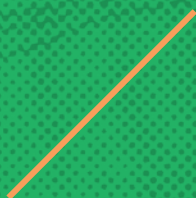


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# IMPACT REPORT



ENERGCITIES

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IMPACT  
REPORT

The Energy cities 2020 impact report aims to give you the flavour of the year.

- / Foreword
- // Highlights of Energy Cities' activities during the year
- /// Our opinion of what changed during 2020 for cities transition

At-a-glance, you will see the main trends and the opportunities that the health crisis might bring to the urban transformation agenda.





## FOREWORD

2020 will forever be remembered as the year of the pandemic – there is no escaping that. But while the pandemic forced changes on Energy Cities, just as it did for our member cities, we continued to deliver on our promise to democratise, decarbonise and decentralise the energy transition.

The pandemic also reminded us that the energy and value of cities resides in its people. Whether it is sharing ideas, trading goods or building solidarity – cities are for people.

From Vienna to Barcelona, from Helsinki to Dunkirk, there is no shortage of examples of cities that are improving themselves for people with climate neutrality strategies, sometimes targeting energy independence and sometimes a broader transition.

Whether this should be done is no longer question: energy neutrality must be achieved in the big cities. And the mayors of metropolitan cities and medium- sized towns are well aware of this new responsibility.



## FOREWORD

For evidence of this, look no further than the new mission letters of the deputy mayors and their portfolios: from the first deputy of the City of Brussels, who is responsible for “climate” in all these dimensions and who ensures its integration into all municipal delegations, or of the deputy Mayor to the City of Nantes, in charge of resilience and foresight while also taking on the role of Vice-President of the metropolis in charge of the climate, energy and food transition, agriculture, economic changes ... Gone are the days when the Vice-Presidents for Energy were only in charge of renovating public buildings!

Energy Cities remains steadfast in its objective of accelerating the energy transition with people at the centre. This Impact Report highlights just a few of the many projects that are building the tools and knowledge our network is creating with the purpose of helping each city find the right path of itself and its citizens.

It also highlights how the experiences of our member cities are being fed directly into the EU decision-making process to create the right conditions for cities to thrive.



# HIGHLIGHTS OF ENERGY CITIES ACTIVITIES DURING THE YEAR

2020 – City Building  
in a Pandemic



## NEW BEGINNINGS

One big highlight from 2020 was the launch of the **EU City Facility** – a new way of working for Energy Cities, in conjunction with many partners, to address a well-known concern: the lack of capacity at local level to develop sustainable investment plans for the energy transition.

For the first time, Energy Cities is handling direct EU grants to cities, along with access to a network of national funding experts to help cities train or hire their own staff, build plans for the future and access the often labyrinthian world of EU and national financing.

Our initial call for proposals received an overwhelming response, both in terms of volume and of the quality of applications for grants. Fortunately, a second call has just been launched and 2021 should see more cities benefit from the EU City Facility to accelerate their energy transition.





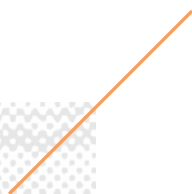
## CHAPTERS CLOSING

Several notable projects ended in 2020 leaving a strong legacy in the participating cities and clear lessons for other cities.

**HotMaps** is an online, open-source tool for local heating and cooling mapping and strategy development. It was created in collaboration with the cities of **Aalborg, Bistrita, Frankfurt, Geneva, Milton Keynes, Kerry County and San Sebastian**, which co-designed, tested and validated the tool in order to guarantee a user-friendly soft-ware entirely based on user needs. HotMaps is now available to any city that wants to:

- ✓ **Map the heating and cooling energy situation** including renewable and waste heat potentials in GIS layers in virtually any EU region up to a 250x250m level
- ✓ **Model the energy system**, considering hourly matching of supply and demand, demand response etc. on local, regional and national level
- ✓ **Simulate supply and demand options of long-term scenarios until 2050** regarding CO<sub>2</sub>-emissions, energy costs, demographic changes, share of renewables.

The timing here is crucial as heating and cooling mapping has already become mandatory in some areas and is being considered as future requirement. HotMaps is a tool developed by cities and for cities to do just that.





**Innovate** developed and rolled-out integrated energy efficiency service packages in 11 target territories, including Brussels Capital Region, Riga, **Litoměřice, Aradippou, Frederikshavn, Heerlen, Mantova, Extremadura and more**. These integrated packages, also called “**one-stop**” shops, helped to accelerate home renovations, increase comfort, address energy costs and drive down energy use for citizens, with:

- ✓ Development of products that meet consumers’ concerns
- ✓ Targeted marketing and communication
- ✓ Independent advisors who guide homeowners through the renovation process from A to Z and guarantee its high quality at each stage:  
information > preparation > financing > implementation > monitoring of results
- ✓ Coordination of a chain of suppliers and contractors to deliver a high quality solution to homeowners
- ✓ Long-term and affordable financing.

The lessons of Innovate have already been communicated and shared broadly with the EU Institutions as they look for best practices in designing the EU’s Renovation Wave and the upcoming changes to the Energy Performance of Building Directives (EPBD). Our pioneering cities have already helped their citizens and in doing so helped other European cities, as the challenge of upgrading the existing buildings can now be met with a tried and tested approach.



## ONGOING STORIES

Hundreds of our Energy Cities members continue to benefit from ongoing projects in just about every country of the EU.

There isn't the space here to give a rundown on them all, their goals, the collaborations and their participants but

*[please sign up for our newsletter](#)*

to stay abreast of all the latest developments and milestones!



## BRIGHT FUTURE

Much of the final months of 2020 was spent preparing detailed proposals for a wide range of upcoming EU projects involving our members. As always, our project goals and our EU lobbying goals are intertwined as we believe that cities' experiences make the most compelling arguments to EU leaders and provides the most useful feedback into how our 'rules' need to change to allow cities to tap into their full potential, and consequently, allow Europe to do the same.

In 2021, we will continue to push mechanisms to increase the local energy production rate and accelerate the transition away from fossil-fuel heating. We will advocate new and different energy policy designs to foster circular systems, break silos and promote broad partnerships for locally-based economies. And we will help translate the 'climate neutral' EU objective into local strategies by advocating an EU budget that works for local government and a science-based carbon budget for better decision-making. Finally, we will maintain our focus on the central idea of sufficiency.

The project proposals were more successful than we could have hoped with a very high approval rate. Be sure to check [www.energy-cities.eu](http://www.energy-cities.eu) regularly to learn about how this next wave of projects will continue the energy transition, further our policy objectives and continue accelerating the energy transition for our Energy Cities members!

OUR OPINION OF WHAT  
CHANGED IN 2020 FOR  
CITIES' TRANSITIONS →



OUR  
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## A GOLDEN AGE OF CITY INFLUENCE IN THE POLITICAL SPHERE?

The political landscape in Brussels is always fractured, but the current situation is unlike anything we have seen before and it may represent an opening for a golden age of city influence, along with unprecedented obligations.

First, the **Climate Law mandating net-zero emissions by 2050 and the 55% reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2030** has set off an unprecedented flurry of legislative activity revising dozens of targets, implementing measures and requiring countless impact assessments.

There are numerous consequences to this activity.

**Firstly**, the European Commission is working overtime to meet the administrative requirements of this legislative review.

**Secondly**, the always powerful European Council has solidified its decision-making position in Brussels, especially as the focus has shifted to how to direct spending in recovery plans and the 2021-2027 budget. The power imbalance has been further exacerbated by a European Parliament that has been largely silent in the last two years but will have a greater role to play as the various legislative proposals move forward.

**Thirdly**, there is now a window of opportunity to move away from the doctrine of growth above all. It might be replaced with its ideological cousin of 'green growth', representing minimal change, or we could see a move towards a goal of autonomy and resilience achieved through the net zero target.



## WHAT ROLE WILL CITIES PLAY?

For decades, cities have been asking to be seen as stakeholders in the negotiations on high-level targets and finance priorities. The result was the Committee of the Regions, which has an opinion on everything and an audience of almost no one.

But with the ongoing work of setting targets and aligning a new course for a net zero continent, attention is turning to those who will implement, on our roads, in our buildings, and in our neighbourhoods, the transformations required by the Green Deal. And that, of course, is cities.

Perhaps the future will put cities and Member States on an equal footing in a parallel approach: States take care of the interconnections between countries and of the rules that apply to all for better cohesion, while cities pull the levers that allow them to transform their local economy, and they organize themselves to leave no territory “behind.”

To give one example, there is no need for cities to think about the rules of the electricity market when it is dominated by about twenty operators. But it becomes absolutely necessary to involve cities directly, in particular through remunicipalisation, when there is a goal is to interconnect the networks (heat, electricity, mobility), reduce needs, create local loops, build solidarity with neighbouring territories, align agricultural and energy sectors, and more. Cities are the only level of government that can recognise and align the resources and actors available in sufficient detail to tap into the real synergies available and necessary for a net zero Europe.

Another major change in the EU doctrine, this one quite radical, is the question of European autonomy – a key, if vague, talking point from the presidents of the European Commission and Council recently. Achieving a new level of autonomy for Europe begins with building more livable and resilient cities that control their own systems for energy, food and materials. Cities and regions have the keys to build more autonomy (resource management, circular economy, sufficiency, adaptation, etc.), though they lack some elements needed for full autonomy, such as fundamental research. This debate is far from crystal clear and may yet default to simpler, less constructive questions, such as whether the EU should be engaging in global trade wars, ignoring the fact that a global transition cannot be a zero sum game.



## DOES IT ALL COME DOWN TO MONEY?

Compared to the stiff and slow movements of the EU's interinstitutional processes, cities are fast and agile players who are capable of rapid action and transformation. Currently, the significant amount of funds on the table is not moving quickly due to the limited administrative capacity to assess and enact proposals at European level. Commissioner Ferreira is well aware of the needs of local communities, and the opportunities and challenges that cities could have with ready access, but is unable to act without agreement from member states.

Energy Cities has focused on getting these funds moving by arguing for increased support for cities to develop the capacity to set up projects. In essence, an expansion of the EU City Facility in the shorter term to develop a pipeline of projects at a local level to ensure a dependable absorption of funding. This is a more productive approach than trying to influence the governance of national strategies, as there is little motivation for member state governments to share power, influence and reputation when it comes to stimulus spending.





## SHORT-, MEDIUM- AND LONG-TERM OUTLOOKS

### SHORT - TERM

In all the instruments of the Recovery Fund, the Commission manages a TSI (Technical Support Instrument), the implementing regulations for which have just been published in the Official Journal. States can request financial support for expertise to the tune of almost 900 million euros for 2021-2027. There is an opportunity for cities to tap into this funding with the collaboration of Member States. It is the Member States who make the request to DG REFORM and it is important to include the following arguments:

- 1) Scalability / replicability of the local pilot project –for other local authorities in the country**
- 2) Support by their national ministry that their local pilot project is key and can also be beneficial for other local authorities in the country.**

We must therefore ensure that the Member States take action, as it provides direct aid for municipal administrations to formulate strategies, seek projects and build capacities.

MEDIUM / LONGER TERM →

## MEDIUM - TERM

An ongoing request for support has been issued (and this could also be via the TSI) to empower local CoPs all over Europe in order to embed the Paris declaration in our communities. The President of the European Commission will send a letter in Spring 2021 to every Mayor in Europe asking them to commit to the new Covenant of Mayors, which sets carbon neutrality as a horizon and insists on the necessary inclusion of all. Local CoPs are an ideal mechanism to achieve inclusion and this should represent an opportunity to request specific support in future calls for projects from DG REGIO (via the Structural Funds) or DG RTD (Horizon Europe).

An additional benefit is that the CoPs could move stimulus plans away from being investment- oriented by sector to a more multi-sector, territorial approach. Tools such as local IPCCs and climate budgets could be funded to provide communities with the skills and the right compass to make the right investment decisions, always following the 'Do No Significant Harm' principle.

## LONGER- TERM

**New European Bauhaus: A 'UPO' or unidentified policy object**

This initiative of the President of the European Commission is designed to promote a new interdisciplinary culture: an initiative of hope to "think and test the way we want to live together in post-Covid times. (And) to make the spaces where we live and the way we experience them Sustainable-Beautiful- Together."

The suggested approach was announced in her first State of the Union speech in September 2020, and involves bringing together the education sector, architects, and town planners and adopting the principle of "form follows planet" as a new form of development. Uniquely, the initiative is not steered directly by a DG (since they are sectoral) but by the research centre because it does not have a defined programme. The current phase is an open contribution phase. Crucially, this approach has the full support of the President herself, who absolutely wants European funds to be earmarked (the two other commissioners in charge are the RDT and REGIO commissioners) and it has a great deal of political capital. One opportunity is the President's suggestion of having local conversations to bring out ideas.

The **New European Bauhaus** initiative is an opportunity for cities to define and develop their agenda together with their own transformation compass and the indicators that go with it. Beyond simply "do no significant harm", we can aspire to high transformative power! It would also be very useful to have the support of the Portuguese President for cities to define themselves the metrics for success in recovery and their own timetables to achieve them.

We write our stories together,  
not just tell them.

**THANK YOU**

Energy Cities' mission is to empower cities and citizens to shape and transition to futureproof cities. We showcase concrete alternatives deployed by cities, we advocate to change politic and economic governance at all levels and we foster a wide cultural change leading to a futureproofed society. Energy Cities community is made up of local leaders of thousands of cities in 30 European countries.

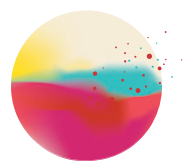
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