

Nantes pledge on Principle 20 of the European Pillar of Social Rights

Principle 20: "Access to essential services"

Principle 20 of the EPSR states: *"everyone has the right to access essential services of good quality, including water, sanitation, energy, transport, financial services and digital communications. Support for access to such services shall be available for those in need"*.

Solidarity has a long history in Nantes, with the first night shelter opened in 1901 and the setting up of a refugee reception centre in 1975. Social action in Nantes is considered globally, starting with housing and offering tailor-made support for the most vulnerable. It is obviously part of national strategies, such as the prevention and fight against poverty, but also of local initiatives. Essential services are those that are necessary to ensure the full social inclusion of people in society and in the labour market. Strong public intervention is crucial to ensure equal access for all. Nantes' approach to this issue is based on five priorities:

I - Developing a public service "from streets to housing" to access essential services

Access to accommodation is often a prerequisite for accessing essential services such as water and energy. For this reason, Nantes believes it is essential to provide social support for vulnerable people, from shelter to stabilisation in housing. To achieve this, a number of facilities are available, including 300 places in accommodation centres and a recently renovated day centre, shower baths and a social restaurant, with a budget of €4 million. Nantes' social action also provides administrative domiciliation for 5,500 people, without which access to many rights, including essential services, would be impossible.

For people in very complicated situations (several difficulties), Nantes has set up a "housing first platform" to bring together social action institutions to find solutions.

II - Bringing together associations and citizens' initiatives

Nantes boasts a wealth of associations in the social field and will create and run a network of social emergency stakeholders in order to contribute to and support innovative projects, offer training to volunteers, and so on. As the European Capital of Innovation, Nantes has developed a vision and practice of open governance in permanent dialogue with citizens, associations and experts. This also applies to social action with the launch in November 2021 of the "New Solidarity Conferences" which will run until autumn 2022. This period will be conducive to allowing citizens, local players and elected representatives to express their views on new ways of doing things to get involved and reduce the precariousness of the most vulnerable.

III - Making social action more proactive towards people in difficulty in order to combat the lack of access to rights

The city of Nantes assists more than 10,000 households each year through its social services. However, in order to guarantee access to essential services, it is still necessary to tackle the problem of "non-use". Since 2014, in order to help people claim their social rights, the agents of the municipal social action centre have also been going as close as possible to where people live (schools, shopping centres, etc.) as well as to their homes to help them with their procedures. Aware that digitalisation excludes the most vulnerable, specialised mediators have been assisting people with their procedures since June 2021.

Since 2019, Nantes has also been offering a local intervention service for energy management. The aim of this scheme is to organise actions to combat fuel poverty and to identify households on a large scale in order to provide them with appropriate solutions.

Lastly, regarding budgetary issues, the City of Nantes offers budget advice points in its various districts which provide confidential assistance and banking mediation.

IV - Creating and/or supporting innovative projects that promote inclusion for all and living together

The City of Nantes supports innovative social inclusion projects. The "5 Bridges" solidarity village opened in June 2021 and represents a total investment of €22 million, including €5 million from the European UIA programme. This unique facility in France brings together people in very precarious situations, residents and employees. The village includes a reception centre for people in very precarious situations, a day centre for families, 70 social rental and affordable housing units, business premises, a launderette, an urban rooftop farm, a restaurant and a solidarity market to promote integration through employment, all of which are enhanced by activities to create interaction in a real spirit of social diversity. This new facility will create bridges to health, housing, social diversity, employment and the ability to act for the most vulnerable people in order to enable full inclusion in society.

V - Promoting access to leisure and culture for all

Promoting access to culture for the most vulnerable groups is essential to fight exclusion, to create or restore social ties and to boost self-esteem. For more than ten years, Nantes has been offering the "carte blanche" scheme to more than 15,000 households each year. This represents an annual investment of €600,000 to provide access to shows and sporting events at reduced or free rates, and to enable people to join cultural, leisure or sporting associations with financial assistance. Carte Blanche brings together a network of more than 200 local organisations involved in cultural mediation to support vulnerable residents in Nantes. Access to culture is enshrined in the French constitution and Nantes is committed to making this essential right to a social life a reality.

Summary: Nantes makes access to essential public services a priority. This commitment to people in precarious situations is based on a series of concrete actions, particularly in terms of access to housing ("from streets to housing"), by bringing together citizens' and associations' initiatives to consolidate them, by adapting the public social service with an even more proactive approach ("reaching out to people in precarious situations"), by developing innovative projects for the inclusion of the most vulnerable (such as the "5 Bridges solidarity village" project), but also by considering that access to culture and leisure activities is an essential need for all, with dedicated measures.

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