

IMPACT REPORT

Empowering local leadership
for a sustainable future

2024

FOREWORD

2024, turbulent times. For several Member States in the European Union, elections have brought difficult coalition negotiations to form governments. At European level, the Parliament is more fragmented into different political forces and the priorities are changing. The new Commission's mandate is to ensure security and competitiveness. The European Environmental Agency, in its sustainability outlook, explains why fairness needs to be the third pillar of the future EU strategic agenda. This is a very short summary of the political context we are now in.

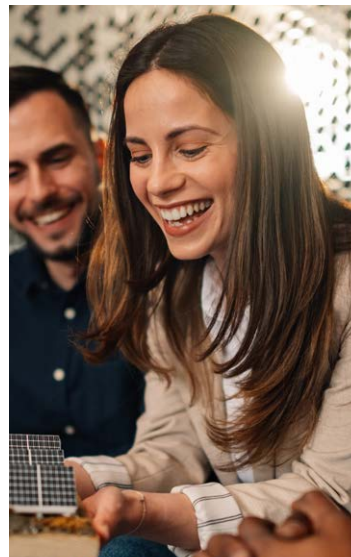
What is sure, is that the years ahead will be "investment" years into our sustainable future. And this is what we have been asking for, advocating for the means to achieve the ambitions set out in the European Green Deal. Cities are ready to take up the challenge. More than that, while our network is expanding, with some new very committed members, we noticed a change in attitude. Cities are ready to invest. They have transformation plans that will answer the EU's top 3 priorities: security, competitiveness and fairness. They are convinced that making EU a resilient continent, a safe place for everyone, is possible, and they have started to design it. Energy Cities is there to help them do just that: in 2024 we worked hard to call for national and EU frameworks that are suitable, and to provide the necessary knowledge and support.

In 2025 Energy Cities will celebrate its 35th anniversary. Our wish for this year (and beyond!), is for cities to have a trustful dialogue, a renewed partnership with the EU, the governments, and the regions to continue to invest in EU residents' future.

Claire Roumet, Executive Director



LOCAL GOVERNANCE



COMMUNITY ENERGY



FAIR ECONOMIES



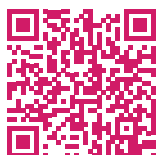
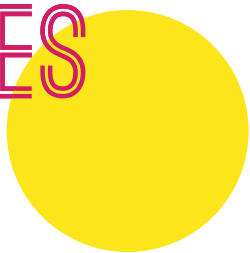
FOSSIL-FREE CITIES



FOOD SYSTEMS



IN 2024 WE SHAPED EU AND NATIONAL POLICIES



TO ENSURE CITIES REMAIN A KEY ACTOR IN EUROPE'S JOURNEY TO CLIMATE NEUTRALITY

European Covenant of Mayors: 15 years of local commitment

2024 marked the 15th anniversary of the Covenant of Mayors. It also saw the launch of a new 3-and-a-half-year contract for Energy Cities to run the European office of this EU initiative now counting more than 12.000 signatory cities! We are very proud of this key partnership between the European Commission and a consortium of European networks of local and regional authorities, working together to help Europe advance towards climate neutrality from the bottom-up.

During the EU Sustainable Energy Week 2024, the Covenant launched its [Cities Heat Detox Campaign](#), to promote a shift towards cleaner, more modern, efficient, and sustainable heating sources. The campaign has gathered so far over 30 stories of cities' heat decarbonisation journeys, been echoed by dozens of partners and reached thousands of municipalities across Europe.



Enabling climate leadership at the local level

As part of the EU Mission for climate-neutral cities, Energy Cities led an important [analysis of the current gaps in regional and national-level support for local authorities](#) to reach climate neutrality. This will help inform the kind of services and support, typically provided by national platforms, that are still needed in different national contexts to enable cities to achieve their ambitious climate goals and commitments.



"WE NEED TO MAKE THE COLLABORATION SYSTEMIC. COOPERATION IN ALL OUR PROJECTS, AROUND ENERGY, SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT, CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION AND MITIGATION, NEED TO BE APPROACHED IN A SYSTEMIC, IMPACTFUL WAY,"

*Mohamed Ridouani,
Mayor of Leuven (Belgium)*



Moreover, Energy Cities used the platform of the Cities Mission 2024 Conference in Valencia to drive across salient points as cities move toward 2030. Our board members made powerful contributions: Vice-President of Energy Cities' and Deputy-Mayor of Porto reiterated the importance of having all stakeholders on board for cities to drive forward climate leadership. Energy Cities President and Mayor of Leuven called for unlocking essential funding to accelerate the implementation of city-level plans, showcasing innovative financial models that cities, such as Leuven, are already putting in place.

[Learn more here](#)



"WE SHARE THE NEED TO INVOLVE EVERYONE, CITIZENS AND BUSINESSES TO ACHIEVE CLIMATE GOALS AND ENABLE A FAIR TRANSITION."

*Filipe Araújo,
Vice-Mayor of Porto (Portugal)*



Multilevel dialogue platforms: the key to effective climate and energy policies

Local actors already play a pivotal role in implementing national energy and climate laws. They should also be able to define them. That's why we have been organising multilevel dialogues around National Energy and Climate Plans in different EU countries over the past 2 years. We have co-developed a model for the development of such platforms at national level, based on the experience in Bulgaria, Romania, Italy, Portugal, Croatia, and France, and a peer learning programme to support EU Member States will start in January 2025. Many representatives from EU national governments have already signed up.

[Learn more here](#)



...TO MAINSTREAM LOCAL HEATING & COOLING PLANNING

An EU tracker to push for a supportive national framework

Energy Cities engaged with EU Institutions and national policymakers to provide better financial and technical support for local authorities to plan and implement the decarbonisation of the built environment.

We advised Belgian regional authorities, as well as Spanish and French national authorities. We also supported national energy agencies in Croatia, Portugal, Germany, Poland and Greece to update their national energy and climate action plans and design public policies supporting clean and local heating sources, such as geothermal and solar thermal energy. The clock is ticking as Member States have until October 2025 to provide an ideal framework for local authorities as they transpose the EU Energy Efficiency Directive.



Find out the latest state of play [on our EU tracker](#).



WE ARE ADDICTED TO ENERGY
AND WE NEED DETOXIFICATION."

*Philippe Guelpa Bonaro,
Vice President of Lyon Metropole*

...TO MAKE A RESOURCE-WISE APPROACH A PRIORITY

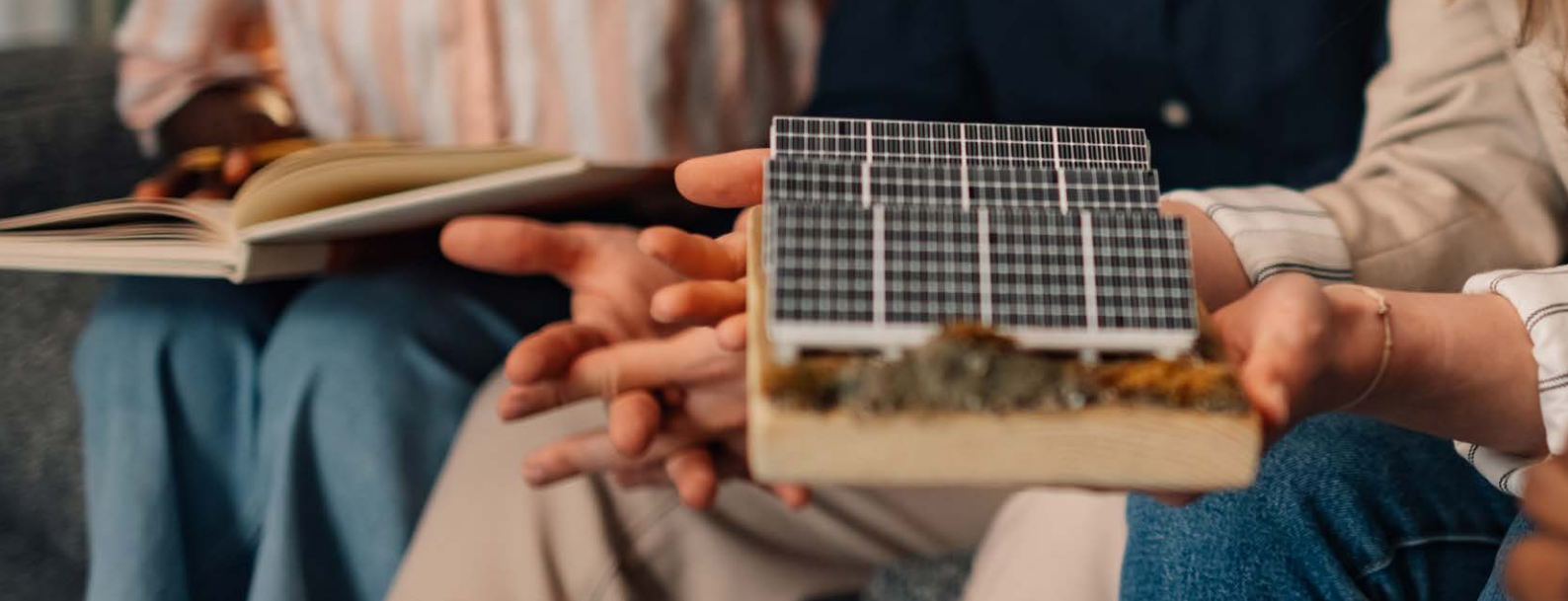
A manifesto for a fairer, cleaner, and more resilient Europe

2024 was the year of the European elections. What a perfect time to bring new debates to the table. Together with about 100 associations from all over Europe, we put the spotlight on sufficiency. We published the first manifesto on resource-wise management calling on EU decision-makers to prioritise sufficiency in the EU's strategic agenda. Covering energy, water, soil and materials, the manifesto highlights how a more sober approach is essential for social justice, the EU's resilience, and the climate transition.

We will continue to advocate for a more resource-wise approach in 2025, as we believe sufficiency measures are key to overcoming climate and energy crises.



[Learn more here](#)



WE PROVIDED KNOWLEDGE FOR CITIES

"FAETHON ENERGY COMMUNITY IS PROVIDING 300 KWH OF FREE ELECTRICITY PER MONTH TO 800 VULNERABLE HOUSEHOLDS. THANKS TO THIS PROGRAMME WE WILL IMPROVE THE EFFICIENCY OF THE EXISTING SYSTEM AND RAISE AWARENESS AMONG RESIDENTS."

Christos Pappous, Mayor of Fylis (Greece)

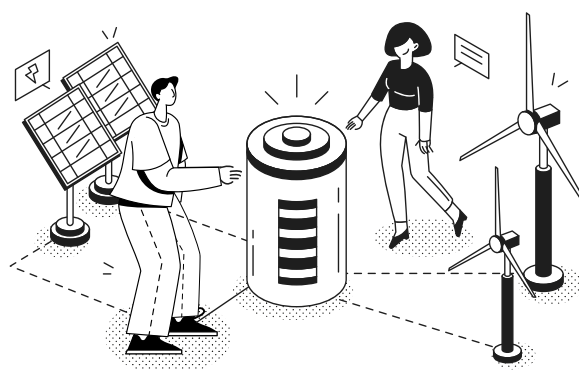


...TO TAKE FULL ADVANTAGE OF THEIR LOCAL RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCES

Community Energy Accreditation scheme for municipalities

Energy Cities' training offer is constantly evolving. As we strive for an active community energy movement all around Europe, we want to make sure municipal employees have the skills for it. That is why our Espresso training was made available in Italian, Bulgarian, Romanian, Croatian/Serbian, Spanish and Greek – thanks to our collaboration with a fantastic team of national partners.

The Espresso training was also updated and integrated into a [full-fledged accreditation scheme](#) – the first one in Europe – to acknowledge municipalities' commitment and preparedness in energy community matters. The scheme also includes a charter, a self-assessment tracker, and an asset matchmaking tool, allowing municipalities to find citizens willing to develop renewable energy projects in unused public spaces suitable for that purpose.



A webtool to visualise the impact of climate policies

Foreseeing the outcomes of a potential policy measure is not easy, but it's necessary. That's why, in the past 3 years, we contributed to the development of the European City Calculator, a free webtool designed to help cities in their decision-making and the implementation of climate strategies. It allows them to visualise and simulate low-carbon scenarios. By inputting their city's data, local authorities and relevant stakeholders can assess the implications and trade-offs of implementing mitigation measures. Several European cities are already using this webtool to advance towards climate neutrality.

In 2024, Energy Cities developed the EUCityCalc learning programme, which was attended by 191 public officials. In 2025, the training programme will be available again on Energy Cities' Local Transition Learning Centre. It will help participants master the webtool, gather data, organise and run multi-stakeholder dialogues, and understand the importance of local authorities being involved in national policy processes. The course is available in English, Italian, French and Czech.

[Learn more
here](#)



...TO DISCOVER WHERE AND HOW THEY CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Making the most of Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs)

At the beginning of 2024, together with the Regulatory Assistance Project, we published a short briefing to provide municipalities with some initial knowledge on renewables PPAs and how to use them to progress with their climate and energy strategies. In the first part of the year, we focused on informing local governments about the potential of PPAs to increase local renewables production and even support energy communities in their areas. A webinar and a live classroom were organised on this topic.



[Access the briefing](#)

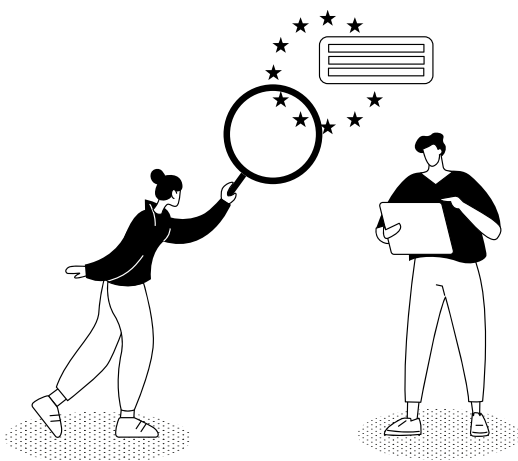


Photo credit: Evi Ramaekers Photography

Decoding the European Green Deal

The essential role of local governments has been increasingly recognised in the legislation of the European Green Deal. At the same time, the Green Deal is also an opportunity to empower municipalities, allowing them to boost sustainability, prosperity and wellbeing for all people. The publication "Cities in the EU Green Deal - Opportunities and Responsibilities", developed with Eurocities, provides an overview of the new opportunities and obligations for local governments within the Green Deal, but also raises awareness of the key role they are called upon to play.



[Read the publication](#)

WE SUPPORTED LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

...TO ACCESS CAPITAL AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR THEIR CLIMATE PLANS

Unlocking a total of €4.4 million to develop sustainable projects

It is no surprise that cities don't receive enough funds to achieve the climate transition. The good news is that, in 2024, the European City Facility (EUCF) awarded 74 European cities €60.000 each to develop investment concepts to accelerate the financing and implementation of clean energy projects.

Coordinated by Energy Cities, this initiative technically and financially supports municipalities and their groupings to conduct robust feasibility studies, technical assessments, and business plans from the critical early stages of project development. Additionally, this helps them attract larger-scale investments, whether from private capital, public funding, or the European Investment Bank.

In June 2024, we have also produced the EUCF learning programme to upskill participating cities.

[Learn more here](#)



[Find out more about this project](#)



Receiving the EU Cities Mission Label

Our City Advisors directly supported the cities of Kranj, Ljubljana, Velenje (Slovenia), Zagreb (Croatia), Guimarães, Lisbon, Porto (Portugal), Valencia, Valladolid (Spain) and Podgorica (Montenegro) in developing their Climate City Contracts (CCCs – voluntary agreements between the city and the European Commission where cities commit to implement concrete measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and achieve climate neutrality). Nine of these cities have already submitted their CCCs and seven have received the EU Cities Mission Label. This label grants them access to dedicated support from the European Investment Bank, both with credit lines and technical assistance, as well as to the Climate City Capital Hub, aimed at facilitating access to public and private finance for the implementation of the CCCs.



WE STRENGTHENED CONNECTIONS

...BY FOSTERING DIALOGUES

Closed-door exchanges among elected people

In 2024, we experimented with new engagement formats to bring together elected representatives from our network. We organised 3 conversations – online and in-person – among mayors and deputy mayors on the topics of resource-wise cities and community energy. These closed-door discussions allowed elected representatives to share their experience on the subjects and informed Energy Cities' positioning in European debates. They will continue as part of our brand-new Mayors Club in 2025!



[Learn more
here](#)

Gathering urban practitioners in the EU Green Capital 2024

Energy Cities' Annual Forum 2024 was hosted by the City of Valencia, also the European Green Capital of 2024. On 26 and 27 June, we brought people together to discover the untold stories of municipal innovation and resilience. The edition offered many topics for discussion, with a focus on two key issues for our members and European municipalities: resource-wise cities and citizens' assemblies. We also made sure our members could present some very concrete issues they face in their city, and benefit from a collective intelligence session to address them.



[Discover the programme
of our Annual Forum
2025](#)



Photo credit: Santi Vidal Photography

...BY ORGANISING PEER-TO-PEER LEARNINGS AND EXCHANGES

Innovative financing for more sustainable cities

In Energy Cities, we strive to connect local authorities and relevant stakeholders to facilitate the exchange of experiences, as well as share and gain knowledge. Driven by this commitment, over the past four years, we engaged over 300 participants from 29 countries into small groups guided by an experienced mentor. City representatives learned more about financing mechanisms such as Energy Performance Contracting, Revolving funds, or Citizen-financing, and received first-hand advice from their peers on their ongoing projects. To maximise the impact of the capacity-building programme, some local learning groups were set up in Italy, Spain, France, Belgium, and the Czech Republic, allowing participants to benefit fully from the sessions in their native languages. The final goal was to empower cities with knowledge and practical tools for innovative financing, enabling them to advance their local energy and climate actions effectively.

[Learn more
here](#)



Exchanging best practices on local food strategies and limited land use

Several cities in France and Germany are committed to developing sustainable food systems and limiting local land use. In 2024, two events brought together French and German cities to discuss solutions and challenges. Participants explored how to support short food production and distribution lines, as well as how to encourage fairer and healthier food consumption. They also discussed the preservation and use of soil, and why this is a fundamental issue for climate change adaptation.

[Learn more
here](#)



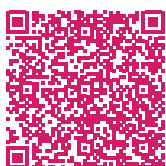


WE GOT THE WORD OUT!

Cities are at the heart of the energy transition. So we've spent the past year telling everyone we could about how our members are leading the charge and what cities need to make the transition happen successfully.

1

Our president, Leuven Mayor Mohamed Ridouani [penned this eloquent appeal](#) to hire the people we need to make the energy transition a reality and on what [cities need to implement the Green Deal](#).



2

Our Executive Director Claire Roumet was interviewed on [how cities need to be funded in order to transform themselves](#) as well as [the role of citizens in the energy transition](#).



3

There were also numerous media articles around different elements of the energy transition – from the urgent need for more cooling in cities to [the opportunity to kick fossil fuels out of our cities thanks to local heating and cooling planning](#) as well as topics like building circularity.



"ENERGY TRANSITION IS ALSO
SYNONYMOUS OF AUTONOMY
AND INDEPENDENCE"

Claire Roumet, Energy Cities

Implementing the
Green Deal in cities



The role of citizens
in the energy
transition



WHAT'S NEXT

WHAT WE WANT TO SHAPE NEXT YEAR

Heating and cooling will take centre stage in Brussels in 2025. Energy Cities will be advocating hard for binding, aggressive measures to decarbonise our buildings and support cities in working with citizens to ensure everyone can afford a warm, comfortable home that doesn't leave them at the mercy of international gas markets. One major focus will be a geothermal strategy for Europe to enhance the roll-out of this vital, clean technology. This should be just one part of a broader EU strategy on heating and cooling to help cities expand and decarbonise their district heating networks.

A Citizen Energy Package is also being planned by the European Commission. Now is an ideal time to look back on the last five years to see what has worked in community energy and what needs to be improved to ensure that every citizen can be engaged locally in the energy transition.

Finally, we will continue to embed sufficiency within the EU institutions and their work because technology cannot do everything – at some point we also need to build sufficiency into our cities and help citizens live better without excess.



[Listen to our members](#)

CELEBRATING 35 YEARS OF WORKING FOR CITIES, WITH CITIES

2025 marks the 35th year of activity for Energy Cities. 35 years of building local governments' capacities, raising awareness, bridging the EU and the local level, inspiring transition journeys...and more!

[Listen to our members](#) sharing what being part of our network means for them. And if you want to celebrate with us, do not miss our 2025 Annual Forum from the 8th to the 10th of April, in Besançon (France).



[Become a member](#)



[More information here](#)



**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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