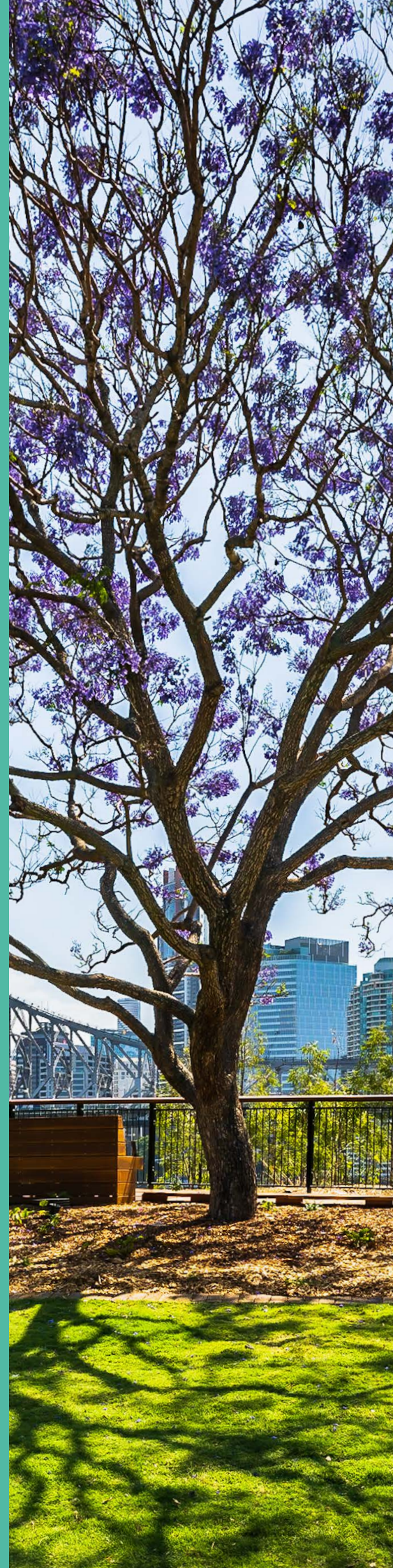


2023
IMPACT REPORT
CONNECTING WITH THE GROUND





FOREWORD

2023: the year of delivery of the European Green Deal. The same Green Deal that is still very much in the news at the start of 2024, and which will hamper our competitiveness and cause an unprecedented agricultural crisis (they say)... The European Green Deal outlines a new horizon for cities and society: climate neutrality. And the need to reach this goal while considering environmental issues, planetary limits, and taking care of natural resources, the vital legacy we must pass on.

Throughout the debates preceding the adoption of the Green Deal directives, Energy Cities gave concrete examples of what is possible, of what our members are doing. Making the potential and transformation of cities visible in everyday life, showing the many ongoing actions of our members, how these actions are grafted onto the existing urban fabric, and how a city can be regenerated if the grafts «take» and if there are many of them...

And we'll keep going!

Claire Roumet, Director



**LOCAL
GOVERNANCE**



**FOSSIL-FREE
CITIES**



**COMMUNITY
ENERGY**



**FOOD
SYSTEMS**



**FAIR
ECONOMIES**



THIS YEAR, WE LOBBIED/RAISED AWARENESS FOR CITIES TO BE ABLE TO...

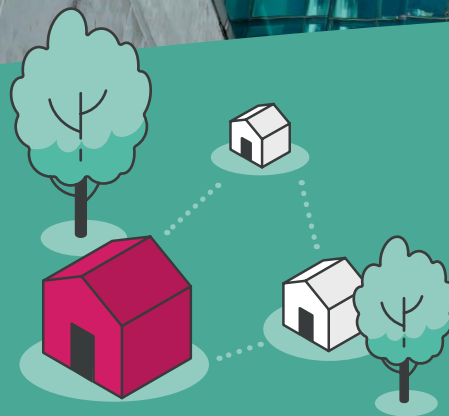


BRING THEIR VOICE TO CLIMATE AND ENERGY DIALOGUES AT NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVEL FOR AN EU GREEN DEAL THAT WORKS FOR CITIES

The [Covenant of Mayors Conference](#) showcased how cities are using the energy crisis to drive the bloc's climate ambitions and the clear need for cooperation between different levels of government. This theme was echoed in our contribution to the Committee of the Regions' opinion [«A multilevel governance for the Green Deal: towards the revision of the Governance Regulation»](#).

We provided clear advice to move away from top-down energy and climate planning in the National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs) with our policy brief "Improving the implementation of Climate and Energy Dialogues in EU Member States", to improve the process of developing NECPs but also their outcome.

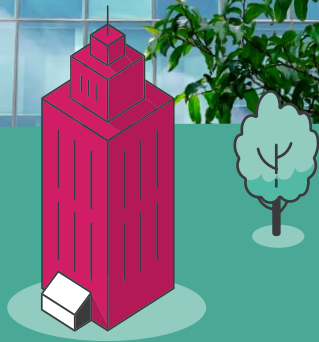
We also highlighted the urgency of the energy transition and the inclusion of cities' voices in our briefing ["REPowerEU: A closing window for energy democratisation"](#).



PRODUCE MORE LOCALLY IN SHARED OWNERSHIP

The revision of the EU Electricity Market Design directive allowed us to have important discussions with EU decision-makers in the European Commission, the European Parliament, and the Committee of the Regions about market rules. We made it clear that these should protect people, SMEs and local authorities from price volatility, while increasing local ownership of renewables and enabling municipalities to engage in energy sharing and to benefit from long-term renewable energy supply (via power purchase agreements). We worked together with our long-time partner REScoop.eu, and within the European Community Power Coalition, who celebrated its 10th year of collective action for community energy in Europe in 2023!

Check our joint [Manifesto](#) for the EU elections!



DECARBONISE BUILDINGS

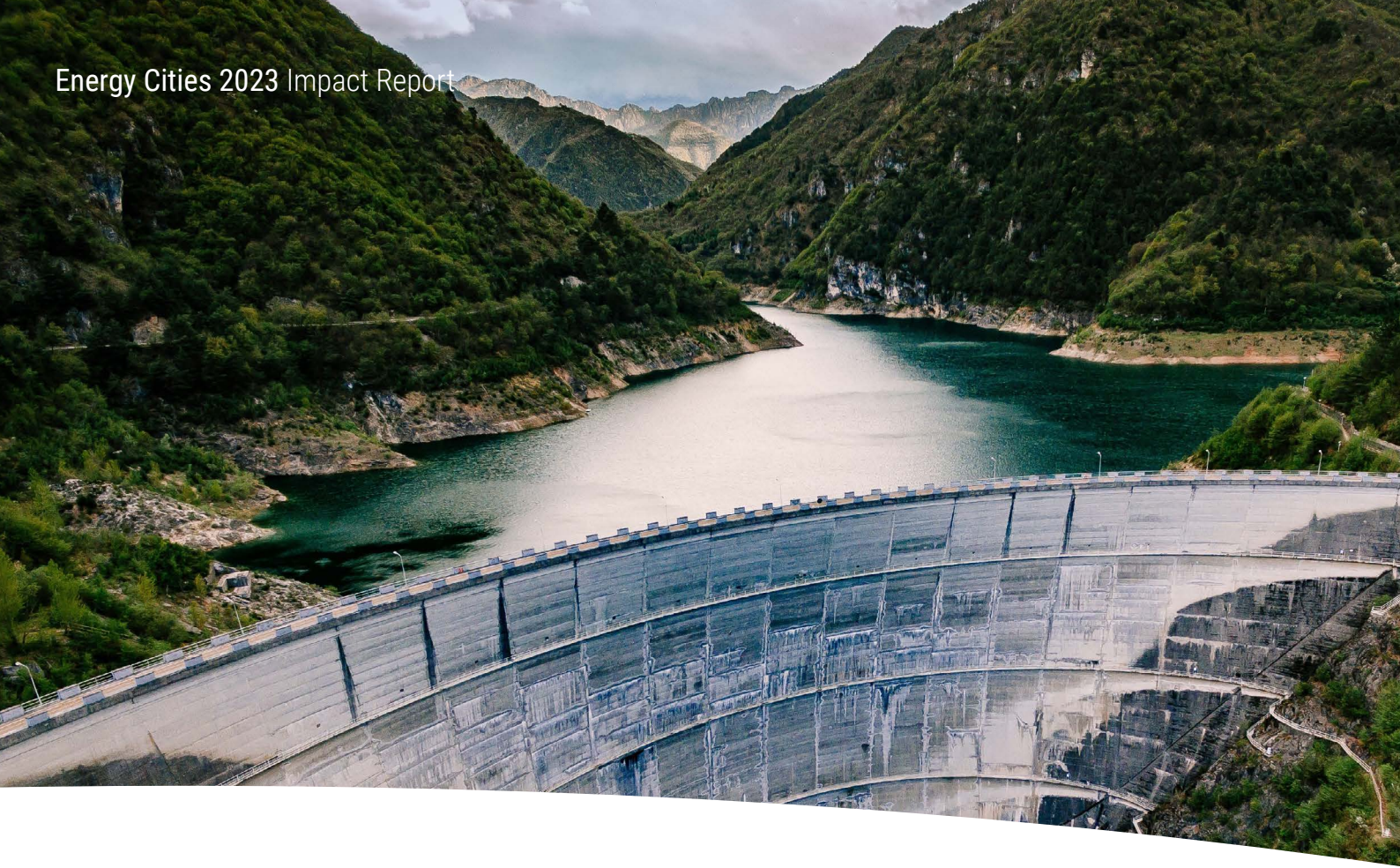
Buildings remain one of the largest sources of emissions in the EU, but 2023 saw some important milestones in tackling the issue. Local heating and cooling planning is now widely recognised across the EU as a key lever to decarbonise buildings with mandatory local plans for all EU cities over 45,000 citizens from 2027. Crucially, member states will be obliged to provide the necessary technical and financial support to make them work. Currently there is a big gap between the potential for local plans and the reality on the ground as shown by our legislative tracker. [See how your country ranks here.](#)

We successfully had these plans recognised in the revision of the EU legislation on the gas market, so that gas grid operators align their planning with the decarbonisation strategies of local authorities. This way, more and more cities will be able to proclaim they [‘No longer need a gas network.’](#)

At the same time, with the cities involved in the EU-funded [Decarb City Pipes 2050](#), we developed resources and heating transition roadmaps that other municipalities can learn from as the EU’s ban on standalone fossil-fuel boilers by 2040 looms.

[One-stop shops are a vital complimentary tool for cities in decarbonising buildings](#) and their importance was also recognised in the European Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD). Member states will need to ensure they are numerous and easily accessible; the target is to have a one-stop shop for every 80,000 citizens, subject to some conditions.

This work and more was done in close collaboration with other progressive organisations in Brussels such as the [Renewable Heating and Cooling Alliance](#), The Cool Heating Coalition with members from across civil society and industry partners representing solar heat, geothermal, district heating and more.



WE PUSHED SUFFICIENCY INTO THE MAINSTREAM!

In order to succeed in the energy transition, our relationship with energy must fundamentally change – it's not enough to just change how energy is supplied. That is why we were so happy to [Bring EU policymakers, experts and cities at the table to discuss sufficiency.](#)

Changing mindsets takes time and many different arguments, but more and more people are beginning to recognise that [Sufficiency is the missing pillar for a resource-wise Europe.](#)

With greater recognition comes more partners and we worked closely with Negawatt, the European Environment Bureau (EEB) and others to build the necessary support for cities to be able to tap into [sufficiency as a new superpower.](#)

WE PROVIDED MUNICIPALITIES WITH INSPIRATION & TOOLS TO...



BREAK SILOS OR INNOVATE LOCAL GOVERNANCE

...by setting concrete goals to advance the local ecological transition

In our publication on [Tangible targets for cities](#), we compiled 33 measures that have already been adopted in cities across Europe to help municipalities speed up their transition, taking inspiration from the expertise and experience of citizens and local stakeholders.

... building on the experiences of our members' ambitious journeys

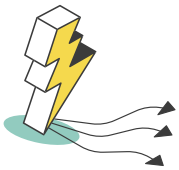
[Leuven](#) and [Valencia](#), the cities presiding over Energy Cities' Board, stand as inspiring examples for the rest of our network. They have built ambitious agendas from the bottom-up, through widespread citizen and stakeholder engagement. With the Mayor of Leuven as our new President and Valencia recognised as EU Green Capital of 2024, Energy Cities is proud to have accompanied these cities from the collective processes since Leuven 2030 and Valencia's 2030 roadmap, to the recent development of their Climate City Contracts as part of the EU Mission for climate-neutral cities by 2030.



INCREASE LOCALLY OWNED RENEWABLES

...With a shot of community energy espresso!

Energy communities can be an immensely powerful tool for local governments to bring people together and make sure everyone benefits from the energy transition. The active involvement of local government is crucial for a thriving and diverse energy community. In 2023, we launched our Community Energy Espresso online course, designed for municipal employees and leaders keen on community energy. As a self-paced e-learning course, they only need to free a total of 8 hours to complete 4 modules of 2 hours each. It was the first course of our Energy Transition Learning Centre, that will be officially launched in 2024.



...leaving no one behind

In some of our EU-funded projects, success is less visible to the external eye, while in others, there is a big boom along with confetti and smiles! We are really proud that our partners in the Belgian city of Eeklo have been recognised for the fantastic work they are carrying out against energy poverty, becoming [one of 3 winners of the European Social Innovation Award!](#) Eeklo's rolling fund of pre-financed social energy shares, developed and launched in the framework of the POWER UP project, will enable low-income households to become members of the energy cooperative Ecopower. The city pre-finances cooperative shares, lending them to people who would not be able to pay the cost upfront on their own. Over several years, these beneficiaries will then pay the share back through a small monthly fee.



...via innovative public procurement

This year, we took some time to discuss with municipalities and other partners how can cities use renewables public purchase agreements not only to access attractive electricity prices, but also to contribute to sustainability and social goals and benefit the local economy. The results of our exchanges are in our short briefing ["Power Purchase Agreements: how can cities make the most of it"](#).



REDUCE THE USE OF RESOURCES

...with a sufficiency approach

Sufficiency has become a new buzzword in Europe since the energy crisis. However, sufficiency is not just about energy, and it's not just about this winter; it's about consuming less to allow others to consume properly, while respecting planetary boundaries. This year, we set off to help members and partners decode sufficiency. We ran webinars and [published a glossary](#), with definitions and examples to give people a better grasp on sufficiency and related concepts.

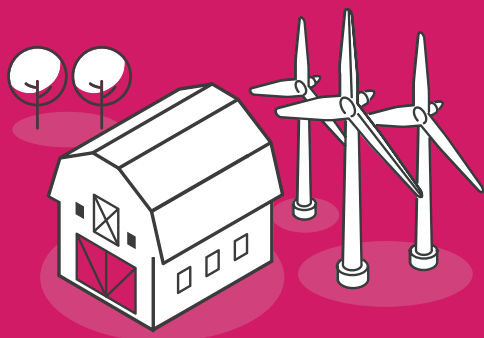


MAKE EU FUNDINGS MORE ACCESSIBLE AND ADAPTED TO CITY CHALLENGES

...with 17.2 million EUR to 292 municipalities!

As coordinator of the EU initiative, European City Facility (EUCF), we contribute to bridging the gap between energy and climate planning on one side, and project finance and implementation on the other. 280 local authorities in Europe have been selected to develop investment concepts for sustainable energy projects, receiving a total of 16.8 million EUR in funding by the European City Facility (60k EUR each). 90 of them are in an advanced stage during the implementation of the investment concept, altogether triggering 13.8 billion EUR of sustainable energy investments.

We are also involved in the [Scalable Cities](#) initiative. Via their action grants, they support the replication of already successfully measures tested in Smart Cities and Communities projects. In 2023, 12 cities received 438 940 EUR to fund projects ranging from the creation of digital platforms and innovative governance frameworks to the development of remotely managed energy management systems. Stay tuned: more calls will open in 2024 from both initiatives!



MAKE THEIR FOOD SYSTEM MORE SUSTAINABLE AND RESILIENT

...by showcasing the work of our members

To move towards more sustainable food supply chains, we need to establish a strong connection between individual changes made by citizens and collective changes. Local authorities play a crucial role in driving and supporting these transformations. In 2023, we discussed what can be done at local level to ensure everyone has access to healthy food. We met in Grenoble at the “Biennale des Villes en Transition”, and also in Modena during our annual forum, to spotlight the experience of our network’s food-system pioneers. These cities are leading the way in developing local food plans and strategies to foster an agriculture system that respects the environment, while providing healthy and affordable food to all citizens.

...together with sustainable food and farming practitioners

In 2023, we joined the ALTAA Network (Alliance of practitioners engaged in the local, sustainable food and farming transitions), a growing French alliance that aims to create a space for dialogue, cooperation and action, at national level. The alliance aims to enhance the capacity of stakeholders engaged with their territories who share an ambitious vision of the transition to sustainable agricultural and food systems. Currently, more than 90 organisations are involved and coordinated by the Social Cooperative Pistyles and Solagro, with the support of the UNESCO Chair in World Food Systems.





WE BROUGHT MUNICIPALITIES TOGETHER

...with Energy Cities annual conference “Grafting cities” in Modena

From October 18th to 20th, 2023, we held our annual conference together with the city of Modena, the Energy and Sustainable Development Agency – AESS and our partner Climate Alliance. “Grafting cities” was an invitation to uncover the hidden potentials of cities, as well as a call for action: to transform cities street by street, house by house, place by place, as a way of increasing diversity and, thus, resiliency.

During our conference, we not only revealed the transformations that are already in motion in cities, but also underlined the need to articulate such changes into ambitious local transformation strategies. It was a good occasion to emphasise the social forces we should build on to move society forward. Citizens’ climate assemblies are blooming at local level all over Europe, emerging as a key instrument to involve everyone and build consensus around climate ambitions. The energy crisis has made clear that without strong involvement of municipalities, we will be unable to ensure fair transitions, thus jeopardising our capacity to reach climate neutrality.

The Energy Cities annual event served as a pivotal moment to bring together members, staff, and institutional partners for an enriching and transformative experience.

Save the date for our annual conference on June 26th and 27th, 2024, in the European Green Capital of the year, Valencia!

...during one of the key events of the EU 2022 Green Capital Grenoble

We actively contributed to the 4th edition of the «Biennale des Villes en Transition» held in our member city and 2022 Green Capital of Europe, Grenoble, from June 8th to 11th. We facilitated discussions around food security and debated cross-border cooperation between cities in France and Germany in the framework of the [TANDEM project](#).

... for the Covenant of Mayors ceremony

On March 30th, the 2023 Covenant of Mayors – Europe Conference brought together high-level representatives of EU institutions and Mayors from cities across Europe. The exchange highlighted how cities' response to the energy crisis is setting an example for Europe's long-term efforts in matters of energy and climate, and how the EU and cities can work hand in hand to reach common objectives.

The Covenant of Mayors 2023 Conference gave the floor to nine mayors to showcase what their cities are doing faced with the two big crises of today: the energy and climate crises. Despite the grim circumstances, the event left the audience feeling energised and inspired. The speakers showed us that, when we put our minds to it, in difficult times, we can transform a dire situation into an opportunity for change. And that is exactly what cities in Europe have done.



WE GOT THE WORD OUT!

We had the pleasure of contributing to different podcasts with our expertise:

1

We discussed the involvement of municipalities in community energy projects, highlighting the challenges but also the many benefits of city-citizens collaborations towards a decentralised energy system in the podcasts [Energ'ethic](#) and [Watt Matters](#)

2

With [FORESIGHT Climate & Energy](#) we highlighted all the work going on behind the scenes to get cities aligned with one another and with their national governments in order to hit climate targets.



OUR WORK GOT PICKED OUT AND SHARED BY OTHERS.

The EU initiative for Coal Regions in Transition published a comprehensive [toolkit on District Heating](#) where our work on sufficiency, heat planning, community energy and hydrogen was mentioned multiple times!

The latest [EU guidance on energy poverty](#) published on October 2023 by the European Commission also made references to our work within the [POWERUP project](#).



ENERGYCITIES

The European learning community
for future-proof cities

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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