



Climate change ambition

Cities leading towards a 1.5 degrees target

18 January 2019



Policy messages

1. Cities are climate leaders and central to meeting global recommendations to limit temperature rise to 1.5C, through ambitious local plans and working with citizens, business and civil society to achieve sustainable change.
2. We call on the Commission to urgently revise the EU 2030 GHG reduction target to ensure that it is consistent with the IPCC recommendations for keeping global temperature rise below 1.5C above pre-industrial levels.
3. Cities need a seat at the table negotiating and developing global, EU and national climate mitigation and adaptation policies, given the vital role of the local level in delivering effective GHG reductions in collaboration with citizens and businesses.
4. We call for an ambitious EU long-term strategy that commits Europe to accelerating the energy transition and achieving zero carbon by 2050 at the latest, and ensure that the EU's resources and funding fully support this.
5. We need EU leadership globally to ensure that subsequent COPs fully take into account IPCC recommendations and ensure that nationally determined contributions (NDCs) are in alignment with the 2030 and 2050 reduction levels recommended by the IPCC.

Cities leading the way

EUROCITIES members are climate leaders. Many cities have plans and targets aligned to limiting temperature rise to 1.5C, and often they are more ambitious than their national governments. With 75% of Europeans living in urban areas, cities are at the core of climate action for mitigation and adaptation. Actions such as decarbonising heating and cooling, retrofitting buildings, increasing active mobility and low carbon transport, and developing adaptation and resilience plans for extreme weather events, among others, are all being implemented at city level. Cities are also taking action to facilitate behavioural changes that contribute to a more climate-friendly lifestyle.

Cities are working with their citizens, businesses and civil society to develop and implement these actions, translating complex theoretical concepts into people's daily lives. Cities are also successfully working with each other through initiatives like the Covenant of Mayors to amplify their emissions reductions, with over 8,000 cities involved and an average 23% CO₂ emission reduction reached in 2017¹.

¹ https://www.covenantofmayors.eu/index.php?option=com_attachments&task=download&id=619

But for all their work and expertise in climate mitigation and adaptation, cities very often still lack the necessary tools and finances, and are largely excluded from global, European and national negotiations on policy and regulation. Active involvement and recognition of the role of cities is fundamental to achieving EU's ambitions for tackling climate change.

The urgent need to act now for 2030

The Paris Agreement committed signatories to 'keeping a global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius'.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report assesses the difference of impact between 1.5C and 2C temperature rise², and the level and timeframe for GHG reduction to stay within a 1.5C limit. The report's conclusions were clear: the impact on the natural environment and humans would be significantly worse at 2C than 1.5C and would bring unprecedented consequences. It also concluded that we have 10 years to rapidly reduce emissions by 45% by 2030³, and to reach net zero by 2050 at the latest.⁴

The EU's GHG reduction target for 2030 is not in line with the IPCC recommendations. EURO CITIES calls on the EU to adopt a revised target of at least 45%, which ensures we remain on track for a 1.5C world. It is important that this target is binding on all member states, and that public spending and other policies are aligned with meeting this target.

To dramatically reverse the emissions trend, and significantly cut emissions in just a decade we need concerted action at all levels of government, ending fossil fuel use, significantly reducing the amount of energy used in buildings, transport and industry, producing much more renewable energy, improving waste management practices, and developing urban carbon sinks.

Cities are integral to all solutions and should be a part of the policy-making and planning to increase the effectiveness and impact of actions and create an environment that is conducive to city-level innovation. Cities have a wealth of expertise and experience that are hugely beneficial to developing plans, policy and regulation. Multi-level governance is key to the development and implementation of climate action from global to local level. We need a greater, official and active role for cities in climate governance at global, EU and national levels.

A clear zero emissions strategy for 2050

The European Commission's long-term strategic vision for a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050⁵ contains three levels of ambition, or pathways, only one of which is consistent with limiting global warming to below 1.5C - net zero emissions by 2050. The Commission has put its weight behind a 1.5C target and is supporting a long-term ambition of net zero emissions by 2050 at the latest.

Such a commitment must also be fully reflected in the next long-term budget for the EU, where climate action should be a priority across all funding programmes, notably the new Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), Horizon Europe, InvestEU as well as EIB financed investments. Cities are already suffering the impacts of climate change and the costs associated with implementing solutions. This situation, which will only be exacerbated if IPCC-recommended emissions

² <http://www.ipcc.ch/report/sr15/>

³ Based on 2010 levels. <https://www.ipcc.ch/2018/10/08/summary-for-policymakers-of-ipcc-special-report-on-global-warming-of-1-5c-approved-by-governments/>

⁴ Furthermore, the International Energy Agency's 2018 World Energy Outlook reported a further increase in global emissions in 2017 that prompted their Executive Director to conclude: "we have no room to build anything that emits CO₂ emissions" <https://www.iea.org/newsroom/news/2018/november/world-energy-outlook-2018-examines-future-patterns-of-global-energy-system-at-a-t.html>; <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2018/nov/13/world-has-no-capacity-to-absorb-new-fossil-fuel-plants-warns-iea>

⁵ A Clean Planet for all - A European strategic long-term vision for a prosperous, modern, competitive and climate neutral economy (28 November 2018) https://ec.europa.eu/clima/sites/clima/files/docs/pages/com_2018_733_en.pdf

reductions are not achieved, must be fully recognised by adequate funding for cities to implement mitigation and adaptation measures locally. This will put the EU in a leadership position globally, and present opportunities for innovation and investment, and ensure that Europeans are living in healthier urban environments.

EUROCITIES calls on member states to show their full support for a target of net zero emissions by 2050. Any other pathway leaves cities and citizens exposed to ever greater climate impacts that are detrimental to human and environmental health and comes at huge financial cost to communities⁶.

EU leadership for global action

The EU is the third biggest emitter of GHG, behind China and the United States. While its contribution is only 10% of global emissions⁷, it is an important leader in global efforts to reduce emissions, even more so now that the United States government has taken a decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement.

The EU should use its leadership role to drive global efforts to drastically cut emissions to stay on a path of limiting global temperature rise to 1.5C. The UNFCCC⁸ negotiations should focus on this lower temperature target within the Paris Agreement⁹, and ensure that the Paris Rulebook and supporting mechanisms are fully agreed.

The EU should demonstrate global leadership by revising their NDCs by 2020 to reflect more ambitious GHG emissions reduction. These should then be translated into mandatory targets for EU member states as soon as possible to ensure that necessary emissions reductions by 2030 and 2050 are achievable.

As cities, we are fully committed to working together, and with all levels of government, to tackle the challenge of climate change and limit global temperature rise to 1.5C, and to work towards a future where all people benefit from a healthy, resilient and safe environment.

⁶ The IPCC is clear: “Pathways limiting global warming to 1.5°C with no or limited overshoot would require rapid and far-reaching transitions in energy, land, urban and infrastructure (including transport and buildings), and industrial systems (high confidence). These systems transitions are unprecedented in terms of scale, but not necessarily in terms of speed, and imply deep emissions reductions in all sectors, a wide portfolio of mitigation options and a significant upscaling of investments in those options (medium confidence).” http://report.ipcc.ch/sr15/pdf/sr15_spm_final.pdf p17

⁷ Direct emissions, not including embedded or embodied carbon.

⁸ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

⁹ The Paris Agreement central aim is to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change by keeping a global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>