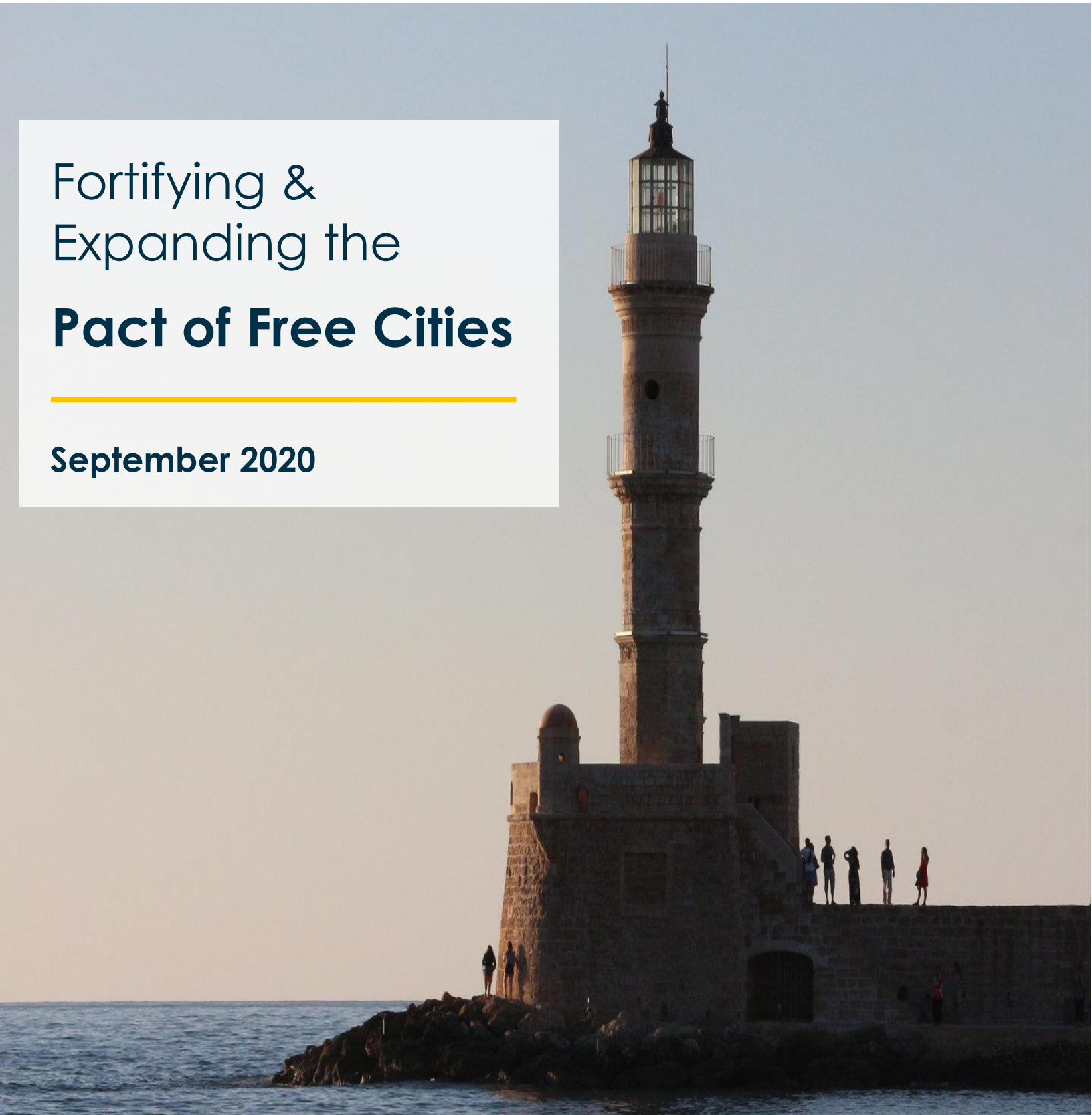


Fortifying &  
Expanding the  
**Pact of Free Cities**

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September 2020



# Fortifying & Expanding the Pact of Free Cities

## GMF Cities Collaboration Proposal

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According to Freedom House, 2020 marked the 14<sup>th</sup> consecutive year of democratic decline worldwide, including in longstanding democracies like the United States. The tendency in Central European countries — previously champions of the transition to democracy — is particularly disquieting. In December 2019, the mayors of Warsaw, Prague, Bratislava, and Budapest established and signed the Pact of Free Cities. All from different political parties, they ran on a platform based on progressive liberal democratic values and determined to improve the governance of their cities for all their citizens. This bold step of the leaders of four capital cities showed that their cities were willing to take a stand against the growing nationalist illiberalism in their countries.

While increasingly polarized societies and paralyzed checks and balances are failing to buttress or strengthen democracy where it is being eroded, cities are emerging as vocal proponents for more inclusive liberal democracies. As the most trusted level of government in both Europe and North America, cities should serve as lighthouses for liberal democracy, laboratories of inclusive civic practices, and champions of social justice.

### Goals

The goals outlined by the original Pact of Free Cities (“Pact”) are shared entirely by the GMF Cities program, with the added frame that it be furthered through transatlantic cooperation. The clauses of the Pact are well reflected in the GMF Cities strategic directions of furthering and fortifying democracy; seeing that there is agency for all; promoting social, economic, and climate justice; and driving enterprise and entrepreneurship to social good.



*We, the Mayors of the Pact of Free Cities commit to protecting and promoting our common values of freedom, human dignity, democracy, equality, rule of law, social justice, tolerance, and cultural diversity. We commit to doing this by sharing practices, coordinating efforts, supporting and jointly advocating for the role of cities, and keeping our cooperation open to cities and entities that share our values and that work to achieve our common goals.*



### Work Streams and Activities

GMF Cities seeks to contribute to and further the work and initiative of the Pact. The spirit of the Pact would be advanced through (i) research and analysis to deepen, codify, and disseminate practices and policies that strengthen local democracy; (ii) by expanding the support and contributions from more cities in Europe and North America for the Pact; and (iii) by strategically convening or highlighting policies, proposals, or initiatives of the Pact with stakeholders and policymakers at all levels of government in North America and Europe.

#### (i) Research and Analysis

- Codification of the principles underlying the Pact in line with dimensions of local democracy from the GMF Cities “City Strength of Democracy Index” (CSDI); coordination on the development of parts of the curriculum and participation in the Cities Fortifying Democracy cohort project.
- Research and publish around key topics that highlight how local innovation by Pact mayors and others around the world can strengthen liberal democracy through local practices such as

participatory processes, civic engagement, and inclusive civic leadership, as well as how cities are addressing the global challenges of inequality, migration and integration, climate justice, and others.

- Share tools and frameworks that guide efforts for high-performing local governments (e.g.: *Equip<sup>t</sup> to Innovate* and other leading innovation models) and organize interactive sessions and discussions with creators and experts.

### **(ii) Expanding Support**

- Contribute to strategic efforts to weave together more support or recruit new signatories to the Pact among European and North American cities.
- Leverage existing and new GMF Cities initiatives (City Directors of International Affairs Network, City Strength of Democracy Index, Cities Fortifying Democracy, and others) to disseminate work of the Pact and promote support and adherence of those who share the values and commitment of the Pact.

### **(iii) Strategic Convening & Dissemination**

- Convene key stakeholders, policymakers, and leaders to public or close-door events (roundtables, panels, briefings, etc.) at GMF offices in Berlin, Brussels, Warsaw, Paris, Washington D.C., to further and promote the goals of the Pact and proposals coming out of the Pact.
- Host Pact representatives at GMF events and conferences to promote the initiative and proposals coming out of the Pact.