



ENERGYCITIES

To Elisa Ferreira
European Commissioner
for Cohesion and Reforms

Brussels, 4th April 2022

Cities as firemen lacking ladders and lances facing energy and social crises

Mayors call for additional capacity building support

Dear Ms Ferreira,

For months now, European local governments have been fighting to mitigate the local consequences of skyrocketing energy prices. Today, they face not only a social crisis caused by the soaring fossil fuel prices but also a refugee crisis, and a continuing climate emergency.

These crises are reaching magnitudes that are well beyond their already narrow capacities. Local governments are in dire need of appropriate financial and technical support to provide immediate relief to the most vulnerable households and plan an exit from these crises by reinventing their economic and energy system.

The European Commission's own emergency response has been swift. It has proposed measures to mitigate the consequences of rising prices (Toolbox of measures¹) and reduce dependence on gas and fossil fuels (REPowerEU Communication²). However, **the proposed measures fall short of mobilising the local governments' key ability to respond to these crises.**

Local governments can put in place plans to avoid or immediately decrease the fossil fuels consumption of certain public infrastructures, in solidarity with Ukraine and as a duty to protect their consumers. They can launch direct, grassroots campaigns among their citizens to raise awareness of the short and long-term benefits of reducing their energy consumption. Equipped with the adequate resources, local governments could also conduct a comprehensive mapping of all the locally available renewable resources and swiftly plan their heat transition, particularly in the building stock.

During your press conference on the 9th of March about the Technical Support Instrument (TSI) 2022 programme, you mentioned that the direct support to sub-national administration is a mark of success of the TSI programme³. We are grateful for the efforts made by the European Commission in this direction which is a direct application of the "do not harm cohesion principle".

¹ Communication on Energy Prices, 13th October 2021. ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_21_5204

² REPowerEU: Joint European action for more affordable secure and sustainable energy
https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_1511

³ The TSI is an EU programme offering targeted ad-hoc expertise to Member States or sub-national administrations to help them designing and implementing reforms. The European Commission sets up yearly programme with the selected Member States' requests and can design ad hoc calls as the one launched the 21st of March 2022 to "support Member States welcoming refugees from Ukraine and the phasing out of their reliance on fossil fuels from Russia".



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The size of the challenge is however enormous considering the persistent lack of technical support among local administrations to adequately plan the transition to both a resilient and renewable energy system.

In view of this, we call on the European Commission to:

- **Select more local government projects as TSI beneficiaries.** This could for example include national administrative reform projects to create local transition agencies, or to help local governments conduct energy efficiency plans, map available renewable local resources, and swiftly plan the heating and cooling transition.
- Encourage the **settlement of technical support facilities at the national or regional level** (such as the ELENA facility) to allow more local governments to benefit from technical support.
- Encourage the **replication of the European City Facility model at the national or regional level**, allowing cities to make plans to finance their projects (see our paper “How to settle your own city facility”⁴).

European cities stand ready to stress test their economies and make their energy system “crisis proof”. But they must be given the means to do it well and quickly.

We thank you for taking the views expressed in this letter into consideration and would welcome the opportunity to discuss them in more detail.

Yours sincerely,

Eckart Würzner, President of Energy Cities, Mayor of Heidelberg (Germany), on behalf of Energy Cities’ members.

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⁴ <https://energy-cities.eu/publication/guide-to-set-up-your-own-city-facility>