

ENERGYCITIES

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To the European Commission President
Ms. von der Leyen
European Commission

Heidelberg, 27/04/2020

A new Resilience Contract based on Europe's solidarity and resources

Dear President,

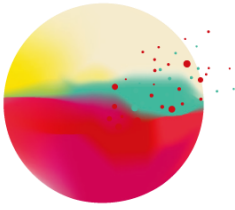
We hope this letter finds you well, and still determined in the wish you have recently expressed to see Europe's soul shine brighter, in a world of redefined politics and reframed economies.

As local elected representatives, we are taking the full brunt of the Covid 19 crisis, entrusted with the responsibility to provide direct emergency services and solutions to our citizens. While we are dealing with a health emergency, we are still in the middle of a climate and social breakdown. We thus welcome your resolve to keep the Green Deal afloat, and your determination to secure economic recovery and boost our resilience at the same time.

In the present situation, "resilience" is indeed a word that is on every lip. But it is not always clear what it means in practice. Through the implementation of our local transition plans and economic diversification strategies, we have found the answers and believe it could be summarized in three key aspects:

1. The collective capacity to organize and provide essential services and goods, relying on a multitude of players
2. The ability to harness available local resources first, and develop a minimum sufficiency capacity for each territory
3. The resulting flexibility and agility due to the combined efforts of various actors, sectors and solutions

If we take the energy sector, on which we cooperate actively through Energy Cities, this is precisely the kind of resilience strategy we have been implementing over the last decades, and even more in the past ten years through our involvement in the Covenant of Mayors initiative and thanks to numerous European policies, programmes and funding streams on experience sharing and capacity building.



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On the ability to better organize collectively, we **have launched local energy communities in cooperation with our citizens**, increasing our energy sufficiency and developing new local added value in the process. When it comes to exploiting and optimizing local resources and flows, we have developed shorter supply chains for energy provision by better mapping our local energy potentials and involving a greater number of economic operators in our processes. This is how the French city of **Amiens** for example managed to heat 4000 households using dead leaves as a fuel. It is also this local ingenuity that led the town of **Heerlen** in the Netherlands to harness the groundwater heat of former coal mines to supply one of the most innovative district heating networks in Europe. In **Liège**, from 2013 onwards, the “Ceinture Aliment-Terre” (food belt) has brought together farmers, urban retailers, academics and other economic and cultural players to commit to locally deliver 50% of the province’s food needs within the next 25 years and it is now looking into launching the same process in the energy sphere.

We are hopeful, Ms. President, that the European Recovery Fund, keeping the Green Deal as its backbone, can enable us to continue doing just that. Not any Green Deal however, but one that is underpinned by a robust **Resilience Contract** to bring about a more balanced, circular and shared economy. Fighting Climate change and building economic resilience are the same single agenda.

After the crises of the first and second world wars, a strong political reaction coupled with a huge mobilization for change by all sectors of society enabled the emergence of a new economic system, with social security and trade union’s rights at its core. This was made possible thanks to a powerful social movement at the beginning of the century that was “preparing the ground for a new world”. In all modesty, we believe that we, Mayors and elected representatives working on local transition plans with all sectors of society, bridging the gap between urban and rural areas, are actually laying the foundations for a post-Covid world to emerge.

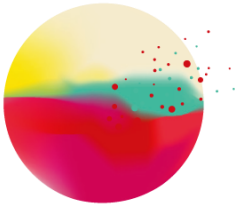
But we cannot do this alone.

The Covid crisis has laid bare the dire need for more local and shorter supply chains. But paradoxically perhaps, we need more Europe to go more local.

To avoid the domino effect of heavy reliance on external know-how, technologies or raw materials, as well as to create new solidarity chains, we need a broader system change. A societal change is what the Youth for Climate movements are largely calling for.

We see 3 key strategic actions Europe can undertake to enable this:

- 1) Include **local resilience pacts** as main delivery mechanism for the “*recovery and resiliency facility*” and the “*Recovery Funds*” to support cities and their communities in jointly redefining their relationships to local ecosystems and their respective responsibilities and commitments to absorb external shocks. These pacts can grow on the already strong



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Covenant of Mayors community fighting climate change while broadening the scope of the commitments to strengthening local economies and resilience. This is what we have asked for from the EU Climate Pact.

- 2) Align the EU's **economic governance** to the ecological and social emergency, by climate proofing and mainstreaming all EU funds and programmes, and applying the same logic to Member States' fiscal and budgetary policies, enshrining this principle **into the Climate Law and EU Semester process**
- 3) Build strategic autonomy in vital supply chains by reducing resource and energy demand and relying on solidarity between territories. Therefore, redefine the **EU's energy policy** to include an **energy sufficiency** objective and to increase drastically the share of **local sources**, notably by applying a district-level approach to the Renovation Wave initiative and by fully leveraging the local heat potential within the upcoming smart sector integration package

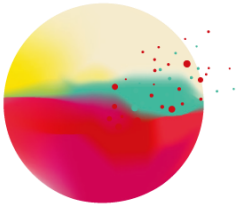
Dear Ms. President, representing Mayors from all corners of Europe but also from all political leanings, our call is devoid of any ideological bias. It is a plea to reinforce Europe's distinctive strength, which lies in the notions of cohesion and solidarity, and create a genuine European "ethos" around this proposed Resilience Contract.

We are aware of the weight of responsibility that is on your shoulders in these extraordinary times, and look forward to opportunities to discuss with you how to turn this crisis into a positive turning point in European history.

With our respect,
Best regards,

Prof. Dr. Eckart Würzner

Mayor of Heidelberg
President of Energy cities
Member of the EU Covenant of Mayors Board
Member of the Global Covenant of Mayors Board



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Futher details:

Our proposals on the [EU Climate law](#)

Our proposals on the [EU Green Deal](#)

Our proposals on [the Climate Pact](#)

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Energy Cities is a network of 1,000 local governments in 30 countries. We believe that the energy transition is about more than renewable energy or great technologies: It is about a wise use of resources while strengthening local participation and well-being in a democratic Europe. www.energy-cities.eu

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