



A European Climate Pact

Co-creating climate-neutrality with cities and citizens

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Key messages

1. The European Climate Pact should build upon existing EU initiatives.
2. The European Climate Pact can add value by acting as an ‘umbrella’ initiative of local climate pacts, upscaling and replicating the most successful ones, and working to clear goals.
3. An effective European Climate Pact must be locally driven, fostering citizens engagement and behavioural change to ensure ownership.

The promise of a European Green Deal has brought a new and much needed impetus to the climate debate. The ambition to make Europe climate neutral by 2050 is not only extremely challenging but an absolute necessity. We cannot let the status quo jeopardise the future of millions of European citizens. We must make more ambitious commitments to address climate change at all levels of government and in every aspect of European policy making.

Many cities are taking the lead in tackling climate challenges; 64% of EUROCITIES members¹ have already committed to climate-neutrality by 2050, to drastically reduce GHG emissions and design resilient cities, ahead of the publication of the Climate Law. The Climate Law should be accompanied by a revised EU 2030 GHG reduction target, in line with the ambition of the Paris Agreement of keeping the increase in global average temperature to 1.5 degrees, binding for all member states to ensure enforcement. It has the potential to be world leading legislation, with a global impact and will hopefully motivate non-EU members to take similar urgent action.

The climate neutral objective can only be achieved through the effective involvement of all levels of governments, stakeholders and citizens. As we share the same goal, working together is the only way forward. A European Climate Pact should recognise the leading role of cities and equip them with adequate tools, ensuring a broad societal engagement in the transition towards a climate-neutral society. This transition will be more a societal than a technical transformation with cities as catalysts. A broad and inclusive societal movement is essential for success. The European Climate Pact is the opportunity to enhance new ways of working together in a more integrated way, breaking silos, fostering societal participation and societal benefits.

¹ EUROCITIES survey on climate action and EUROCITIES’ climate pledges: <https://bit.ly/3cKcipU>

The Climate Pact must:

- build upon existing initiatives. The Climate Pact shouldn't start from scratch, many relevant initiatives already exist in the EU. The Covenant of Mayors is a central force in Europe, where more than 10,000 cities and towns have already developed commitments on climate and energy with the cooperation of local stakeholders and citizens. The Covenant of Mayors can give a head start to the Climate Pact and should remain a key platform to share good practices on how to trigger and implement change locally, empowering cities to elaborate their own climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies and plans. The Climate Pact must also embrace the progressive proposals developed by EU's mission board for climate neutral and smart cities. The goal of 100 climate neutral cities by 2030 and the tools, such as the climate city contract, to achieve this will show the way for many more local authorities. It will be essential to achieving the 2050 goals.
- support goal driven local partnerships. Many European cities have already set up their own 2030 and 2050 strategies together with their local stakeholders. Cities such as Stockholm, Rotterdam, Amsterdam and Nantes have already set up local climate pacts. The European Climate Pact can add value by acting as an 'umbrella' initiative of local climate pacts, working to clear goals. It should offer opportunities for learning, exchanging, co-creation, engagement and collaboration. This would enable capacity building and behavioural change, supporting knowledge sharing, peer-to-peer learning, innovation and collaboration on climate actions. The Climate Pact must facilitate replication and scale up of the most successful initiatives. The European Climate Pact should boost the commitments already signed at local level by local actors (SMEs, schools, local authorities, universities, etc.) and generate new commitments to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050.
- work with city authorities to engage citizens and local stakeholders. City authorities are well-placed to drive a co-creation process at local level. Locally, there is a wealth of experience on co-creating policy solutions, enabling citizens' assemblies, boosting civic dialogues and fostering participatory budgeting. These experiences form a solid basis for inspiration on how to engage people directly in formulating and achieving ambitious climate goals. The European Climate Pact should build on local insights by placing cities as facilitators for local stakeholders and citizens. EU policy makers could use the insights collected from the local climate pacts to design EU legislation. The European Climate Pact represents an opportunity to give citizens and stakeholders a voice and role in designing new climate actions, ensuring ownership.