

ENERGYCITIES

policy paper

THE EUROPEAN CLIMATE PACT: ENERGY CITIES' EXPECTATIONS

March 2020

The Climate Pact is one of the strategic pillars of the proposed European Green Deal. If properly designed, this new instrument could be a game-changer in shaping new democratic, social and economic models for collective climate action in Europe.

At the moment, the aim is still very vague with the broad intention to "give citizens and all parts of society a voice and role in designing new actions, launching grassroots activities, sharing information and showcasing solutions."

With the launch of this new mechanism and the opening of a wide consultation on March 4th, the European Commission essentially aims to reconnect with disillusioned citizens who are demanding more climate action through ambitious political commitment, dialogue and concertation.

The Problem

The climate crisis cannot be solved by the same political and economic system that we have inherited from the industrial revolution. Everywhere around the world, infrastructure and services, livelihoods, food and energy systems are being threatened by extreme weather conditions or predatory use of resources. Experience is showing that solutions to these problems cannot be

managed top-down by central authorities. They require citizens, academic institutions, local economic actors, government and civil society at large to join forces in order to devise common solutions that would genuinely leave no one behind.

The Solution

"Protecting our way of life", the name of a new EU Commissioner's portfolio, should actually be changed to reinventing our way of life. Devising a new societal pact, based on a reformed set of values and standards that redefine our relationship to our local ecosystem and our respective responsibilities and commitments in addressing the climate threat. Whether at territorial, social or economic level, this would also help us give new meaning to the word "cohesion", one of the most valued aim of the European project.

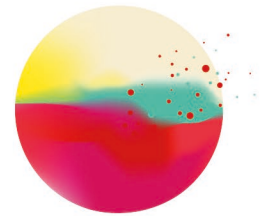
⇒ Reforming the Covenant of Mayors initiative

The Covenant of Mayors already brings together some 10,000 local authorities committed to climate and energy action. Through their Sustainable Energy and Climate plans, they have already pledged to or implemented sustainable mobility

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measures, reduced energy intensity and increased renewable capacity. To go one step further and fully embark on the road to climate neutrality, they will need the contribution of all their local communities.

⇒ **Engaging local energy alliances**

The Covenant of Mayors' purpose, methodology and monitoring should thus be reviewed around this objective to create local alliances of stakeholders jointly committed to coordinated climate action and targets. The current two-year timeframe linked to the submission of the Energy and Climate Action Plan would be used to organize a series of local and regional concertation meetings and debates which would lead to the adoption of a local climate and energy agreement. Every year, climate "hackathons" could be organized over a 24-hour period to identify collaborative solutions to very specific challenges, as a potential successor to the current EU "Energy Days". A scientific committee would be formed at the most appropriate local or regional level and tasked with formulating proposals for negotiation which would then be reported to the national and European authorities.

⇒ **Guaranteeing effective multi-level governance**

Coordinating such a large-scope consensus-building process with the involvement of all the sectors of the economy requires extensive resources and relevant competencies. At present, the Covenant of Mayors already embarks not only cities and local authorities but also regions and provinces at a higher governance level to ensure adequate coordination between the various local governments. This multi-level governance process will have to be strengthened in accordance with the new objectives of the Covenant of Mayors.

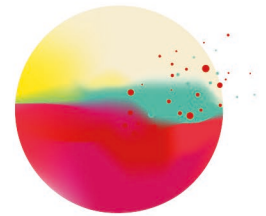
⇒ **Going beyond energy and climate**

Successfully addressing the climate crisis will require going beyond mere energy and climate considerations, encouraging local authorities and their communities to adopt broad-based societal transition roadmaps. These roadmaps will be underpinned by new socio-economic models based on more participative and circular processes, short circuit supply chains and redefined links between citizens and their local environment. This will also require cities to completely overhaul their budget and

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financial management practices and align them to the climate emergency.

⇒ **Putting the emphasis on education**

The magnitude of the reforms we need to collectively undertake to reshape our cultural, social and economic systems are nothing short of a civilization challenge. And if we are indeed to build a new civilization, we first need to revolutionize our educational system, putting carbon literacy at the center but also directly involving youth organizations and students in how to shape the world of tomorrow. This is why the reformed Covenant of Mayors also needs to include a new strong chapter on education.

⇒ **Adopting a corresponding EU support programme**

A specific EU budget line should aim at supporting this governance engineering around climate action, by providing local and regional authorities with the right resources to coordinate the process.

In addition, this support programme should enable peer-to-peer exchange between the various local authorities on the development of new collaborative practices and socio-economic models around the transition,

turning the Covenant of Mayors into a mutual-learning lab.

The Examples

Several initiatives of this kind have already been initiated at various government levels, providing inspiration for large-scale replication across Europe.

Centre-Val de Loire Region, France

In 2019, this French region has mobilized all the local stakeholders of its territory to identify joint answers to the "social and climate emergency". Based on the model of the international COPs, the region has rallied all sectors of society to co-sign a climate and energy agreement that will be re-evaluated every two year.

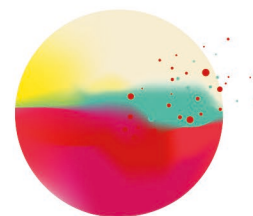
Leuven, Belgium

The city of Leuven in Belgium has also managed to deliver a very innovative and inclusive process to bring everyone, from representatives of civil society to government and industry, to agree on a clear roadmap on how to deliver the city's goal to reduce emissions by 67% by 2030 and become carbon neutral in the next 30 years. This process, called "Leuven 2030" has led

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the city to be awarded the European Green Leaf.

The Netherlands

Back in 2013, the Netherlands government initiated a large scope bottom-up negotiation process involving a large set of players including local authorities, trade unions, environmental organizations and industry representatives in order to jointly adopt and commit to the country's agreement on "energy for sustainable growth". End of 2018, a similar negotiation process was launched and led to the adoption of the country's ambitious National Energy and Climate Plan for 2030 and 2050.

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