



Climate Change Global challenges - Local solutions

Local and regional authorities are well aware of the global challenges that lie ahead and are already developing solutions to weaken their impact on society. Over the years, they have implemented a multitude of actions to both combat climate change and adapt to its impacts. As the level of government closest to citizens, municipalities and regions are in the best position to raise awareness and mobilise people, to promote energy efficiency, decentralised energy production and a new mobility culture. They can act as a role model to encourage other stakeholders and individuals on how to take own action. Climate protection and adaptation at local and regional level has the potential to dramatically reduce climate change, but can also create jobs and enhance social cohesion.

The current financial and economic crisis should not undermine the fight against climate change. Instead, it should be but one of the multitude of arguments for paving the way towards a low-carbon economy. Responsibilities must be taken now; failure to do so will result in unprecedented costs. Findings in the 2006 Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change suggest that 1% of annual GDP invested today could avoid up to 20% of climate-induced damages tomorrow.

On the occasion of the United Nations Climate Summit COP14 in Poznan, Poland on 1-12 December 2008, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), Climate Alliance, Energie-Cités and EURO CITIES request that national governments negotiating the post-2012 climate agreement:

1. Recognise the role of local and regional authorities in climate mitigation and adaptation policies and involve them in the international, European and national debates and policy making processes.
2. Take into account the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions that local and regional authorities are achieving, thus contributing significantly to national reduction plans
3. Create and improve legal, financial and fiscal frameworks at the appropriate level and in partnership with local and regional authorities in order to secure strong local and regional mitigation and adaptation actions and investments.
4. Encourage and enable local and regional authorities to engage the necessary human resources for energy and climate management and to promote further innovative solutions.

We therefore request that a chapter highlighting the prominent role of local and regional authorities be integrated into the post-2012 agreement.

European local and regional authorities through their European networks and organisations

- Support local and regional CO₂ reduction commitments in line with the European energy and climate targets (20% reduction of CO₂ emissions, 20% increase in energy efficiency and increase the share of renewables up to 20% by 2020).
- Support integrated approaches e.g. mainstreaming climate protection into policies and climate-proof legislation and ensuring coherence with mitigation and adaptation policies at all levels.
- Mobilise local actors and citizens to raise awareness and take action, exchange experience and learn from each other.
- Support solidarity and political and technical cooperation between local and regional authorities all over the world to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Local and regional authorities can make a difference!

As the level of government closest to citizens and local stakeholders, local and regional authorities have the competence – in their roles as planners, consumers, service providers and motivators – to act in an integrated way on several key policy areas:

1. Sustainable spatial planning for enhanced quality of life: 74% of European population lives in cities

Via sustainable urban and land use planning, local and regional governments make strategic decisions concerning spatial development. Adequate planning and improvements in infrastructure design are crucial to minimising urban sprawl, optimising the use of natural resources and minimising the risks of climate change.

2. Energy efficiency: in Europe, 40% of energy is consumed in buildings

Through policies and financial schemes, local and regional authorities directly manage the energy performance of public buildings and influence the performance of residential and tertiary buildings. The European Display Campaign [www.display-campaign.org] engages over 300 municipalities to calculate and display the energy performance of buildings. Raising users' and decision-makers' awareness has helped to considerably reduce the energy consumption of public buildings.

3. Urban traffic is responsible for some 40% of CO₂ emissions in Europe

By implementing integrated long-term mobility strategies, local and regional authorities can strongly influence the choices that individuals make and encourage a modal shift towards more sustainable transport modes. Campaigns such as the European Mobility Week [www.mobilityweek.eu] which count on the participation of around 2,000 cities, encourage local authorities in Europe to increase the availability of car free areas, development of public transport systems and promotion of walking and cycling.

4. Decentralised energy production and renewables: multiplying the conversion efficiency

Local authorities are providers of services such as district heating and cooling, and combined heat and power. Decentralised energy production based on the use of local renewable energy is a safe, clean and affordable option, and enhances both energy security and local prosperity.

5. Sustainable procurement to influence the market

Local and regional authorities are major purchasers of goods and services. They play a key role in opening up markets for more energy efficient products. Ambitious and measurable sustainable public procurement can provoke a change in production and consumption patterns.

6. Reinforcing social cohesion to the benefit of the most vulnerable citizens

The poorest are often hit hardest by the negative impacts of climate change and fluctuations of energy prices. And it is the poorest who will find it hardest to adapt. Local and regional authorities are best positioned to reach out these people and help households to deal with unaffordable energy costs. Furthermore, climate change is already the cause for migration of large populations. Cities are the places where migrants settle and the likely social and economic impacts of this must be addressed. Efforts are also needed to adapt infrastructure in the countries of origin to prevent such migration.

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