



# European cities and climate action: towards COP 21

Taking the right actions on climate - for jobs, social inclusion, and a better life in the city



EUROCITIES member cities are already world leaders on climate action: many of us have targets more ambitious than our respective governments, and we want to take the agenda one step further. Our goal goes beyond reducing emissions or adapting to the inevitable consequences of climate change. We place sustainability and climate change at the heart of our local policies, and we work hard to ensure our climate action is closely connected to our wider sustainability goals. For instance, climate action provides opportunities to

- create innovative, durable employment in our cities
- improve social inclusion with decent work and with access to affordable, sustainable energy, energy efficiency and mobility
- improve quality of life for all citizens, including through increased public health

COP 21 will be a crucial moment - not only for global climate action but also for the global response to the pressing economic, social and environmental challenges we are facing. We have to continue addressing them in cities, where already over half of the world population live, and two thirds of global CO<sub>2</sub> is emitted. The potential for reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from urban areas is high, and cities have a crucial role in contributing to limit global warming to an acceptable level. Whilst we are achieving a great deal already, we do not underestimate the work that still lies ahead.

We must take citizens along with us, on the transition to a global post-carbon economy. As the level of government closest to citizens, our cities are best placed to engage citizens - but we also understand the enormous challenge ahead in raising awareness and ensuring citizens' acceptance for the step change that is needed.

We support an EU greenhouse gas reduction target of at least 40% for 2030<sup>1</sup>, and we commit to support each other's climate efforts within EURO CITIES to help our cities achieve at least 40% emission reductions until 2030, continuing to exchange good practice and experience. Our combined efforts will also make a significant contribution to worldwide climate mitigation, with a view to limiting global temperature increases to 2°C.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/2030/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/2030/index_en.htm)

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Strong cooperation between levels of government is also essential, to ensure that the national, regional (e.g. EU) and global frameworks enable and empower our cities. We therefore invite COP negotiators and their national governments to make this part of their agenda in Paris in December 2015, to further enable cities to take action, and to better involve them in the global governance of climate change.

## Sharing valuable European city experience

EUROCITIES brings together the local governments of over 130 of Europe's largest cities and 40 partner cities that between them govern 130 million citizens in 35 countries.

Many of our cities are among the oldest in the world and we have come a long way since the beginning of the industrial revolution. We started out as centres of economic growth, and had to learn how to combine this with improving living conditions for our citizens, and with limiting our impact on the environment and the climate. On the way we have made mistakes, and learnt many lessons.

- Urban planning: as we are well aware of the energy efficiency that compact cities provide, we recognise the importance of density in our urban planning, while improving quality of life.
- Buildings: lower-cost building techniques of the 1950s, 60s and 70s helped provide more housing. Now, we are improving these buildings to reduce their energy consumption, and many of us are using efficient district heating to reduce emissions further.
- Mobility: during the last century, emissions from urban transport increased exponentially in European cities. Now, we are finding new ways to meet today's mobility needs while reducing emissions by encouraging a shift to more sustainable modes like walking and cycling and public transport, as well as smarter and cleaner technologies and better urban mobility planning.
- Energy production: cheap fossil fuels powered our economic development in the past. Now, we carefully assess our energy options on their environmental and climate impact, and use more and more renewable energy, including from local production.
- Waste management: we have come a long way from greenhouse gas emitting landfills to promoting reuse and repair, more recycling, and recovering energy from residual waste.
- Innovation: universities and research centres are mainly located in cities, and many of our cities are actively cooperating with them, for instance to test new low-carbon solutions.
- Our citizens: we constantly look for ways to involve them in making our cities more sustainable, including through new technologies; more and more cities are co-creating solutions, together with citizens and other partners
- Consumption: we are increasingly addressing the impact of our cities beyond their territorial boundaries, for instance when we help our citizens opt for more sustainable food and low-carbon products, services and activities.

We are convinced that our experiences can be an inspiration for cities around the world, including developing and emerging cities, to do better more quickly than we did. We are also ready and keen to learn from the experience of other cities. This is crucial if we are to reduce emissions despite a growing global population and increasing urbanisation.

# City climate action - benefitting our economies and our societies

Our major European cities have made climate change a priority. But we cannot afford to make it a luxury, and neither can other cities around the globe. Instead we constantly explore ways to use the economic and social opportunities climate action offers for our cities. For instance:

- Promoting investment in climate adaptation measures, in the installation and maintenance of local renewable energy production, and in local energy efficiency, can help create and create jobs within the local economy. The green sector offers not only opportunities for highly skilled citizens. Some green jobs can be made accessible for less qualified workers, who often have more difficulties finding employment, especially in times of crisis. Appropriate education and (re)training will be important for this.
- Supporting innovative low-carbon solutions and technologies can be an opportunity for the local economy. Targeted local business support services for innovative SMEs can create prosperity and jobs now, and sustain them in the future.
- Helping existing SMEs become greener and more energy efficient also helps them save costs. That is good for business, and for the local economy.
- Helping low-income households become more energy efficient reduces their risk of fuel poverty.
- Developing climate adaptation capacities of our cities and citizens, especially more vulnerable citizens, to be more resilient to the impacts of climate change.
- Making our cities and our citizens more independent from volatile fossil fuel prices helps make our overall local economy more resilient, be it through more renewables, higher energy efficiency of buildings and transport, or working with energy cooperatives.
- Procuring energy efficient and green solutions benefits our city budgets and makes them more stable in the long-term.
- If carefully designed, measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions can help clean up the air in our cities, improving citizens' health and reducing healthcare costs.

## Working together

Taking advantage of the opportunities climate action in cities can offer for our wider social and economic objectives is important to support the transition to a low-carbon economy in the longer term.

At the same time we must remain aware of the threat climate change represents to many city dwellers around the globe and to their human rights, such as the right to safe and adequate water and food supplies, to health and adequate housing. Adequately adapting to climate change will not be possible for all cities, and it will be even more costly if we do not mitigate enough. Climate migration is another consequence of climate change that will have a substantial impact on our cities and must be addressed by all levels of government.

A global climate deal is not optional - it is indispensable to ensure that everyone can contribute an adequate share to climate mitigation.

## Cities as partners in the global efforts

Achieving the ambitions of the global climate deal that is needed cannot be done without harnessing the full potential of our cities. It is important that negotiators at COP 21 in Paris recognise this.

We invite the COP negotiators and their national governments

- To be inspired by our local good practices and by the energy, commitment and action in and by our cities
- To empower us further, equipping our cities with the capacity and resources to take effective climate action, ensuring cities can use the instruments they need; action that can improve our citizens' lives and benefit our economies
- To involve cities more in the global governance of climate change

In practical terms, we propose:

- Enhancing the dialogue with local authorities during the COP negotiations
- Developing and intensifying cooperation with successful city networks and initiatives such as EUROCITIES, the Covenant of Mayors and the Green Digital Charter<sup>2</sup>
- Encouraging and supporting cities to share and learn from each other's experiences and good practices, providing support that encourages city-to-city cooperation on climate objectives. As members of EUROCITIES, we know that networks like ours can play a key role in this.
- Facilitating access for cities to international support mechanisms such as the Green Climate Fund<sup>3</sup>
- Providing stable financing and funding streams for private building renovation that is easy to understand and access, and financial support for cities to promote these opportunities, including through new business models
- Supporting innovation that creates more low-carbon, green solutions
- Ensuring space to act: for instance, cities should not only be able to set themselves more ambitious climate goals than their national government but also to put into place additional local incentives for energy efficiency and renewables
- Creating stable regulatory and taxation frameworks that
  - o remove remaining harmful subsidies, such as for fossil fuels
  - o provide incentives for renewables, energy efficiency in buildings and urban transport. They should focus on solutions that provide wider benefits, such as reducing congestion, improving air quality or reducing noise. Negative side-effects should be avoided, such as the air pollution Europe is experiencing today due to the dieselisation of the road vehicle fleet
- Ensuring that the format of statistics generated by national government facilitates local greenhouse gas emission inventories.

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<sup>2</sup> The Green Digital Charter creates a framework for cities to use ICT as a main driver to improve energy efficiency, <http://www.greendigitalcharter.eu/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://bit.ly/1o4LC8l>