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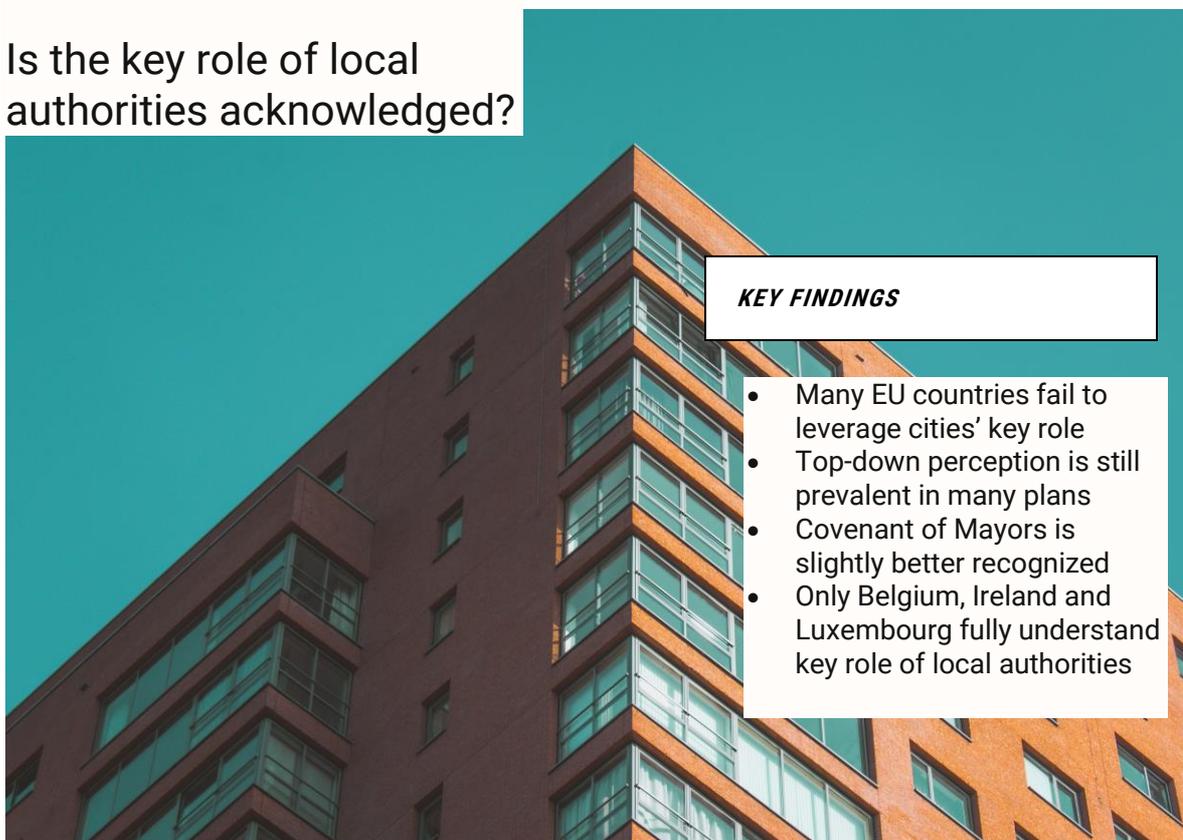
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NATIONAL ENERGY AND CLIMATE PLANS

Is the key role of local
authorities acknowledged?

KEY FINDINGS

- Many EU countries fail to leverage cities' key role
- Top-down perception is still prevalent in many plans
- Covenant of Mayors is slightly better recognized
- Only Belgium, Ireland and Luxembourg fully understand key role of local authorities





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INTRODUCTION

[The Regulation on the Governance of the Energy Union](#) has redefined how the EU and its Member States plan and deliver on the EU's energy and climate goals. It has also established a transparent governance mechanism that should ensure that the EU complies with its commitments to the Paris Agreement. The Governance Regulation applies to all five dimensions of the EU Energy Union: energy security, internal energy market, energy efficiency, decarbonisation, and research, innovation and competitiveness. The Governance Regulation considers that each Member State can contribute to the EU's energy and climate targets in different ways.

The core of this mechanism are Member States' National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs), which cover the period from 2021 to 2030. In their NECPs, EU countries set out their objectives, policies and measures, which collectively have to meet the EU's targets in cutting GHG emissions, improving energy efficiency and increasing the share of renewable energy.

Local authorities such as cities and local communities, as well as other actors as e.g. civil society organizations, play a key role in achieving the energy transformation, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to climate change. The Covenant of Mayors is a prime example that underlines the critical role of local authorities in supporting the

EU's transition towards a climate-neutral society. With over 10,000 signatories in Europe, it is an important instrument for translating and implementing the EU's climate and energy targets at local level.

After having analysed the role of local authorities in the draft NECPs ([see our previous report here](#)), Energy Cities has now verified whether Member States have improved in better involving local authorities [in their final NECPs](#). Did EU countries recognize the potential of cities' energy & climate actions in their NECPs? Did they also take into account key urban initiatives and networks such as the Covenant of Mayors in their plans? In our new report, Energy Cities has analysed all final NECPs to see whether they are indeed "local-proofed", or whether they continue with top-down, business-as-usual policymaking.

Structure of this paper

This policy paper consists of two parts: First, through a **qualitative assessment** of all final NECPs, we have analysed the involvement of local authorities in NECPs with two main focal points:

- Mention / endorsement of local authorities' / cities' actions and policies
- Mention / recognition of European / transnational city / local authority network / initiative

Secondly, we have also conducted a **quantitative assessment** (*available in the annex of this publication*), to verify the prevalence of local-related terms, the Covenant of Mayors and other key urban initiatives and networks (the European Energy Award). We acknowledge the



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limit of this quantitative exercise, as the NECPs of EU countries are heterogeneous in terms of their length, details and terminology. Nevertheless, it contributes to provide an overall idea on how Member States perceive the role of their local authorities in their NECPs.

Qualitative Assessment

In the qualitative assessment, we have examined each NECP and identified extracts related to the involvement of local authorities in NECPs, based on two main focal points:

1. **Mention/endorsement of local authorities'/cities' actions and policies**
2. **Mention/recognition of city/local authority network / initiative**

We have concentrated on analyzing whether the Covenant of Mayors and the European Energy Award, as flagship urban initiatives on energy and climate, were highlighted in Member States' NECPs. Furthermore, we have also examined whether the following key local-related terms were reflected in EU countries' NECPs:

1. **"city/cities"**
2. **"local"**
3. **"local authority/-ies"**
4. **"municipality/-ies"**
5. **"local scale / level"**
6. **"local government"**
7. **"local / urban initiatives / networks"**

Moreover, we have also verified whether these terms are related to an actual endorsement / acknowledgement of local authorities and city networks. The term "local" doesn't always lead to an actual endorsement of local authorities. It can refer to various topics and is used, most of the time, for other purposes (for

example: local sources, local flexibility services, local DSO, etc.). For each Member State, we have therefore gathered exemplary extracts / sentences that reflect to which extent local authorities and the above mentioned key European / transnational networks / initiatives (i.e. the Covenant of Mayors and the European Energy Award) are mentioned and recognized in the NECPs of the 27 EU Member States.

Detailed qualitative Assessment per EU country NECP (in annex of publication):

- Austria
- Belgium
- Bulgaria
- Croatia
- Cyprus
- Czechia
- Denmark
- Estonia
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Greece
- Hungary
- Ireland
- Italy
- Latvia
- Lithuania
- Luxembourg
- Malta
- The Netherlands
- Poland
- Portugal
- Romania
- Slovakia
- Slovenia
- Spain
- Sweden



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KEY FINDINGS

4 EU Member States (Belgium, Latvia, Italy and Romania) **explicitly mention at least one good practice by local authorities in their final NECPs:**

- **Belgium:** City of Ghent energy coaching project
- **Latvia:** City of Riga within the scope of the Horizon 2020 project C-Track 50
- **Italy:** City of Florence Smart Cities and Communities project
- **Romania:** Bucharest and Cluj-Napoca smart city strategies

Furthermore, **12 Member States recognize local authorities' actions in the implementation of the energy and climate transition in their final NECPs:**

- **Belgium:** "As the most visible level of authority, they play an important exemplary role with regard to their inhabitants and businesses."
- **Bulgaria:** "The contribution of the local authorities [...] is essential for the cost-effective development of renewable energy in the country."
- **Czechia:** "Many cities and municipalities [...] are undertaking commitments under their own self-governing authority to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in their territory that go beyond national or EU legislation."
- **Greece:** "Cities are at the core of the transition to sustainable

mobility. Through sustainable town planning and by addressing the demands of mobility and infrastructure, cities are called upon to play a pivotal role."

- **Ireland:** "Ireland's Local Authorities play a pivotal role in their local communities and can act to demonstrate public sector leadership on climate action in their areas as well as key mobilisers of change."
- **Italy:** "In the light of the objectives for 2030, and then for 2050, it is also necessary to encourage a more active role by those local and regional bodies that are closest to citizens."
- **Latvia:** "Municipalities play a big role in promoting the development of regions, and it would therefore be necessary to promote understanding of employees of municipalities of energy efficiency and climate change."
- **Lithuania:** "Municipalities make an important contribution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions through the establishment of sustainable urban mobility plans, and their contribution to achieving the RES targets set out in the specific plans for district heating."
- **Luxembourg:** "Municipalities should become pioneers in building renovation (climate pact, financial aid, logistical aid, etc.)."



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- **The Netherlands:** “Municipalities assume the directive role in the transition to gas-free districts.”
 - **Portugal:** “Cities have been active agents in decarbonising the economy and it is of vital importance to make the most of this dynamic to create low-carbon cities.”
 - **Spain:** “The collaboration of all the territorial administrations will allow progress in this energy transition process, in which the autonomous communities and the local authorities will play a fundamental role”.
- Member States note that the capacity of local authorities should be reinforced;
 - Many Member States develop or run instruments to increase the technical and/or financial capacity of local authorities;
 - Local authorities as key actors to implement national laws and/or programmes;

In most final NECPs, the local level is moreover recognised as a relevant scale for the following topics:

- Heating (mostly district heating and cooling)
- Mobility (electric mobility for public transport)
- Local Energy Communities
- Energy efficiency in (mainly public) buildings
- Energy Poverty (local level key to tackle this issue)

The Covenant of Mayors is mentioned by 10 Member States in their final NECPs, which is an improvement compared to draft NECPs, where it was only highlighted by 4 EU countries. The 10 EU Member States acknowledging the importance of the Covenant of Mayors are: **Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania and Romania.**

Luxembourg is the only country to mention the European Energy Award in its final NECP, in relation with showcasing the holistic approach of local authorities' energy and climate policies.

In most final NECPs, Member States refer to mainly 3 categories, when mentioning local authorities in relation to their role in the energy and climate transition:

Overall, only few countries have fully understood local authorities' key role across all aspects of the energy and climate transition.

The few notable exceptions to this are Belgium, Ireland and Luxembourg, which throughout their final NECPs highlight the key role of local authorities in designing and implementing the NECP.

However, the remaining EU Member States still don't fully acknowledge the key role of local authorities to the same extent in their national energy and climate transition.



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RECOMMENDATIONS

Taking the aforementioned key findings into account, Energy Cities recommends to EU Member States and the EU Commission to take the following 4 actions to significantly improve the acknowledgement of local authorities' key role in their NECPs, in particular when updating it in 2023/24:

- Build on existing good practices, Member States should consider putting the local level on equal footing with the national and regional levels for energy and climate policy-making;
- Use Covenant of Mayors SECAPs of local authorities as compass for localizing policies and make national policies more targeted;
- Member States should consider to which extent local authorities can contribute to all 5 pillars of the EU Energy Union by systematizing local authorities' role in all areas (and not only in the energy efficiency and decarbonisation pillars);
- The EU Commission should strengthen the recognition of the role of local authorities in the NECPs by e.g. calling on Member States to report on indicators such as local investments, local action plans or local energy communities in their NECPs;

Further reading:

- *[Report on good practices in energy and climate governance](#) from the LIFE PlanUp project
- *[Energy Cities' analysis on role of local authorities in draft NECPs](#)
- *[LIFE PlanUp project website](#)

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About:

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.

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Annex

Detailed qualitative assessment per EU country NECP

Austrian NECP - Excerpts

- **“Support Austria’s towns, cities and municipalities in the area of mobility management”** (p. 106, Austrian NECP)
- **Investment** totalling around EUR 2.2 billion between 2020-2030 **will be necessary from all local authorities to develop cycling in Austria** (p108)
- **Developing suitable instruments to increase the competences of local authorities in their political decision-making”** (p126)
- **3-City Initiative:** “this initiative aims to launch demonstration projects to test future-ready solutions in order to prepare Austria’s towns, cities and industries for the upcoming major EU projects: Mission ‘Climate-neutral and Smart Cities’” (p201)

Austrian NECP - Key takeaways

- Key role for local authorities in delivering in particular mobility policies, for which national support is explicitly mentioned;
- Recognition of the need to increase local authorities’ competences in political decision-making;
- Highlighting the role of Austrian local authorities in the future EU mission on “climate-neutral and smart cities”;
- No mention of the Covenant of Mayors nor the European Energy Award;

Belgian NECP - Excerpts

- **Federal level: “Strengthening support for local climate policy:** Belgium will also focus on practical support and guidance, smart cities, mobilising local energy investments, project co-financing, as well as on multi-level governance. **This will also require the voluntary commitment of local councils to the Covenant of Mayors”** (p. 105, Belgian NECP)
- **Federal level: “Involvement of the public, local authorities and business in the energy transition:** It is vital that the public, local authorities and businesses become more involved in the energy issue in order to increase public support for the energy transition and the continued development of renewable energy projects. We will therefore ensure that the public, local authorities and businesses can be more active and come together within local energy communities in order to participate in the energy market as full stakeholders by engaging in activities such as financing, production, flexibility services, energy documents, energy storage, energy efficiency services, etc. (p. 305)
- **Flanders Region: “Towns, cities and municipalities have a wealth of powers to support the energy transition at its root.** Nearly 90% of Flemish towns, cities and municipalities have already made commitments under the Covenant of Mayors 2020-2030 and taken numerous initiatives. There are many interfaces between these local initiatives and the regional targets, measures and actions (e.g. with regard to the long-term renovation strategy, development of green electricity, district heating systems, transition to sustainable heating of buildings, energy poverty, etc.). **The Flemish Government will therefore continue to encourage local authorities in Flanders to work together to achieve the 2030 target of the Covenant of Mayors.** In particular, it will **support local authorities in their work** to reduce energy consumption and GHG emissions within their area, and to increase renewable energy generation. It will provide practical support with the development and, in particular, the implementation of their climate and energy plans. These initiatives not only concern the mitigation policy, but will also support the climate adaptation policy at local level.” (p.117)

- **Flanders Region: “A renewed partnership with local authorities:** Our towns, cities and municipalities have a key role to play in Flemish energy and climate policy. As the most visible level of authority, they play an important exemplary role with regard to their inhabitants and businesses. They translate the targets, actions and measures of regional policy into the day-to-day lives of citizens and are the best placed to develop local support and ensure the energy and climate transition at its root. For that reason, the Flemish Government wants to continue supporting local authorities and **involve them more closely in the development of energy and climate policy. We will therefore work together to conclude an Energy and Climate Pact between the Flemish Government, towns, cities and municipalities, and the Vereniging van Vlaamse Steden en Gemeenten/Association des villes et communes flamandes (Association of Flemish Towns, Cities and Municipalities).** This pact will lay the foundations for structural cooperation and, through mutual undertakings, will ensure a vigorous local energy and climate policy. The Flemish Interior Minister will discuss the following topics with local authorities: local climate tables, local demolition policy plans and local demolition funds. (p.118)
- **Wallonia Region:** “Spatial planning must take account of the impacts of climate change on the territory at both the regional and municipal levels. Under the Covenant of Mayors, there is increasing collaboration between these two levels as, in addition to the energy and GHG reduction aspects, this agreement also covers the aspect of adapting to climate change. A tool has been developed in Wallonia – the ‘adapte ta commune’ (adapt your municipality) approach – to help municipalities understand and assess the impacts of climate change on their territory. This tool has been publicised via the POLLEC (local energy and climate policy) campaigns and is therefore being used by a number of municipalities.” (p.196)
- **Wallonia Region:** “The POLLEC project aims to provide financial and methodological support to municipalities that voluntarily adopt a Local Energy and Climate Policy under the Covenant of Mayors.” (p. 293)
- **Mention of the city of Ghent energy coaching project as a best practice at local level** (p.279)

Belgian NECP – Key takeaways

- Frequent mentions of initiatives and projects to provide technical/financial support to local authorities from the federal/regional levels, across all fields of energy & climate policies;
- Covenant of Mayors explicitly highlighted as key initiative for local authorities to adhere to, and to also support their involvement in it through technical / financial assistance;
- Endorsement of local authorities’ actions, as e.g. the energy coaching project of Ghent;
- Willingness of the federal / regional levels to engage in a stronger partnership with local authorities, and to better involve them in the energy transition (i.e. in the energy market through local energy communities);

Bulgarian NECP - Excerpts

- “The **contribution of the local authorities** to a higher penetration of renewable energy and to the creation of conditions for renewables self-consumption and consumption of renewable energy by separate ‘renewable energy communities’ at local level **is essential for the development of renewable energy in the country.**” (p.105; Bulgarian NECP)
- “**Local authorities will remain actively engaged in the implementation of government policy in the area of renewable energy** [...] by developing long-term and short-term municipal programmes for the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources and biofuels within each municipality.” (p.105)
- “**To promote and deploy electric mobility, obligations will be imposed on local authorities.**” (p.111)
- “Support to boost the **energy efficiency** of SMEs and local authorities.” (p.269)

Bulgarian NECP – Key takeaways

- Contribution and involvement of local authorities seems to be mainly focused on the development of renewable energy and electrical mobility in the country;
- Top-down perception of the role of local authorities, i.e. obligations will be imposed on them in deploying e-mobility;
- No mention of the Covenant of Mayors nor the European Energy Award;

Croatian NECP – Excerpts

- **“Measures supporting the decarbonisation:** the signatories of the **Covenant** support a joint vision for 2050: accelerating decarbonisation of their territories, strengthening capacity to adapt to the inevitable impact of climate change and allowing citizens to access safe, sustainable and affordable energy. The Covenant encompasses 82 cities and municipalities, i.e. more than 2 million citizens of the Republic of Croatia.” (p. 22 Croatia NECP)
- **“Obligation of counties and large cities** (> 35,000 inhabitants) to adopt Action Plans and annual energy efficiency plans” (p.32)
- **MCPP (process of developing new national Programmes of Green Infrastructures Development in Urban Areas) – “the aim is to encourage cities and municipalities** to build projects for revitalization and development of new urban environments on sustainability principles.” (p.88)
- **“At local level, it is necessary to continuously prepare and implement Sustainable Mobility Plans,** and take into account integration, participation, and evaluation principles to meet the citizen’s mobility needs now and in the future.” (p.129)

Croatian NECP – Key takeaways

- Mostly enforcing implementation of national regulations / laws / plans (top-down policymaking) at the local level;
- Covenant of Mayors mentioned as tool to support decarbonisation of territories by 2050;

Cyprus NECP - Excerpts

- “As a response to the increased obligations arising from the circular economy package, the National Strategy for the Management of Municipal Waste will be revised in 2020 [...] **to support local authorities in their new obligations.**” (p.52, Cyprus NECP)
- “Long-term renovation strategy – the following policies and measures will be examined up to the next revision of the NECP: **further engagement of local authorities in building renovation. Local authorities have a dual role in building renovation.** As building permit authorities, they have a responsibility for the implementation of minimum energy performance requirements. **It should be examined how synergies with the Covenant of Mayors should be utilized,** how buildings of local authority could serve as “light house” projects, and how training of the local authorities’ personnel will improve the implementation of minimum requirements in renovation.” (p.78)
- **“Additional measures under examination to achieve the reduction target of -24% greenhouse gas emissions are [...] strengthen the involvement of local authorities”** (p.108)

Cyprus NECP – Key takeaways

- Highlighting several EU projects focusing on local authorities;
- Aim to support and further engage local authorities in energy and climate policies, but no mention of how;
- Covenant of Mayors mentioned as initiative to connect to in accelerating local authorities’ renovation efforts;

Czech NECP - Excerpts

- "It is also worth mentioning the **voluntary commitments of cities and regions** (e.g. under the Covenant of Mayors) in achieving energy and climate goals. **It can be expected that local authorities will take greater responsibility for achieving climate targets also by implementing smart strategies and smart projects at the level of municipalities and cities.**" (p.20, Czech NECP)
- "One of the tools for addressing climate issues by expanding forest areas is **local support for afforestation** of agricultural land under the Rural Development Programme." (p83)
- "**Many cities and municipalities [...] are undertaking commitments under their own self-governing authority to reduce greenhouse gas emissions** in their territory that go beyond national or European legislation. **Covenant of Mayors** is an example of this. **In the future it is necessary to take this trend into account and to support the activities of municipalities in the area of transition to the low-emission regime from the national level.**" (p112)
- Five **basic policy objectives of the Multiannual Financial Framework [...]** A Europe closer to citizens by fostering the sustainable and integrated development of urban, rural and coastal areas and **local initiatives.**" (p.331)

Czech NECP – Key takeaways

- Acknowledgment of local authorities' commitments under the Covenant of Mayors, but no mention of specific cities' actions;
- Provide support for local authorities in fields of energy and climate policies (e.g. afforestation, renewable energy);

Danish NECP - Excerpts

- "The Government requested all **municipalities** to develop their own **adaptation action plans** within two years." (p.31, Danish NECP)
- "The **Danish State has provided grants** for the establishment of light rail transits in the country's three largest cities." (p.95)

Danish NECP – Key takeaways

- Dissemination of information and provision of grants to local authorities;
- No mention of Covenant of Mayors nor European Energy Award;

Estonian NECP - Excerpts

- "**More than 9,200 cities have joined the Global Covenant of Mayors including Tallinn, Tartu, Rakvere, Jogeva, Kuressaare, Rouge and Voru from Estonia.**" (p.19, Estonian NECP)
- "**Motivating local governments and local community** via local benefit that renewable energy production units bring along that should so-called compensate the possible disturbances (visual pollution, noise nuisance, NIMBY effect." (p.71)
- "**Preparation of the local governments for climate change is supported by consistent development of environmental and weather monitoring information systems.**" (p.77)
- "The aim of the advisory unit acting by the Estonian National Social Insurance Board from 2019 is to **increase the support organised by the State to the local governments** in performing the social welfare tasks." (p.107)

Estonian NECP – Key takeaways

- Increase the support for local authorities and motivate them in implementing energy and climate policies;
- Mention of the global umbrella initiative of the Covenant of Mayors (the Global Covenant of Mayors);

Finnish NECP - Excerpts

- “The **(Voluntary Energy Efficiency Agreements)** are intended to **guide companies and municipalities towards continuous improvements in energy efficiency.**” (p.104, Finnish NECP)
- “**Finland participates** [...] in the **campaign** promoting the more flexible use of power plants and electric transport **between cities** (Pilot City Programme).” (p.127)

Finnish NECP – Key takeaways

- Provision of guidance and funding from national government to local authorities;
- No mention of Covenant of Mayors nor European Energy Award;

French NECP - Excerpts

- “**Developing crowdfunding and promoting local ownership of projects:** Tenders launched since 2016 have systematically favoured projects that implement crowdfunding solutions (involving citizens or local authorities) by integrating criteria and bonuses linked to participatory investment”. (p.183, French NECP)
- “**Local authorities will be provided with monitoring tools to enable the roll-out of low-emission zones and zones where entry is forbidden for most polluting vehicles.**” (p. 129)
- “**The integration of renewable and recovered energy in H&C (i.e. heating and cooling) should also take place as close as possible to the projects and could be included in Local Development Plans.** In addition, specific local actions could be implemented to promote system ranking, based for example on those holding ‘eco-network’ labels.” (p. 282)

French NECP – Key takeaways

- Providing technical and financial support to local authorities;
- The local level is viewed as the most pertinent to integrate renewable and recovered energy in the H&C sector;
- No mention of Covenant of Mayors nor European Energy Award;

German NECP - Excerpts

- “**The Federal Government, the federal states and the municipalities all have a role to play in implementing the energy transition and climate protection measures.**” (p.26, German NECP)
- “**Municipality-level energy efficiency and resource efficiency networks** - Municipalities can set up a network for the purpose of this funding programme with the aim of improving their energy and/or resource efficiency. With the help of a network team, they will then be able to work together to identify and implement savings potential.” (p.90)

German NECP – Key takeaways

- Mention of financial support from Federal Government / States towards local authorities;
- No mention of Covenant of Mayors nor European Energy Award;

Greek NECP - Excerpts

- “**Cities are at the core of the transition to sustainable mobility. Through sustainable town planning (for compact cities and reduced urban sprawl) and by addressing the demands of mobility and infrastructure, cities are called upon to play a pivotal role.** Urban areas should move towards digitisation, automation and other innovative solutions and should adopt active and shared modes of transport through increased walking, use of bicycles and micro-mobility vehicles, use of public transport, or even car-sharing and car-pooling (sharing economy). (p.21, Greek NECP)

- **“An ever-increasing number of local authorities have started developing local adaptation plans. More than 50 Greek cities have signed the ‘Covenant of Mayors on Energy and Climate for 2030’, to make their respective areas more resilient to climate change. Also, the programme for preparing local physical plans, which is being drafted currently and is expected to cover all municipalities in Greece within 6 years, provides that each one of these plans will include a special section laying down climate change adaptation measures at municipal and municipal district levels.”** (p.100)
- **“Measures to support cities and municipalities in mobility management and awareness-raising consist in strengthening accessibility and pedestrian mobility.”** (p.102)
- **“Cities can play a major role in developing and implementing climate change policies and measures, as they are a link between local action and national and international commitments for climate change mitigation. Urban areas in Greece have a significant share in national energy consumption and GHG emissions. Therefore, improvement in town planning and energy management at a local level contribute decisively to reducing energy consumption in cities as well as the carbon footprint [...]”** (p.112)
- **“Continued improvement of the energy efficiency of public buildings will also be strengthened through the implementation of the Action Plans for Sustainable Energy and the Action Plans for Energy Efficiency of Buildings, which must be drawn up by regions and municipalities, supported by targeted financing programmes.”** (p.155)

Greek NECP – Key takeaways

- Widespread acknowledgment of local authorities’ role and support for their actions in tackling climate change in different fields (e.g. mobility, adaptation, urban planning to reduce energy consumption, etc.);
- Mention of Covenant of Mayors as key tool to accelerate renovation of public buildings;

Hungarian NECP - Excerpts

- **“With the implementation of the Green Bus Programme - aimed at greening local transport - electric buses will be used in larger cities.”** (p.23, Hungarian NECP)
- **“Biogas may be a viable option for municipalities lacking natural gas network”** (p.96)

Hungarian NECP – Key takeaways

- Top-down perception of role of local authorities, mentioned mainly in relation to transport or energy infrastructure;
- No mention of Covenant of Mayors nor European Energy Award;

Irish NECP - Excerpts

- **“Local authorities play a key role in meeting Ireland’s energy targets, particularly for climate change and energy efficiency.”** (p.15, Irish NECP)
- **“Delivering and implementing the wide range of policies and measures necessary to achieve our energy and climate goals will require a deep level of collaboration across Government, local authorities and agencies.”** (p.26)
- **“Ireland’s Local Authorities play a pivotal role in their local communities and can act to demonstrate public sector leadership on climate action in their areas as well as key mobilisers of change. In 2018 four Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs) were established to assist the Local Authority sector in building capacity to engage effectively on climate change. These groups and structures were consulted in the development of the Climate Action Plan and NECP. A Climate Action Charter for Local Authorities will be developed and support offered in developing their activities under the Charter.”** (p.28)
- **“National climate action policy in Ireland recognises the potential which exists within the local government sector to contribute to the transition to a low carbon and climate resilient future. The NAF identifies the critical role to be played by local authorities in addressing climate change adaptation.”** (p.104)

- “In order to encourage the transition away from fossil fuels onto more sustainable forms of transport, Action 81 of the Plan calls for: [The development of] a **regulatory framework on low emission zones and parking pricing policies, and provide local authorities with the power to restrict access to certain parts of a city or a town to zero-emission vehicles.**” (p.123)

Irish NECP – Key takeaways

- Clear acknowledgment of local authorities’ key role in reaching Ireland’s energy and climate objectives (i.e. climate change and energy efficiency);
- Climate Action Regional Offices as key structure established by national funding to build the capacity of local authorities;
- No mention of Covenant of Mayors nor European Energy Award;

Italian NECP - Excerpts

- “A **compulsory requirement is envisaged for local authorities** to ensure that at the time of their renewal, their fleet of cars, buses and public service vehicles is made up of at least **25% electric vehicles or vehicles fuelled with LNG or CNG.**” (p.26, Italian NECP)
- “A **cultural change towards modal shift** and the use of bicycles, public transport, shared and electric mobility and vehicles that use alternative fuels thus **needs to be triggered in cities.**” (p.28)
- “**Two new investment funds, assigned to the State and to regional and local authorities, will be introduced in the Budget Law for 2020. [...] to boost investment by local authorities, with effect from 2020 a fund assigned to municipalities for initiatives involving energy efficiency, sustainable local development and the security of infrastructure and public buildings will be in place.**” (p.29)
- “**In the light of the objectives for 2030, and then for 2050, it is also necessary to encourage a more active role by those local and regional bodies that are closest to citizens.** Specifically, this will be done by building on and strengthening the actions those bodies are taking forward in their own **Action Plans for Sustainable Energy (APSEs) and Action Plans for Sustainable Energy and the Climate (APSECs), the operational instruments of the Covenant of Mayors. In the context of the ‘concurrent competences’ between State and Regions, and with due regard for the roles of the regulator, the network operators and market operators, and with a view to ensuring that the Plan is implemented correctly, a permanent technical office will be set up (INECP Observatory, which will absorb the existing Renewables Observatory).** The role of the office will be to discuss, share and agree and cooperate on topics regarding the implementation of the Plan, with particular reference to the following: monitoring the state of progress of the Plan objectives; checking and drafting improvement proposals, including in coordination with INECP environmental monitoring, regarding the arrangements and implementation times for the roadmap through which the effects of climate change will be integrated, in the first update of the INECP for 2023. **This observatory will be set up jointly by the INECP proposing ministries, by a representative of the Regions proposed by the Energy and Environment Coordination unit of the State-Regions Conference and by the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI), by GSE (Gestore Servizi Energetici, the energy services operator) and by the Institute for Environmental Protection and Research (ISPRA).** Its aim is to provide a forum for advanced technical discussion of the actual implementation of the Plan and the monitoring of its execution, and agreeing on and sharing any necessary adjustments to the INECP as it is implemented. **Each year the Observatory will draw up an implementation report that will be sent to the State-Regions Conference, the Prime Minister’s Office and Parliamentary Committees 8 (environment) and 10 (productive activities) and to the ANCI.**” (p.45-46)
- “Setting-up the **Green Italy programme to encourage initiatives for the sustainable management of Italian cities and the spreading of good practices.**” (p.142)

- **"Heating sector:** In order to meet the mandatory national target in relation to renewable energy, the contribution of the heating sector is fundamental. [...] The principal instruments are: **contributions to municipalities towards investment in the field of energy efficiency and sustainable local development.**" (p.156)
- "Italy's participation in Horizon 2020 Smart cities and communities with **the project for the city of Florence.**" (p.234)

Italian NECP – Key takeaways:

- Mention of several national instruments/funds to support local authorities;
- Acknowledgement that local authorities are well-placed to tackle various issues on energy and climate, and have to play an active role, including through the Covenant of Mayors which is explicitly mentioned;
- NECPs observatory to be set up, including the National Association of Italian Municipalities in its governance;

Latvian NECP - Excerpts

- "In 2018, active cooperation was ensured with the Riga planning region within the scope of the project "Putting Regions on Track for Carbon Neutrality by 2050" (C-TRACK-50). Similarly, the topical issues regarding the development of the Plan and the involvement of local governments required for fulfilling the conditions to be included in the Plan was discussed with the representatives of planning regions of Latvia. The conditions, action lines and measures included in the Plan were presented in the Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments, at the meeting of partners of the Co2mmunity project of the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme 2014-2020 of the Riga planning region" (p.20, Latvian NECP)
- As a result of the analysis of the potential it was concluded that **there is no potential for increasing the share of RES at national level in DH, while it was identified that in certain cities (Daugavpils, Liepaja and Jurmala) it would be necessary to introduce high-efficiency cogeneration in district heating.**" (p.43)
- **"It is precisely the municipalities and their employees who are often approached by the public for information or advice [...] however, as things stand it must be concluded that the ability of municipalities to ensure sufficient capacity and involvement of the population in the implementation of necessary measures is limited by insufficient funding, capacity and other priorities [...] Municipalities need to provide residents with more assistance in preparing documentation and implementing procedures.** Although Latvia has many municipalities which have committed to the Covenant of Mayors and have committed to implement GHG emission reduction measures, there is still a **need to better inform employees of State and municipal employees on air pollution reduction and climate change mitigation policies and objectives**, their synergies and contradictions, so that these employees can pass this information on to the public." (p.105)
- **"Municipalities play a big role in promoting the development of regions, and it would therefore be necessary to promote understanding of employees of municipalities of energy efficiency and climate change. To encourage municipalities to develop in a climate-friendly direction, they must be encouraged to introduce innovative technologies in their own work."** (p.106)
- **"The faster implementation of energy efficiency improvement measures in DH is hampered by the lack of investment, the limited capacity of municipalities to take out loans and the slow rate of capital turnover."** (p.117)
- **One of the identified barriers to greater involvement of municipalities in self-generation of electricity is lack of experience in organising public procurement for the purchase of such technologies and services."** (p.126)

Latvian NECP – Key takeaways

- Widespread acknowledgement of local authorities' key role in the energy and climate transition across all of its fields;
- Awareness of local authorities' need for greater capacities (capacity-building) – i.e. “lack of experience”, “limited capacity”;
- Mention of the Covenant of Mayors initiative, to which many Latvian local authorities have signed up to;

Lithuanian NECP - Excerpts

- **“Municipalities make an important contribution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions through the establishment of sustainable urban mobility plans, their participation in the implementation of the Covenant of Mayors, and their contribution to achieving the RES targets set out in the specific plans for district heating.”** (p.19, Lithuanian NECP)
- “Development and implementation of a cross-cutting study on public transport in Vilnius city. Strategic optimisation will reduce CO2 emissions from buses by 12.64%.” (p.62)
- “The assessment of cogeneration potential analysed heat and electricity generation and supply technologies, heat and electricity generation capacities in 10 major cities.” (p.210)

Lithuanian NECP – Key takeaways

- Highlighting the role of local authorities in particular on mobility and heating & cooling;
- Mention of local authorities making important contribution to cut GHG emissions in transport, notably through their involvement in the Covenant of Mayors;

Luxembourg NECP - Excerpts

- **“Climate Pact as a decarbonisation measure:** In 2012, the Luxembourg Government concluded a Climate Pact with the municipalities, offering technical advice and financial support for climate action measures. The Climate Pact is a wide-ranging instrument for orienting and shaping communal climate and energy policies, which has been expanded to include the topics of air quality and the circular economy. It supports the municipalities in introducing an integrated climate action and energy management system and achieving certification with the ‘European Energy Award’. The Pact has been well received and has now been signed by all municipalities in Luxembourg, of which more than 86% had already achieved one of the three certification levels by the end of 2018. The 2018-2023 coalition agreement envisages the further development of the Climate Pact beyond 2020.” (p.17, Luxembourgish NECP)
- “Technical and financial assistance programmes will be made available to municipalities in order to implement concrete measures that reduce the carbon footprint” (p. 63)
- “The *Pacte Logement* [housing pact] which provides municipalities with, among other things, additional financial resources to create new housing and public infrastructure, will come to an end in December 2020. Considering the high demand for affordable housing in Luxembourg, the government has decided to extend and refocus the *Pacte Logement*. **This pact between the government and the municipalities is to be relaunched under the name *Pacte logement 2.0* and, on the basis of a wide range of measures, will help the municipalities to achieve important objectives in relation to housing construction and to improve the quality of housing available to inhabitants.** The new *Pacte Logement* will be in force until around 2030 and its structure will be more diverse. Possible elements include improved advice to municipalities from the Ministry of Housing, providing a housing consultant and promoting various measures focusing on both the quantity and quality of housing. The range of measures for achieving these objectives was drawn up in cooperation with the municipalities.” (p. 68-69)
- “Municipalities should become pioneers in building renovation (climate pact, financial aid, logistical aid, etc.)” (p. 104)

Luxembourg NECP – Key takeaways

- Strong acknowledgement of key role of local authorities and financial / technical support for their actions across energy & climate policies (e.g. air quality, circular economy, renovation, renewable energy, biodiversity, etc.), through instruments such as Climate Pact or Housing Pact that bring State and local authorities together;
- Mention of the European Energy Award as key flagship initiative behind the country's Climate Pact;

Malta NECP - Excerpts

- **“Local councils form the most basic form of local government; however, their role is primarily administrative and their involvement in energy and climate policy design is marginal.”** (p.27, Maltese NECP)
- **“Malta’s contribution to the EU’s 2030 renewable energy target will require the extension of current policies and measures and the development of new initiatives tailored to local developments.”** (p.76)

Malta NECP – Key takeaways

- The role of local authorities is marginal in national energy and climate policies;
- No mention of Covenant of Mayors nor European Energy Award;

Netherlands NECP - Excerpts

- **“Municipalities will manage the district approach and provide local customisation. Municipalities assume the directive role in the transition to gas-free districts.** In a diligent process that involves district residents they will have to weigh up the best solution per district, if houses are no longer heated using natural gas.” (p.31, Dutch NECP)
- The Climate Agreement – “the objective is to make 1.5 million existing homes and other buildings natural gas-free by 2030. In addition, a district-oriented approach will be adopted as a result of which, in 2021 **municipalities will have a heat plan that provides direction for the transition.** (p.35)
- **“As part of efforts to increase the sustainability of the built-up environment, municipalities will first have to determine how increased sustainability will be achieved per district, and the infrastructure required to do so.”** (p.59)
- **“In order to stimulate the demand side of the transition to a low CO2 and circular economy, central government supports local and regional authorities in using the purchasing power of government (around 73 billion euros annually) for purchasing climate-friendly and circular products and services, including renewable energy.”** (p.62)
- **“An Energy-saving Measures Programme (PRE) will start this autumn in cooperation with municipalities and market parties. 93 million euros are available for this.”** (p.64)
- **“In the district-oriented approach, the perseverance of municipalities to end the consumption of natural gas in designated districts is an important element in the package to ensure emission reductions and investments for housing.”** (p.151)

Netherlands NECP – Key takeaways

- Highlighting key role of local authorities in particular for implementing a district-oriented approach for the energy transition, i.e. when phasing out gas in the energy mix;
- Mention of funding programmes to provide local authorities with financial support (e.g. for energy savings);
- No mention of Covenant of Mayors nor European Energy Award;

Polish NECP - Excerpts

- "At the same time, the **vulnerability of cities to climate change is particularly important**, and thus they should be given special significance and priority in the adaptation process." (p.75, Polish NECP)
- "At the same time, there is a **need for financial support for local governments in public transport fleet replacement.**" (p.82)
- "**Supporting public transport systems in cities** with EU Cohesion Policy funds." (p.82)
- "The [Clean air and stop smog] programme is addressed to **all municipalities that are able to demonstrate poor air quality** in their territory, i.e. concentrations of air pollutants exceeding EU standards." (p.121)

Polish NECP – Key takeaways

- When referring to local authorities, main focus is on mobility, air quality and climate adaptation, with national government providing technical and financial assistance;
- No mention of Covenant of Mayors nor European Energy Award;

Portuguese NECP - Excerpts

- "**Cities have been active agents in decarbonising the economy and it is of vital importance to make the most of this dynamic to create low-carbon cities.**" (p.16, Portuguese NECP)
- "Among the initiatives to be implemented are the support programmes for establishing self-consumption **in partnership with municipalities.**" (p.55)
- "**Place cities at the forefront of sustainable mobility**, creating conditions for a paradigm shift in urban mobility." (p.64)
- "Promote programmes to support the establishment of **energy communities in partnership with municipalities.**" (p.77)
- "These **support mechanisms** (i.e. programmes to promote and support energy efficiency and integrate renewable energy to mitigate energy poverty) will be **developed in conjunction with municipalities to be better suited to the local situation.**" (p.116)
- "Recognising that the **impacts of climate change** have a **strong territorial component** mean that **adaptation must be implemented by local agents.** (p.174)
- "The aims of the **financial instrument for urban rehabilitation and revitalisation 2020 are to revitalise cities**, support the rehabilitation of areas dedicated to disadvantaged communities and support energy efficiency in housing." (p.193)

Portuguese NECP – Key takeaways

- Key role of local authorities highlighted across policy areas of energy and climate policies
- Important acknowledgment by the national government that actions should be taken by putting local authorities at the forefront, or in partnership with them;
- No mention of Covenant of Mayors nor European Energy Award;

Romanian NECP - Excerpts

- "In the context of the "**Smart City**" strategies under preparation (e.g. **Bucharest, Cluj-Napoca**), local authorities have planned a series of projects focused on the **production of electricity and heat from renewable sources** by using photovoltaic panels, heat solar panels or biomass." (p.60, Romanian NECP)
- Fostering energy symbioses between SACETs and the proximity industry. Example: **in Cluj-Napoca City**, under a pilot demonstration project under the SPIRE axis of Horizon 2020, **the residual heat from a local factory will be recovered and introduced into the district heating system of the city the heat households**, which results in substantial GHG savings." (p.84)
- "**Promoting smart cities and green cities**" (p.88)

- **"Bucharest Municipality** adopted in 2016 the **exemption from the payment of the parking fee** in public parking areas **for electrical and hybrid vehicles** registered in Bucharest. This specific measure may also be adopted by other localities in Romania." (p.93)
- **"Several local authorities in Romania** have expressed their interest in taking action to reduce GHG emissions. Several municipalities chose to participate in the **EU Programme "Covenant of Mayors"** which encourages production and use of sustainable energy. The developed plans envisage mainly improving energy efficiency in buildings and identifying solutions to improve the local transport system." (p.145)
- **"Alba-Iulia City, through the municipality's partnership** with various multinational companies in the technological sector, and with local and regional SMEs, **benefitted from the implementation of several smart city projects.**" (p.198)

Romanian NECP – Key takeaways

- Main focus on the smart city concept when referring to local authorities;
- Recognition and mention of several good practices from local authorities in energy and climate action;
- Mention of the Covenant of Mayors as initiative in which many Romanian local authorities are involved in;

Slovakian NECP - Excerpts

- **"Local governments are currently facing major changes connected with their efforts to ensure sustainable growth based on a local-carbon economy.** They are therefore looking to intelligent or "smart" solutions." (p.94, Slovakian NECP)
- **"In July 2019, the ME SR announced the first ever call for the construction of AC charging stations for municipalities and local government** (planned volume EUR 500000)." (p.108)
- **"The forthcoming Vision and Strategy for the Development of Slovakia to 2030 states, as one of the means to significantly reduce the energy and carbon intensity of the Slovak economy, the need to build capacity for quality energy planning at the strategic planning level for regions, towns and municipalities."** (p.118)
- **"Comprehensive investment in the energy infrastructure of towns and municipalities is a prerequisite for supporting the development of public lighting."** (p.117)
- **"The SR is creating local information centres on the use of energy through the SIEA. These services are generally free of charge. Strengthening capacity at the level of self-government in the field of energy and energy efficiency, increasing professional education for staff and strengthening instruments and measures at both national and local levels are also important."** (p.126)
- **"It would be advisable to develop a National Strategy for raising awareness in the field of energy efficiency, targeting the public from children to specialists and manufacturers. The strategy should support the development of awareness and education on energy efficiency, support the implementation of information campaigns on energy efficiency and support the implementation of consultancy and training projects for state and local government employees in the field of energy efficiency."** (p.138)

Slovakian NECP – Key takeaways

- When referring to local authorities, main focus is on the need to build capacity of regions, towns and municipalities especially in the field of energy efficiency (e.g. public lighting) and energy planning, and to provide them with financial assistance;
- No mention of Covenant of Mayors nor European Energy Award;

Slovenian NECP - Excerpts

- **"Update the concepts and schemes of urban passenger transport to improve the quality and accessibility."** (p.103, Slovenian NECP)
- **"Create a heat map and establish a uniform and up-to-date collection of databases and necessary tools to support local planning."** (p.104)

Slovenian NECP – Key takeaways

- Mention of local authorities mainly in relation to heating & cooling, with necessity to support their local planning efforts by creating a heat map of the country;
- No mention of Covenant of Mayors nor European Energy Award;

Spanish NECP - Excerpts

- “In the mobility-transport sector, the planned reduction is 27 Mt CO₂-eq. Above all, this result is a consequence of the important modal shift from the conventional combustion vehicle to public, shared and non-emitting modes of transport, and as a result of the widespread **creation of low-emission zones in cities with more than 50,000 inhabitants starting from 2023**, in which it is planned that access for the most highly emitting and polluting vehicles will be limited.” (p.36, Spanish NECP)
- **“The collaboration of all the territorial administrations will allow progress in this energy transition process, in which the autonomous communities and the local authorities will play a fundamental role.”** (p.52)
- **“Instruments of support and collective financing adapted to the real environment of cities and the rural world**, where competition criteria are considered and where local citizen participation is ensured either directly or indirectly (i.e. cooperatives, residents’ associations). **Promotion of action mechanisms in the municipal sphere** to promote associations or partnerships between municipalities and citizen groups, given the existing synergies and the mutual benefits to be achieved. The municipality can be a strategic advisor by co-investing as a partner in participative citizen projects, or even by becoming an infrastructure operator (existing and/or future) with a high effect/impact on the success of the so-called participative citizen projects.” (p. 104)
- **“Taxation: The Ministry of Finance, in collaboration with local authorities, will analyse the convenience, viability and time periods for reform of the current Motor Vehicle Tax, levied by the local authorities.”** (p. 137)
- **“The autonomous regional and local administrations are pioneers in the procurement of energy providers and in the use of energy performance contracts and public-private partnerships to finance energy efficiency actions.”** (p. 154)

Spanish NECP – Key takeaways

- Emphasis on the key role of local authorities across different areas of energy and climate policies – e.g. to deploy sustainable transport solutions (i.e. low-emission zones), to support the roll-out of local energy communities, etc.;
- Highlighting that collaboration across governance levels essential to progress in transition;
- No mention of Covenant of Mayors nor European Energy Award;

Swedish NECP - Excerpts

- **“The Swedish Energy Agency provides municipalities with Government funds so that they can give local climate and energy advice to private individuals and small businesses.** Almost every Swedish municipality has a local climate and energy advisor, who provides objective information tailored to the locality.” (p.46, Swedish NECP)
- **“The Klimatkiv is an investment support initiative for local and regional measures to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and other gases** which have an impact on the climate; it is administered by the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency. The funds must be invested with the primary aim of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.” (p.67)
- **“All municipalities can provide basic local energy and climate advice.”** (p.90)

Swedish NECP – Key takeaways

- Mainly referring to local authorities in view of providing financial and technical support;
- No mention of Covenant of Mayors nor European Energy Award;

Quantitative assessment of NECPs from local authorities' perspective

	Covenant of Mayors	EU Energy Award	Local-related words						
			city/cities	local	local authority/-ies	municipality/-ies	local scale / level	local govern.	local initiatives
Austria	0		51	53	8	60	1	0	1
Belgium	7		55	140	24	0	3	0	1
Bulgaria	0		8	63	9	37	2	1	0
Croatia	8		55	33	2	11	4	1	0
Cyprus	1		10	71	21	0	2	1	0
Czechia	1		32	44	3	28	1	0	1
Denmark	0		4	26	3	18	2	3	0
Estonia	1		20	76	0	3	3	8	0
Finland	0		10	17	1	12	0	2	0
France	0		7	55	15	0	1	0	1
Germany	0		45	98	29	69	0	31	0
Greece	1		39	84	3	11	7	0	0
Hungary	0		3	53	6	9	0	0	0
Ireland	0		34	79	37	0	5	10	0
Italy	1		21	113	18	59	6	2	0
Latvia	1		4	44	0	49	0	2	0
Lithuania	1		24	45	2	68	1	0	0
Luxemb.	0	1	40	7	2	0	0	0	0
Malta	0		1	87	1	0	0	4	0
Netherl.	0		5	28	2	33	0	0	0
Poland	0		45	78	0	14	3	14	0
Portugal	0		32	52	0	22	3	2	0
Romania	1		19	33	4	11	0	0	0
Slovakia	0		20	40	2	14	3	1	1
Slovenia	0		13	38	1	15	1	0	0
Spain	0		47	25	0	13	1	0	0
Sweden	0		21	40	3	40	1	0	1