



**Local & Regional  
Europe**

# Climate Change

## Evaluation of the EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change

CEMR response to the Consultation on the EU Adaptation Strategy

March 2018

In 2016, the Commission launched an evaluation of the EU Adaptation Strategy to examine the actual implementation and performance of the strategy. The evaluation is planned to be completed by the end of 2018.

CEMR welcomes the opportunity to contribute to his process through: a) the public stakeholders meeting last January in which CEMR participated; b) through the online consultation in which members have contributed individually and c) with the current document with a more general input from CEMR as European umbrella organisation of 60 national associations representing local and regional government, including those from all EU member states.

## Our 5 core messages

### **1. Improved EU policy and legislative process to mainstream local climate adaptation action in EU and national policies and frameworks on adaptation**

Appropriate frameworks on innovative adaptation policies and instruments and mainstream climate adaptation into all policies are the key factors to adapt to climate change (and of course to combat climate change). National governments must accelerate their efforts on climate adaptation not only by providing better support (finance as well as guidance) but also by formally recognising the role of local governments in the decision-making processes on climate (adaptation) issues, and acknowledge them as relevant components of the State structure, close to citizens, legitimate and accountable for their actions with the appropriate resources to accomplish their mission. The EU can encourage Members States to strengthen the dialogue with subnational governments to some extent (requiring the close collaboration with such levels in the elaboration of the National Strategies on climate and energy). As part of the better regulation process, we request that the EU institutions and national governments give local authorities early recognition in the decision-making processes. Strong and unified positions to adapt to climate change can be achieved if the involvement of all levels of government takes place at an early stage and actions are localised.

Subnational governments are public institutions with legal personality, as component of the state structure, below the level of central government and accountable to citizens, encompassing different tiers of government. Initiatives such as the EU Urban Agenda, the Territorial Agenda 2020, the EU Climate and Energy Package and its legislative review or the National Strategies on climate and energy, have the potential to introduce such an approach and working method of partnership with regions and municipalities.

It is important that the climate adaptation strategy addresses all relevant stakeholders throughout the entire chain, from the municipalities to the developers and the building owners all the way through to the insurance business.

### **2. The use of EU, national and subnational governments' financial resources, political frameworks, and innovation and research tools to adapt to climate change**

Key factors to adapt to climate change are the following: appropriate political frameworks, deployment of innovative financing instruments, funding of climate adaptation policies and actions, and application of instruments such as public procurement (as a voluntary instrument to stimulate sustainable growth and eco-innovation) to enhance the transition towards a decarbonized society and economy. But this cannot be done without EU

institutions and Member States being more proactive in their relations with the subnational level, finding new ways of financing and funding on adaptation. The engagement of politicians of regions and municipalities responsible for climate dossiers is a success factor, as is the need to build awareness and to give ownership to citizens in the territory. However, all this can only be achieved with sufficient sustainable resources.

### **3. Link to EU and international development related initiatives to climate: global climate adaptation agendas are only achieved with local action**

We need to encourage the link between the EU Adaptation Strategy at the local level and the international development agendas, in line with the principle of policy coherence for sustainable development. The experience developed by European municipalities to adapt to the effect of climate change can be precious for municipalities in partner countries.

Links to similar International climate initiatives like the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy (GCoM) need appropriate consideration to avoid administrative burden of the public authorities.

We call on the EU and the international community, which have ratified the Paris Agreement to facilitate (Talanoa<sup>1</sup>) dialogue with towns, cities and regions in the Member States. This consideration should also come with the recognition and collaboration of global and regional programmes for cities' actions such as the GCoM above mentioned, and regional covenants such as European and Sub Saharan African Covenant (CoMSSA), which also cover adaptation dimension of climate.

Giving cities and regions leverage to fight climate change is the way forward to make a difference on the ground. COP22's outcomes were linked to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Urban Agenda of Habitat III. In the EU, most of the specific commitments for local governments will come indirectly via a new EU climate regime where the local and regional level can boost the implementation of these agendas for 2030. As members of the UN constituency of Local Governments and Municipal Authorities, all European states have agreed to engage and take actions to reach the goals. The localisation process of the Agenda 2030 and climate aspects in particular should therefore come with a real commitment to strengthening multi-level and multi-sectorial alliances.

### **4. The facilitation of the exchange of good practice and city to city cooperation at sub-national level, in Europe and globally on adaptation**

The EU should intensify actions on adaptation and its support to co-operation previously established among networks of cities and regions and joint action initiatives, exchanges of practice, projects, tools or high level events, targeting non UN State Actors and especially local governments. More alliances need to be constructed while respecting the competence and mandate of each one.

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<sup>1</sup> "Talanoa" is a traditional word used in Fiji and across the Pacific to reflect a process of inclusive, participatory and transparent dialogue. The Presidencies of COP 22 and COP 23 presented the outcome of their consultations on the dialogue and on this basis, made available the approach to the dialogue to all Parties. The COP welcomed with appreciation the design of the 2018 facilitative dialogue, to be known as the Talanoa Dialogue, and launched the dialogue, which has started in January 2018.

## **5. Decentralised cooperation helps to reach decarbonised societies**

Decentralised cooperation should be systematically considered in climate adaptation discussions. Our cities have been developing expertise on sustainable urban planning, integrated territorial climate plans and decentralised partnerships have been tools which have allowed such expertise. The international community should promote this through its international development cooperation policy, particularly within the framework of the GCoM or CoMSSA or actions by PLATFORMA strategic partnership for development and decentralised cooperation. Thousands of European towns and regions already cooperate with their peers to implement adaptation projects in developing countries and on south-south, north-south and north-north decentralised cooperation.

### **Five exemples from our membres**

**CEMR's response to the UE consultation is accompanied by practical examples provided by CEMR members on projects to adapt to the effects of climate change:**

- A workshop on the UE Adaptation Strategy for cities organised by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA)
- The various projects implemented by the region of Marches (Italy) in the field of the fight against climate change and the improvement of energy efficiency
- The strengthening of competences of local governments in the field of adaptation to the effects of climate change through two networks funded by the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS)
- A project in Finland aimed at strengthening the capacities to ensure the continuity of public services in exceptional climatic conditions.

## Contact

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## About CEMR

The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) is the broadest organisation of local and regional governments in Europe. Its members are over 60 national associations of municipalities and regions from 41 European countries. Together these associations represent some 130 000 local and regional authorities.

CEMR's objectives are twofold: to influence European legislation on behalf of local and regional governments and to provide a platform for exchange between its member associations and their elected officials and experts.

Moreover, CEMR is the European section of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), the worldwide organisation of local government.

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