



To Member States and permanent representations

Brussels 10 March 2014

Open letter

Europe must be ambitious in its 2030 framework and tap local and regional authorities' potential to deliver the EU climate and energy objectives

The European Union is debating on the post-2020 framework for climate and energy policies. Currently a world leader with its "20-20-20 targets", Europe must keep its aspirations up. An ambitious 2030 framework is not only necessary for meeting the European Council commitment to reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 80 to 95% until 2050. It is also an opportunity to translate the EU's climate and energy objectives into a multitude of actions at the local and regional level, which already contribute to improving the quality of life of citizens and to boosting EU competitiveness. **Local and regional authorities are continuously increasing their efforts for climate action and the transition towards green growth.**

Our networks are concerned about the European Commission's proposal on the future of climate and energy policies in the EU. In particular, the Commission's communication:

- **does not address the potential of local action to contribute to EU climate and energy goals;**
- **does not sufficiently include local and regional stakeholders and political leaders** that are committed to mitigating climate change through different initiatives;
- **fails to seize the potential of decentralized low-carbon production and lower energy use.**

On the other hand, **we very much welcome that the European Parliament** resolution on the dossier

- **recognizes the essential role played by local and regional authorities** in promoting and implementing the measures needed to move towards a low-carbon economy;
- **encourages the Commission and the Member States to remove any obstacles that hamper local and regional authorities in delivering on the EU's climate and energy objectives;**
- promotes greater use of the EU financial instruments for smart investments in sustainable technologies.

It is now in the hands of the European Council to send an encouraging signal to citizens, investors, communities, local and regional authorities by confirming the EU's ambition to take a leading role in international climate talks. It is an opportunity for national governments that local governments are committed to act, as stated in the Nantes Declaration¹, and to lead the way forward.

Local and regional authorities supported by their energy agencies are the key to delivering the EU's objectives to achieve a low-carbon future. Urban areas are responsible for 80% of energy consumption and CO₂ emissions. Because they have significant legal powers and responsibilities and

¹ <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/getWSDoc.php?id=2170>

are closest to citizens, **they drive societal and technological innovation within their constituencies**. Cities, towns and regions thus hold an important and often untapped potential for the delivery of the EU climate and energy objectives.

Thousands of local authorities have already committed to taking action at their level, by joining the Covenant of Mayors² or other initiatives. They present a win-win situation: while the EU needs a strong involvement of local and regional authorities to attain its climate and energy objectives, local and regional authorities need an ambitious EU policy environment to scale up their actions.

The Covenant of Mayors initiative accounts for almost 5,500 signatories, voluntarily committed to go beyond the EU climate and energy targets by 2020. With some 3,430 Sustainable Energy Action Plans under implementation, the Covenant signatories aim at reducing their CO₂ emissions on average by 28 % by 2020, thus showing the potential emission reduction target in Europe for 2020. Municipalities are supported in their actions by Regions, which establish energy transition programmes, set ambitious targets for the use of renewable energy and act as coordinators on their territory.

The European Council will discuss the 2030 framework for climate and energy policies on 20-21 March. Member states must seize this unique opportunity to:

- Place local and regional authorities at the heart of the EU's climate actions and to recognize the Covenant of Mayors as a key instrument of this policy framework, alongside the Smart Cities and Communities initiative already mentioned in the Communication from 22 January;
- Ensure continued EU and national support to regions, cities and towns to translate long-term strategy into actions at local level, be it through financial support or support for capacity building and exchange of good practices.

We are willing to accompany this process and hope that you will support our vision.

Sincerely,



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² Covenant of Mayors : <http://www.eumayors.eu>