Europe in Cologne – livable. colorful. connected.

Foreword

Politics is constantly facing new challenges. It is necessary to address ecological, economic, and social issues and find solutions that reconcile these aspects and improve the living conditions of all people.

With progressive, fact-oriented and transparent policies, Volt stands for exactly that.

Our goal is to sustainably improve the living conditions of all people in Cologne – socially, economically and ecologically.

A EUROPEAN PARTY IN THE COMMUNITY?

Volt is the only party with a Europe-wide, unified platform. Europe is the strongest community of nations in the world. Germany cannot exist without Europe, and Europe cannot exist without Germany.

Although it may not always be immediately visible to the city's residents, the EU provides financial support for numerous projects that strengthen the economy, science, and research, ultimately benefiting the city's citizens.   .
Education and culture can be more effectively connected, fostering neighborhood exchange through programs such as Cultural Heritage in Regional Policy and Cultural Heritage in Action.

The influx of EU citizens plays a role in every municipality and is a task for local politics. Cologne is not an island, but part of the metropolitan region, which, with its proximity to the border triangle, can and should actively utilize this advantage in its European context.

At the same time, new and holistic policies are needed at all levels extending   beyond national borders.

Our election manifesto is a list of our ideas and thoughts for a progressive future for Cologne. We want politics to not cling to old structures, but to boldly break new ground. With digital and citizen-oriented systems, we are making the administration future-proof so that citizens' concerns can be resolved quickly and easily. By consistently reevaluating all budget items and linking them to clear goals, we ensure that every euro goes where it is demonstrably needed – be it for the mobility transition, the housing situation, social coexistence, or climate protection. *(See Chapter 3.2 Democratic Cologne - Modern Administration as a Service Provider)*

We recognize that not every one of our ideals can be implemented overnight   . Therefore, we will regularly review the program, challenge our approaches, and seek out   new solutions.

At Volt, we stand for a progressive, solution-oriented, and value-driven policy. This requires flexible approaches and a new kind of politics that puts people first and focuses on causes rather than dogma. To this end, we seek to work constructively with all democratic forces—guided by the Basic Law and European values—in order to move as close as possible to our shared goals.

Volt stands for transparent, openly communicated decisions and a policy in which citizens are not only informed but also actively   involved! *(see Chapter 3.2 Democratic Cologne)*

We hope to convince you of our principles and ideas. More comprehensive information can be found in the long version of our election manifesto . We look forward to hearing from you if you have any further questions or suggestions.

Liveable Cologne

1.1. Climate-friendly Cologne

Volt is committed to the City of Cologne's goal of becoming climate-neutral by 2035. We remain committed to achieving this goal together with the entire city community. Pursuing the goal of climate neutrality in Cologne also offers numerous opportunities for a modern city: Expanding diverse urban green spaces not only helps absorb harmful greenhouse gases but also enhances quality of life by improving the local microclimate and fostering biodiversity. Climate-friendly technologies offer new approaches for value creation in the local economy.

Expand renewable energies

Funding programs and initiatives to promote photovoltaics: Urban energy supply should move away from fossil fuels and increasingly rely on locally generated renewable electricity. Funding programs such as "Building Renovation – Climate-Friendly Living," "Photovoltaics – Climate-Friendly Living," and "Photovoltaics – Climate-Friendly Working," as well as the Photovoltaics Focus Initiative, should also be revised and simplified.

Creating additional areas for renewable energy projects : The consistent use of all suitable public roofs for photovoltaics - (e.g. according to the NRW solar cadastre) [1] - will efficiently unlock additional potential for renewable energy. ,

Heat transition

Heat register: Significant heat sources such as industrial waste heat, sewage gas or data centers should be included in the heat register so that they can be taken into account in municipal heat planning.

Wastewater heat: We would like to increasingly examine the feasibility of innovative solutions such as wastewater heat and roll them out across the country as quickly as possible based on their potential.

Monitoring: Through concrete interim targets set until 2035 and appropriate monitoring, we will ensure that we as the City of Cologne will actually achieve our goals in the heat transition.

Shaping climate protection socially

Funding program for tree planting on private properties: Tree nurseries are provided to private individuals (owners). This enables rapid tree

Best Practice Waste Heat: Dresden
Thanks to the technology of the Dresden-based startup "Cloud&Heat," waste heat from data centers is used to heat buildings. In Dresden, for example, the process waste heat from 20 server cabinets supplies approximately half of the heat required for drinking water and heating in 56 residential units. This enables the expansion to meet the growing demand for computing power in a sustainable and efficient manner.

planting on fallow land on private properties, saving money and keeping administrative costs low.

Promoting volunteer work, organisations, sponsorships, and initiatives: We would like to specifically support clubs that promote biodiversity in the city (e.g., financing seeds and equipment for cultivating and maintaining flowerbeds).

Sponge city and water management

Increased greening of building roofs and facades : We want to promote the greening of the city, primarily through incentives and cooperation with private construction companies, property owners, and other stakeholders.

Continuation and expansion of the program "GREEN to the power of 3 ROOFS | FACADES | COURTYARDS": We want to continue and strengthen the program by subsidizing the greening of roofs, facades and areas to be desealed.

Expansion of green spaces through planting of previously unused areas: previously neglected areas for greening – such as the roofs of bus stops – are being developed.

Desealing: further deseal paved areas and then prepare them with green spaces.

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[1] https://www.energieatlas.nrw.de/site/karte_solarkataster

Cooperation beyond water management: cooperation between urban and landscape planning, urban water management, traffic planning and water protection within Cologne and intermunicipal.

Biodiversity

"Herb Quota" : We advocate for the conversion of up to 20% of the city's open green spaces into meadows with species-rich, regionally grown seeds, a mowing concept that protects insects and promotes flowering areas. We also advocate for the planting of traffic islands and the edges of sidewalks and bike paths, and strive to prioritize pollinator- and biodiversity-promoting plants in parks and on green spaces.

Establishment of an ecological network: Creation of green corridors to connect urban green spaces. This includes protecting the existing network of inner and outer green belts and further connecting green spaces, for example, through species-rich meadows along cycle paths between parks.

Waste management

Obligation to provide yellow and blue bins: Yellow, blue and – if the pilot project we initiated is positively evaluated – brown bins should be mandatory for all households.

Increase the use of organic waste bins: Valuable natural materials can be collected and reused via the brown bin. We are committed to expanding our "organic waste bin" pilot project.

Awareness campaigns: By educating people about the circular economy in cooperation with schools, initiatives, and industry, we can create a broader understanding of the circular economy.

1.2. Mobile Cologne

We want a Cologne that can transport people quickly, comfortably, reliably, and safely from A to B – without harming the environment or other people. Unfortunately, for years, mobility planning has prioritized cars – the consequences: congested streets, noise, and accidents are part of everyday life for Cologne residents.

Safe and modern infrastructure for all road users: Development of a safe transport infrastructure through protected cycle paths, clear separation of mobility modes, safe crossings/stops/intersections (through improved visibility/lighting at intersections) and intelligent sensor systems for mobility control.

Optimized routes: Volt Cologne is committed to harmonious coexistence among all road users. We want to set clear priorities: Clear bus lanes enable the KVB to provide reliable and fast connections, for example on Aachener Straße. Well-designed bike paths, separated from sidewalks, ensure safe travel.

Mobility as a Service: Sharing systems are intended to become faster, more reliable, and more environmentally friendly, for example by allowing bicycles, cargo bikes, and e-scooters to be dropped off and charged at fixed stations.

30 km/h speed limit in the city center : We are committed to a 30 km/h speed limit throughout the city center.

Strengthen pedestrian traffic representatives in Cologne and make them more effective.

Faster progress for environmentally friendly transportation: Selected lanes will be reserved exclusively for buses or car-sharing vehicles. At the same time, traffic lights will give priority to cyclists and pedestrians.

Congestion pricing for Cologne: Congestion pricing is a charge for cars and trucks in certain urban areas to reduce traffic, improve air quality and strengthen public transport.

The toll will be collected digitally using license plate recognition and will be staggered according to pollutant emissions, with social benefits for those in need.

Lively and car-free neighborhoods

Open-air and car-free Sundays for livable neighborhoods: In the long term, neighborhoods should become as car-free as possible. To increase acceptance of this, we will advocate for car-free

Sunday shopping in selected neighborhoods during the next legislative period.

Superveedel for Cologne: Superveedel are based on the superblock concept, in which several blocks of houses are combined into a single unit in which through traffic for cars is restricted.

Best Practice Superblocks: Barcelona
A superblock can be imagined as a low-traffic zone where pedestrians and cyclists are given priority. Cars are only allowed to travel at approximately 10 km/h, with access restricted primarily to residents and essential delivery vehicles. Through traffic is routed around the superblocks on streets with higher speeds. The goal is not just to calm traffic, but to improve access to public space and to restore streets as living and recreational spaces for adults and play areas for children. Furthermore, traffic injuries [2]and fatalities, as well as noise and air pollution, are to be significantly reduced [3].

Dynamic parking fees and sustainable use of parking space: Parking fees are calculated variably based on factors such as vehicle size, weight, environmental impact, time of day, and occupancy. In addition, parking spaces in busy city centers will be gradually reduced and converted for alternative uses such as unsealed green spaces, bike paths, or pedestrian zones.

Alternative parking areas outside the city center: In order to reduce parking pressure in Cologne's city center, parking areas on the outskirts of the city are to be adapted for increased use.

Bus and train like in Switzerland

Better working conditions at KVB: improved working conditions for KVB drivers and is guided by the recommendations of ver.di.

Expansion of smart bus routes: Expansion of smart bus routes to make public transport more efficient and attractive. Using an open data approach, KVB data on capacity and frequency will be analyzed and optimized routes developed using artificial intelligence.

Public data for public money: A large portion of the KVB's data will be made publicly accessible. This includes information on outages, punctuality,

GPS location data, and statistics on defective elevators and escalators.

1.3. City of Neighborhoods

Cologne needs a construction and housing policy that ensures affordable housing in the long term and at the same time improves the quality of life and health for all citizens.

New neighborhoods that also enhance the ecological value of spaces, paths and streets that are accessible to everyone, clean air, and meeting places that promote social interaction. A city of short distances and spaces for everyone through gender- and generation-equitable, health-promoting design.

Sustainable urban development – A city for all

Promote active land policy: Through a long-term strategy for the purchase of building land and the maintenance of net land ownership, [4]the stock of municipal and subsidized housing should be stabilized in the long term.

Promoting sustainable and socially just urban development in Cologne: consistent application of social preservation regulations in endangered urban districts to prevent displacement through luxury renovations and speculation.

Strengthening the leasehold for long-term affordable housing: Instead of selling municipal land, Cologne should increasingly grant leaseholds, particularly to public-interest housing associations, cooperatives, and social institutions.

Creating inclusive infrastructure : Public transport stops and public buildings such as libraries, citizen offices, sports facilities, digital infrastructure and cultural centres should be accessible to all people.

Public toilets: All people have the same right to participate in public life – this includes access to clean, safe and free toilets.

Living in Cologne

Establishment of a non-profit municipal housing cooperative: Following the Viennese model, such a cooperative will create affordable housing.

Expansion of the cooperative building land model: Further development of the cooperative building land model to make an additional 20% of affordable housing mandatory for construction projects on municipal land.

[2]Compared to the reference period 2018/2019, the number of traffic injuries in LTN 2020 fell by 50%, especially in pedestrian traffic:
https://backend.repository.difu.de/server/api/core/bitstreams/92c4614c-293b-44ff-9a57-7c20ffb75c5f/content
[3]http://theconversation.com/superblocks-are-transforming-barcelona-they-might-work-in-australian-cities-too-123354

[4]The net land holdings of a municipality refer to the total area of municipal property less any land leased, sold or otherwise tied up.

Preference for the distribution of building land for residential construction: The urban development company should provide the future municipal housing cooperative with preferential access to land.

Flexible usage rules: Flexible usage rules simplify the conversion of office space into residential space.

Innovative housing solutions for a better home: We want to promote projects and platforms that facilitate the exchange of apartments and properties. To ensure these exchange processes are secure and seamless, a trusteeship process will be introduced, supported and guaranteed by the city.

Health

Equal opportunities for primary care: promoting municipal multi-professional primary care centers, expanding low-threshold health services (e.g., counseling, basic diagnostics) in health kiosks, and continuing and expanding the anonymous health insurance card for uninsured individuals.

Dealing with the consumption of psychoactive substances:
We are committed to expanding safe consumption conditions, low-threshold substitution treatment [5]– even for people without health insurance – and expanding and supporting access to psychosocial counseling in the drug assistance system.

Introduction of a non-smoking ordinance: In busy outdoor areas, such as downtown areas, tram stops, and public festivals, smoking and vaping should be restricted to designated smoking areas. This applies to tobacco, cannabis, and e-liquids.

Cologne as a model city for cannabis: The creation of a sufficient legal supply is intended to protect the health of users and strengthen their rights, as well as to displace the illegal trade.

Prevention and health services for disadvantaged groups : Low-threshold preventive medical examinations (e.g. preventive days in district town halls) or programs for free club memberships for low-income families create equitable health services.

Care infrastructure: The care infrastructure should be strengthened by strengthening outpatient care models, particularly home care, promoting outpatient care services, and funding programs for investments in barrier reduction. Neighborhood care should be initiated as a care model across Cologne.

Health-promoting urban development: Expanding green infrastructure to improve air quality and reduce particulate matter, creating low-noise, low-emission residential areas, and increasing public parks and recreational spaces. Pedestrian and bicycle-friendly paths also promote healthy neighborhoods.

Colorful Cologne

2.1. Social Cologne

A central principle of the European Union is the belief that all people are entitled to equal rights and opportunities and that human rights must be respected. Especially in times when fundamental human rights are under attack worldwide, it is all the more important to place humanity and solidarity at the center of political action.

The large area of civil society is supported by the substantial volunteer commitment of Cologne's citizens. Especially in times when social peace and our democracy are at risk, strengthening civil society is the key to social change toward an inclusive, active, engaged, and resilient [6]society [7]

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[5]Substitution therapy is the medical treatment of people with opioid addiction. Treatment is carried out with legally and guideline-compliant prescribed medications (substitutes), such as methadone.

[6]https://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/aktuelles/alle-meldungen/zivilgesellschaft-staerken-und-langfristig-foerdern-225638
[7]https://www.deutsche-stiftung-engagement-und-ehrenamt.de/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/240227_FW_Ergebnisbereicht_bp_Organisationale-Resilienz.pdf

Celebrating diversity

Mandatory anti-discrimination training for city employees.

Support for refugees and asylum seekers: Financially strengthen voluntary refugee assistance and ensure and expand counseling services.

Resolutely oppose anti-Semitism : Expand the existing offerings of the NS Documentation Center and implement federal/state anti-Semitism strategies. Further expand and professionalize measures by the city and its affiliated companies, and strengthen concrete measures such as the "Meet a Jew" program.

Strengthening civil society

Strengthening volunteerism : Offers of the volunteer card, the Juleica card (youth leader card), will be expanded and the Forum for Companies [8]Engaged will be further established in Cologne.

Strengthening migrant self-organizations and community projects : Targeted promotion of initiatives, financial support, spaces for networking and opportunities for participation in local decision-making processes.

Gender equality

Gender equality as a guiding principle : Gender mainstreaming [9]full implementation of the Istanbul Convention measures to prevent violence against women.

Prevention through education and awareness : violence prevention through targeted educational programs, workshops and campaigns in schools, youth facilities and in administration. Likewise, further training on gender and sexual diversity and raising awareness of queer life realities in administration, youth welfare offices and other public institutions should contribute as an important building block to education and prevention.

Reproductive justice: In addition to safe access to abortion and medical care, this also includes access to contraception. To ensure everyone has access to safe contraception [10], social security recipients should be reimbursed for contraceptive costs.

Equal opportunities

Cologne Pass 2.0: The Cologne Pass will be expanded to include additional extracurricular (cultural) educational opportunities, musical instrument rentals, increased discounts at learning studios and tutoring, and subsidies for club memberships. To prevent people, especially children, from being stigmatized by the Cologne Pass, the Cologne Pass will also be issued as an app or a debit card; such a debit card could then also be used to disburse the education budget.

Housing First: in addition to the expansion of Housing First according to the American model, [11]Housing First according to the Nordic model should also be expanded.

Best Practice Housing First: Finland
The Finnish concept aims to provide housing unconditionally to every Finnish homeless person, if possible. Since the introduction of "Housing First," Finland has more than halved homelessness, from 8,260 (in 2008) to 3,686 in 2022 [12].

Places of encounter: In addition to these "third places", there is a need for spaces for clubs, leisure activities, self-help groups, and other opportunities for gathering and encounters. Civic centers and intercultural centers are examples of this. We are committed to maintaining and further expanding these.

Strengthening participation

Simple language, simple paths : Whether it's inclusive customer centers, easy-to-understand forms, translations into sign language, or clear directions for people with visual impairments: low-threshold services benefit all Cologne residents.

Facilitating access to language and education : free and flexible German language courses with childcare as well as targeted educational opportunities to facilitate access to the labor market and social participation for migrants and refugees.

Free menstrual products in public facilities following the Scottish model: Building on our pilot project in community centers, the project will be expanded to schools, universities, public buildings, and social institutions to combat period poverty and ensure participation for all.

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[8] https://www.stadt-koeln.de/artikel/72441/index.html

[9] See explanation of gender mainstreaming: Gender Mainstreaming

[10] https://www.sexualaufklaerung.de/ausgabe-anzeigen/geringes-einkommen-sozialleistungsbezug-und-verhuetung-1/

[11] Housing associations rent apartments directly to previously homeless people and associations offer assistance with integration into the social and health systems

[12] https://www.tagesschau.de/ausland/europa/finnland-obdachlosigkeit-gevwitz-101.html

2.2. Youth and family-friendly Cologne

Volt Cologne is committed to ensuring that different, alternative, and diverse family models are normalized and given equal legal and social status (e.g., single-parent families, foster families, multi-parent/patchwork families, and queer families).

In order to enable all children and young people to participate in social life, regardless of the financial means of their parents or guardians, children from financially disadvantaged families must be given special support, for example with regard to participation in clubs and associations.

To better protect children and young people from sexual violence, quality standards in commercial and government prevention programs must be regularly reviewed and expanded. Awareness of the signs and treatment of sexual violence is needed in professional training programs for children and young people (including social work, preschool teachers, and teachers).

A fair education policy is the key to a society in which all children have the opportunity to realize their dreams and actively participate in our future. Educational equity is not only a social but also an economic and democratic obligation—and it must be placed at the center of our policies.

Municipal parent-child facilities

Raising political and social awareness: Youth welfare services must be recognized as a social priority. We want clear political prioritization that ensures that youth welfare services remain an indispensable support in the long term.

Preventive and family-oriented support: Every city district should have a central contact point that coordinates cooperation between youth welfare offices, daycare centers, schools, social services, and independent providers. Exchange formats between relevant stakeholders help identify needs early and coordinate measures.

Establish family centers in every district.

More professional staff in daycare centers and schools: Educational professionals, school social workers, and psychologists must be secured in the long term and receive better financial support.

Intensify outreach social work: Mobile Social workers can be regularly present in daycare centers, schools and youth centers to offer early support.

Promote cooperation between existing institutions.

Early childhood education

Innovative concepts for sufficient daycare places: The introduction of modular construction methods, such as the successful Berlin MoKiB model, enables the rapid construction of additional daycare centers and creates urgently needed capacity. Close cooperation between the city administration, providers, and a specialized task force can prioritize urgent cases and resolve them more efficiently. We also specifically support lateral entry programs for part-time training to become a qualified pedagogical professional to sustainably combat the shortage of skilled workers.

Promoting innovative daycare concepts (e.g., allotment-based daycare): The focus is on urgently needed capacity expansion to meet the growing demand for childcare. At the same time , the climate crisis requires increased protection of urban green spaces. Volt Cologne is committed to expanding innovative daycare concepts such as allotment-based daycare. By utilizing existing allotment gardens, it combines educational quality with environmental and climate protection.

Access to opportunities: To provide children and young people with low-threshold support outside of school, we want to provide targeted support to local stakeholders – especially youth centers as social meeting places. These facilities should become central points of contact where children and young people can meet, learn together, and meaningfully spend their free time.

Demand for fair access to open all-day schools (OGTS): All children must have equal opportunities to complete their homework with support and maintain social contacts. The allocation of places should benefit all children.

Healthy digital school environment : Mental health must be protected. Promote smartphone-free schools to strengthen concentration, social interaction, and mental stability in everyday school life. This requires a comprehensive expansion of psychosocial support in schools to provide early support to children and young people in dealing with digital stressors, social challenges, and psychological distress.

Strengthen resources for men's work .

Education and Science: Sustainable Education and Digital Research

Digital learning and teaching: In addition to a modern digital infrastructure, the targeted promotion of media literacy in all educational institutions is crucial. We are committed to comprehensive training in digital didactics to support (prospective) teachers in effectively integrating digital technologies and educational materials into their teaching.

Digital Master Plan for Education and Integration of Innovative Learning Technologies: Development of a comprehensive plan for the integration of learning platforms, learning software and innovative technologies (e.g. virtual reality) into everyday education.

2.3 Active Cologne

In a livable city, a diverse cultural landscape, sport and exercise are essential for well-being, education and social cohesion.

Sport and culture bring people together, broaden our perspectives beyond national borders and create a greater awareness of what we can achieve together.

An active Cologne is also characterized by the fact that the offerings are designed to be accessible, appeal to different target groups and are distributed fairly across the city.

Diverse cultural life for cosmopolitanism

Making culture crisis-proof: Developing a long-term funding strategy that equally considers the independent scene and institutions
Anchoring culture as a mandatory task in the municipal self-image – with reliable funding even in times of crisis.

Space for culture – fair, diverse, affordable: temporarily open vacant properties for cultural purposes – unbureaucratically and flexibly.

Cologne is to have a central depot so that space can be used for exhibitions elsewhere and storage costs can be reduced.

Sustainable cultural policy – ecological, social, innovative: Establishment of a municipal advisory center, "Green Culture Cologne," to support cultural institutions, festivals, and individual artists in their ecological transformation.
The materials carousel established [13]in the Cultural Development Plan will be made permanent. The reuse of materials in cultural operations should be encouraged to reduce costs and conserve resources.

Culture for all – enabling participation, breaking down barriers: systematically promoting the cultural participation of children and young people – for example through an "Under 25 Culture Board" and new participation formats specifically for young people.

Protecting nightlife and club culture : Recognizing clubs as cultural venues and treating them accordingly in development plans, permitting procedures, and security concepts.
Establishment of a noise protection fund based on the Berlin model, subsidizing structural measures to combat noise conflicts.

Shaping remembrance – diverse, local, future-oriented: public remembrance culture should become more diverse – through new names, monuments, and educational formats that make marginalized perspectives visible.
In addition, Cologne's colonial past will be systematically addressed – with the participation of civil society initiatives and migrant communities.

Digitalisation as an access and experimental space: Consideration and active promotion of digital innovations in cultural funding – e.g. interactive formats, participatory tools or VR applications

Co-creation instead of administration – cultural policy in dialogue: interdisciplinary platforms between art, science, business and technology are promoted – especially in the area of creative tech.

Think European – act local: Cologne's active participation in EU programs such as "Creative Europe" and support for cultural actors in their application processes.

Sports and exercise

Connecting schools and clubs: During the last legislative period, we launched the "Sports Role

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[13] Mine, yours, ours - Material carousel of Cologne culture" - KEP

Models" pilot project. We intend to further advance this approach. To this end, we intend to continue to bring schools and Cologne clubs together in collaboration with organized sports. Through this collaboration, sports programs can be directly integrated into everyday school life. This will also be achieved at sports club locations through childcare for school children.

Swimming safety: By introducing instructor certification courses in schools, we increase the number of possible swimming courses and consequently the swimming safety of children.

Promote health and physical activity: Free sports and physical activity programs (such as "Kölle aktiv!") should continue to be organized to make sport and its benefits accessible to everyone.

Inclusive Sports Park: With the flagship project Inclusive Sports Park, we want to create a diverse sports facility.

Violence prevention through social work during sporting activities.

Promoting urban sports culture: We want to continue promoting urban sports such as skateboarding, parkour, bouldering, and urban cycling in Cologne.

Best Practice Urban Sports Culture: Cologne
The Sportpionierpark offers a variety of outdoor sports. Any necessary equipment, such as table tennis rackets, can be rented there.[14].

eSports

Cologne as a pioneer for the digital future

We want to establish eSports as social offline meeting places that bring people of all ages and backgrounds together. This requires targeted investments in infrastructure: electricity, stable internet, tables and chairs – the foundations for interaction and shared engagement. Together with youth welfare offices and sports clubs, we want to create spaces that use gaming as a door-opener, promoting social contact and addressing prevention topics such as addiction.

eSports can enrich sports clubs by bringing digital skills to the clubs while simultaneously offering sporting activities. This symbiosis not only promotes club sports but also establishes eSports as part of a holistic, digital education program. Volt aims to strengthen Cologne as a pioneer for eSports and thus also promote the gaming industry as an economic powerhouse in Europe.

Anyone who wants to shape digital transformation must create cultural and sporting foundations that attract, connect, and inspire people.

Connected Cologne

3.1 Digital Cologne

Smart City: Digital Administration and Citizen Participation

We want to develop Cologne into a digital city: citizen-centric, connected, and future-proof. Digital technologies should make everyday life easier, administrative services accessible, and enable innovation.
A smart city is transparent, efficient, and accessible from any location. Digital administration must be user-friendly and accessible, reduce bureaucracy and conserve resources, and consistently be designed from the perspective of citizens—not the administration.

Digital processes also strengthen participation: low-threshold, dialogue-oriented, and suitable for everyday use. This is how we address demographic change and the shortage of skilled workers with modern, digital structures.

At the same time, we reject digital coercion: everyone must retain analogue access to municipal services.

Digitalization

Digital citizen services: Our goal is a fully digitalized administration that is paperless, seamless, and accessible around the clock.
We are committed to uniform and secure procedures – especially the online ID function as a central access point to municipal services, as provided for in the OZG Amendment Act. At the same time, we are examining how people without ID can also benefit from digital services.

Best Practice Videoident Procedure: Wiesbaden
Residents of the city of Wiesbaden can register their new address from home using the video identification process. A video call verifies the identity of the person moving, and a certificate with an electronic signature is created. This promotes citizen-friendly e-government, saves citizens time, and significantly reduces the burden on the administration.[15]

Open data and transparency: More of the city's data and information should be publicly accessible. Cologne should sign the Open Data Charter and

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[14] https://www.stadt-koeln.de/artikel/73926/index.html

[15]https://www.kommune21.de/k21-meldungen/videoident-stoesst-auf-positives-echo/

systematically develop existing platforms such as offenedaten-koeln.de and the Cologne Urban Data Ecosystem (KUDOS). In this way, we will create a foundation for data-driven innovation – in administration, urban society, and the economy.

Strategic management of digitalization: The central responsibility for digitalization in the administration is to be supplemented by a strengthened innovation office and an externally staffed digital council based on the Augsburg model.
At the same time, targeted training for administrative staff as well as regular digital conferences and networking meetings are needed to share knowledge, make successes visible and strengthen digital culture in the administration.

Digitalization as a cross-cutting issue

Volt consistently considers digitalization as a cross-cutting theme, thus presenting digitalization measures throughout the program. Since we have limited this chapter to smart cities and the digitalization of public administration, references to additional measures can be found in the long version of the election program under 3.1. Digital Cologne – Volt Germany (e.g., outreach social work, education and science, health-promoting urban development). At the same time, we list some measures from various thematic areas below:

Parking management: Digital parking ticket machines and automated enforcement: All parking machines will be replaced by digital systems that require license plate entry. Parking time can be flexibly extended via an app or at the terminal. At the same time, camera systems at fixed checkpoints or mobile vehicles enable automated monitoring to immediately detect and penalize illegally parked vehicles.

Improving care through: Promoting digital innovations such as telemedicine and smart care assistance systems to close gaps in care. [16]Using mobile medical devices and flexible specialist staff for remote visits, e.g., in nursing homes. Implementing AI systems to support documentation.

Data-driven planning for sufficient daycare places: Modern, data-driven solutions to better meet the growing demand for daycare places in our city. By analyzing birth rates and registration data, we can create early forecasts that enable forward-looking planning.

Learning environment of the future: Self-organized and strengths-based teaching also requires modern learning spaces such as digital tools: Schools must be equipped with modern technology to promote digital and interactive learning.

Healthy digital school environment: Promoting smartphone-free schools to strengthen concentration, social interaction, and mental stability in everyday school life. This requires a comprehensive expansion of psychosocial support in schools to provide early support to children and young people in dealing with digital stressors, social challenges, and psychological distress.

Land use: Businesses need space – and space is scarce in Cologne. This makes it all the more important to preserve existing commercial space and intelligently develop new areas. The diversity of our local economy – from small-scale trades to digital startups – must not be jeopardized by a lack of space.

Best Practice Land Use: Vienna
In Vienna, unused roof areas are being systematically developed for photovoltaics and greening through the "We Renovate Vienna" program. At the same time, the need for commercial space is being secured through digital cadastres and long-term development plans.

3.2 Democratic Cologne

Participation

More and more citizens feel inadequately represented by politics. At the same time [17], [18]a vibrant democracy thrives on the engagement of everyone and dialogue on equal terms. Political participation strengthens social cohesion and promotes trust in state institutions.

Establishment of a permanent Citizens' Council: This council brings together a representative sample of the city's citizens and deliberates on a topic previously proposed by the citizens. The recommendations developed by the Citizens' Council are submitted to the City Council, which incorporates them into its policy work.

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[16] Medical personnel can carry out standard visits (e.g. in nursing homes) and care services (ultrasound, ECG, etc.) remotely with the help of audiovisual medical devices and on-site specialist staff.

[17]https://www.zdf.de/nachrichten/politik/deutschland/studie-universitaet-bielefeld-kinder-jugendliche-politik-100.html
[18]https://www1.wdr.de/nachrichten/vertrauen-buerger-politiker-wdr-umfrage-100.html

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Best Practice Citizens' Council and Budget: Warsaw and Aachen

The Participatory Budget in Warsaw is a democratic process through which Warsaw residents can directly decide how a portion of the city's budget is spent. All residents can submit project proposals digitally and participate in the vote digitally [19].

Aachen was the first city in Germany to establish a permanent Citizens' Council. Citizens meet three times a year to discuss issues previously proposed by fellow citizens [20].

We advocate for a combination: a permanent citizens' council with its own budget.

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Real child and youth participation

Youth representation in committees: Two young people are sent to the committees to bring the perspective of young people in Cologne.

Children's and Youth Parliament : Children and young people meet regularly for meetings where they can discuss concerns and make decisions. These decisions are submitted to the City Council, which undertakes to consider them in its meetings and decisions and to provide reasons for rejections.

Financial compensation for district student representatives to make participation possible and strengthen it for everyone, regardless of their parents' economic situation.

Inclusion and (digital) participation

Accessible digital offerings: We ensure that all of the city's digital services are accessible and inclusive.

Targeted support for seniors and disadvantaged groups: We offer special training programs for seniors and socially disadvantaged citizens to strengthen their digital skills.

Multilingualism and simple language: Information is provided in multiple languages and in simple language so that all citizens can obtain information.

Modern administration as a service provider

Intelligent and people-oriented bureaucracy: One-stop shops ensure simple and flexible administration that focuses on people's needs.

Zero-Based Budgeting: In this approach, public expenditures are not automatically continued but are reevaluated from the ground up. Every item in the budget must be regularly justified and reviewed for its necessity.

Impact-oriented budget: Budget resources are linked to concrete objectives that are evaluated annually.

Machine Learning (AI): We develop clear guidelines for city administration to ensure ethical and responsible use of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML).

Common good indicator for political decisions: In addition to the financial and ecological impacts of decisions, social and economic impacts will also be presented in the future.

Cologne as a European city

Consistently access EU funding : In order to benefit more from the offers as a municipality, applications should be made jointly with other EU cities.

Making Europe and the EU tangible: We want to introduce "Europe May." During "Europe May," we want to make Europe and the EU visible and tangible in the community through various activities. For example, citizens can ride a ferris wheel – the "Europa Wheel" – for free for a whole day. Each gondola houses a politician or administrative employee who will then engage in conversation with the citizens.

Education and exchange: We want to work to promote the Erasmus+ program more strongly, whether for pupils, students, trainees, teaching staff, or administrative staff.

Networking: The city of Cologne is to join the Green City Accord, a movement of European mayors committed to protecting the environment and developing cities that are cleaner, healthier, and more resource-efficient.

International Cooperation: A municipal Senior Expert Pool for international cooperation and a coordinating office will be established. The Senior Expert Pool is intended to attract experts who are approaching retirement or are entering semi-retirement for volunteer work.

Expanding city partnerships and increasing their visibility among the Cologne population: We

[19] https://um.warszawa.pl/waw/bo ,
https://oidp.net/en/practice.php?id=1312 ,
https://www.bosch-stiftung.de/sites/default/files/documents/2024-06/Laend erexpertise-Polen.pdf
[20] https://buergerinnenrat.aachen.de/

want to raise awareness of city partnerships through events and stronger representation in Cologne's city life, especially in Cologne schools. In addition to established partnerships, we also focus on project-based collaboration on specific topics, where we can learn from other municipalities around the world, or they can learn from us, without going through the complex process of establishing an official partnership.

3.3 Innovative Cologne

Reducing bureaucracy through digitalization

Introduction of a municipal digitalization fund that facilitates access to digital tools, machines, and training for small businesses with up to 50 employees.

Land conservation & intelligent urban development

Volt Cologne is clearly opposed to the conversion of commercial land into purely residential or mixed-use areas unless equivalent replacements are created. At the same time, we see great potential in creative repurposing: Underused parking garage roofs, for example, offer space for solar parks, greening, temporary cultural uses, or recreational activities such as skate parks and rooftop bars. Commercial repurposing should also be possible, with operators receiving a fair share of the revenue.

Consider infrastructure adaptation economically

Commercial parking spaces must be included in every neighborhood development. Furthermore, traffic routing and environmental zones must be planned with the logistical realities of small and medium-sized businesses in mind.
For the sustainable distribution of goods and services, we want to promote the expansion of so-called micro-hubs.

Best practice micro-hubs: Rotterdam

In Rotterdam, micro-hubs have been introduced to organize inner-city goods distribution by cargo bike and electric van. At the same time, loading zones and delivery areas are mandatory for new neighborhood developments.

Crafts & training as a mainstay of Cologne's economy

Our vocational schools need regular renovations, stable digital infrastructure, and modern workshops. We are also committed to a targeted

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housing strategy and financial support for driver's license costs for trainees.

Best Practice Housing for Trainees: Munich

The City of Munich, together with chambers of commerce and industry, is operating the "Azubiwerk" model project, which creates affordable housing for trainees – including common rooms and social-educational support.

Welcome Desk – making arrival easier

Volt Cologne remains committed to implementing a central Welcome Desk – both digital and physical.

Best Practice Welcome Desk: Frankfurt am Main

The "Expat Welcome Desk" in Frankfurt am Main offers international professionals comprehensive support upon arrival – including multilingual advice, assistance with administrative procedures, and a central online platform.

Making sustainability economically viable

Promoting local energy cooperatives – especially in districts such as Porz or Chorweiler, where there is potential for renewable energy such as photovoltaics.
Two new urban districts are to be built entirely climate-neutrally from the outset. In addition, unused roof areas- such as those on schools or parking garages - will be systematically developed for solar power generation.

Supporting start-ups & modern industries

Expansion of startup centers that offer young companies access to advice, training, networking with investors, and market entry opportunities. One possibility would be a municipal startup fund through which founders can receive low-interest loans – subject to clear conditions, such as a repayment commitment or a minimum term in Cologne.

Best Practice Company Founding: Berlin

In Berlin, so-called "start-up units" in the economic development agency specifically support founders – with central contact persons, structured consulting processes and

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> access to networks as well as industry-specific funding programs.

Securing and developing economic diversity

Forward-looking diversification of the economic structure requires a comprehensive location analysis to identify sectors that can create stable, sustainable and well-paid jobs in the long term.
A catalogue of urban measures will then be developed, ranging from tax incentives and infrastructure improvements to targeted support for young talent.

Best Practice diverse economy: Leipzig

In Leipzig, the "Leipzig Cluster Strategy" program is actively working on diversifying the economic structure. Future-oriented industries such as bioeconomy and smart logistics are systematically promoted and marketed internationally.

Cologne's future wholesale market – for diversity, supply and the local economy

A wholesale market/fresh food center/food hub is to be built in the city.