (DE):** Developed a holistic concept for structural, digital and communicative accessibility, making the city barrier free

Chapter 4: Aachen for everyone

4.1 Education in Aachen

4.1.1 Strengthen early childhood education

- ☆ Expand nursery places that are close to home, full day, and with flexible opening hours
- ☆ Support alternative concepts such as forest nurseries or multigenerational nurseries

4.1.2 Improve digital equipment

- ☆ Ensure that all schools in Aachen have fast internet, Wi Fi, digital devices, and media education support
- ☆ Offer further training for teachers in the field of digital education

4.1.3 Modern and sustainable school construction

- ☆ Plan schools to be functional, inclusive, and climate-friendly with sufficient space for full-day offers, canteens, physical activity, and quiet rooms.
- ☆ Ensure that new construction and renovation projects are energy efficient and accessible

4.1.4 Language, culture, and multilingualism

- ☆ Support multilingual offers in early childhood education, for example, through native language reading sessions or language learning mentorships
- ☆ Enable regional languages such as Öcher Platt to be taught voluntarily and at a low threshold in cooperation with schools and associations



4.2 Health and social affairs

4.2.1 Expand local health services

- ☆ Develop community health centres that bring together doctors, midwives, physiotherapists, care advice, and psychosocial services under one roof
- ☆ Ensure good public transport connections and accessibility
- ☆ Strengthen health prevention in nurseries, schools, and associations

4.2.2 Strengthen care structures



- ☆ Support care communities, neighborhood support centres, and care advice
- ☆ Provide better support for family carers
- ☆ Improve working conditions in the care sector, also through municipal initiatives

4.2.3 Effectively address poverty

- ☆ Offer social counselling in neighborhoods with multilingual information and outreach services
- ☆ Provide targeted support for people in precarious situations, including energy, rent, or debt issues

4.2.4 Integration as a cross-cutting task

- ☆ Integration begins in everyday life. Strengthen places of encounter such as schools, sports clubs, and community centres

4.3 Leisure and youth

4.3.1 Shape the city for young people

- ☆ Ensure that in every district and regardless of family income, young people have access to space, opportunities and co-determination

4.3.2 Create spaces without pressure to consume

- ☆ Offer public spaces where people can stay without having to buy anything, including seating, covered meeting points, and freely accessible sports facilities

4.3.3 Promote youth culture and creative opportunities

- ☆ Expand opportunities for youth culture, such as rehearsal rooms, open stages, events, and workshops for esports, urban sports, and digital culture

4.3.4 Participation from the beginning

- ☆ Young people should not only be the target group but also be able to actively decide
- ☆ Introduce children's and youth councils, open participation procedures, and low-threshold feedback. Participation starts at school and in leisure activities

Best Practices

- **Düren (DE):** The district demonstrates how fee free childcare can work
- **Bonn (DE):** The project Leihbar, a library of things where neighbours can share everyday items free of charge, won the Bonn Climate Award in 2023 and shows how sustainable consumption and social participation can go hand in hand
- **Münster (DE):** Supports digital volunteering in community centres. Aachen itself shows with the House of Curiosity how open learning spaces can work
- **Cologne (DE):** Enables children and young people from low income families to access free leisure and cultural opportunities in municipal facilities
- **Düsseldorf (DE):** Demonstrates how digital platforms can simplify the search for nursery places and make allocation of childcare more efficient
- **The Netherlands (NL):** Integrates care and support into multigenerational neighborhoods, reducing isolation in old age
- **Cologne (DE):** On Cologne Day all residents receive free admission to municipal museums once a month, making cultural participation accessible
- **Essen (DE):** The Church of St John was converted into an open reading café
- **Düsseldorf (DE):** Sport im Park offers more than 30 free courses every week, from yoga to boxing to dance

Imprint

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