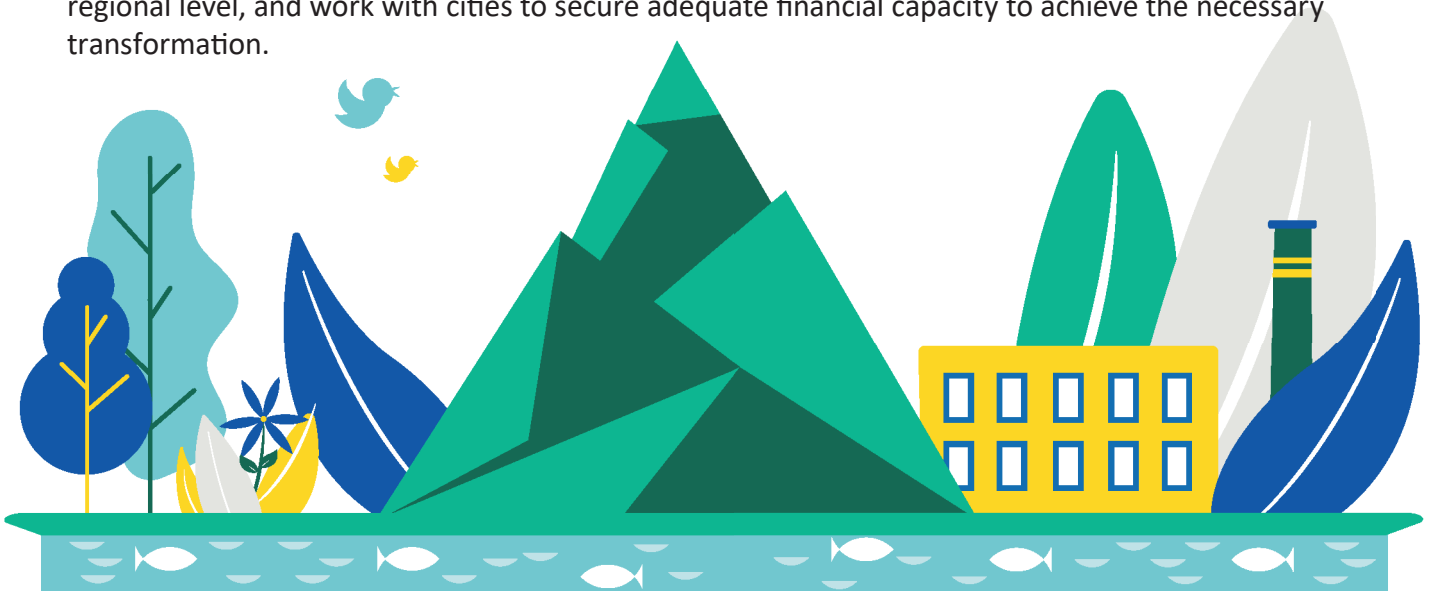


# A greener, climate-resilient and just transition starts in cities

## Eurocities' call for a better Europe

### Cities' recommendations to the EU:

- ✓ The new European Commission should swiftly present its legislative proposal for a binding EU target of a least 90% net emissions reduction by 2040. It is with a sense of urgency that European cities continue to support an ambitious EU climate policy. Achieving climate neutrality by 2050 will require swift and systemic implementation of relevant policies and targets.
- ✓ The Commission should propose an EU target for consumption-based emissions, with a dedicated methodology for cities. Also, new distinct targets for natural sinks and permanent carbon capture technologies will also be needed, focusing solely on hard-to-abate emissions.
- ✓ EU legislation and funding should reinforce focus on supporting universal access to essential services – in particular energy, transport and housing – to contribute to the EU climate-neutrality objectives while helping improve people's living conditions.
- ✓ The EU should establish new binding and measurable targets for EU and member states' adaptation policies which consider local actions, while also increasing support to local governments. All new initiatives should be climate- and risk-proofed to minimise climate change impacts.
- ✓ The EU should accelerate noise and air pollution reduction, sustainable food systems, stricter standards for PFAS, pesticide reduction, and healthier soils with limited sealing. As underscored by the pandemic, health and well-being, our ecosystems and climate action are deeply interlinked.
- ✓ The EU should promote local partnerships between cities and industries, and support cities to become shareholders in strategic net-zero projects. The Green Deal Industrial Plan initiatives should strengthen local innovation ecosystems and benefit the local community to foster public support.
- ✓ The EU and member states should establish permanent and structured dialogues with the local and regional level, and work with cities to secure adequate financial capacity to achieve the necessary transformation.





Cities are committed to the 1.5°C target of the Paris Agreement and a climate-neutral Europe by 2050. Understanding the unique urban responsibility to lead the way and achieve the ambition, European cities have supported the European Green Deal since its launch to decarbonise and make cities a better place to live without leaving anyone behind. An inclusive and just transition has the potential to reinforce social cohesion while improving people's health and well-being.

Cities have already set ambitious targets to reduce GHG emissions, decarbonise mobility, increase green and recreative areas, become more resilient, and alleviate energy poverty. The climate and biodiversity loss emergencies, the cost-of-living and housing crisis and the geopolitical context increase the concerns for the future for many people, including a lack of trust in the ability of public institutions to tackle the challenges.

Cities are at the frontline of tackling many of these challenges, but no level of government or sector can succeed on their own. There is a need to reinforce the effective ways of working between EU and city leaders to tap into the potential of cities fully. An empowered EU, working closely with local authorities, is vital to achieve this, as outlined in the Eurocities manifesto.

To achieve the transition to a greener, climate-resilient and just Europe, cities recommend that the EU:

### Accelerate climate mitigation

The European Green Deal has set the trajectory and engaged the EU and member states on a long time horizon, until 2050. The first condition to ensuring the targets are reached is to enable a swift and systemic implementation of the different policies and sectoral targets.

Setting milestones along the climate-neutrality journey is crucial. The EU should adopt a legally binding EU 2040 target of a least 90% net emissions reduction to anchor Europe in a climate-neutral trajectory towards 2050. However, it cannot be a simple "repackaging exercise". The current gaps in achieving the targets, for example, the social and distributional aspects, should be assessed to inform the mitigation measures needed to ensure a just transition. New tools and measures – a combination of policy, regulatory and finance interventions – are necessary to accelerate decarbonisation and accompany citizens.



To reach net zero by 2050, we need natural sinks and permanent carbon capture technologies. A distinct target should be set for these, ensuring the latter focuses solely on hard-to-abate emissions.

In parallel with climate mitigation, the EU should work on the fact that 53% of EU emissions are generated outside Europe. These emissions represent a large part of our cities' carbon footprint but are often left unmeasured and unchecked. While a few cities are leading the way on consumption-based emissions, the EU should set targets to reduce these emissions and provide all stakeholders with a calculation methodology, together with training on how to measure them.

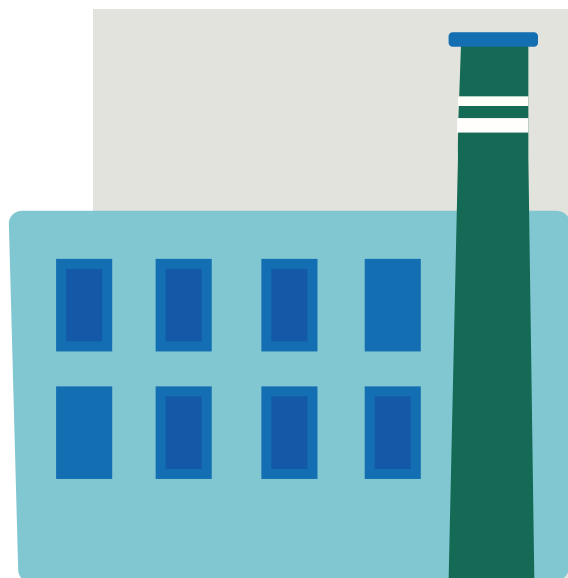


### Enable a people-focused transition

Securing equal access to essential services – in particular energy, transport and housing – is the foundation of a just transition and addressing disparities in access to clean energy solutions. EU legislation and funding should be dedicated to accelerating renovation, using empty spaces, increasing access to affordable housing and building social housing in a sustainable way. This would contribute to the EU climate-neutrality objectives, while helping improve people's living conditions, and fighting the populist narratives on Europe.

Member states should be encouraged and supported to invest in education, upskilling and reskilling and to provide support for job transitions, while enhancing partnerships in Continued Education and Training. Decarbonising our economy requires a reshaping of the labour market to generate net employment gains and the creation of new business sectors.

The Social Climate Fund should become a permanent instrument, aligned with the EU 2040 target and based on a thorough assessment of its social impacts, to support socially fair green initiatives locally. It should boost investments in projects that reduce emissions while promoting social inclusion locally. It should primarily be financed by the EU's own resources and channelled towards climate and social co-benefits such as equitable and affordable access to clean energy, accessible and affordable public transport as well as green infrastructure. To make sure it can really benefit local actions and plans, the use of these funds should be directly managed by cities or decided through mandatory dialogues with the local level.



Enabling a people-focused transition also means citizen and stakeholder engagement at the local level. Actively promoting local democracy and multi-level governance in this way is essential to achieving the decarbonisation of our societies. The EU should work with cities and tap into their extensive experience of working with citizens to scale up the work on the Climate City Contracts, as established within the 100 Climate-Neutral Cities Mission, and participation mechanisms such as climate assemblies.

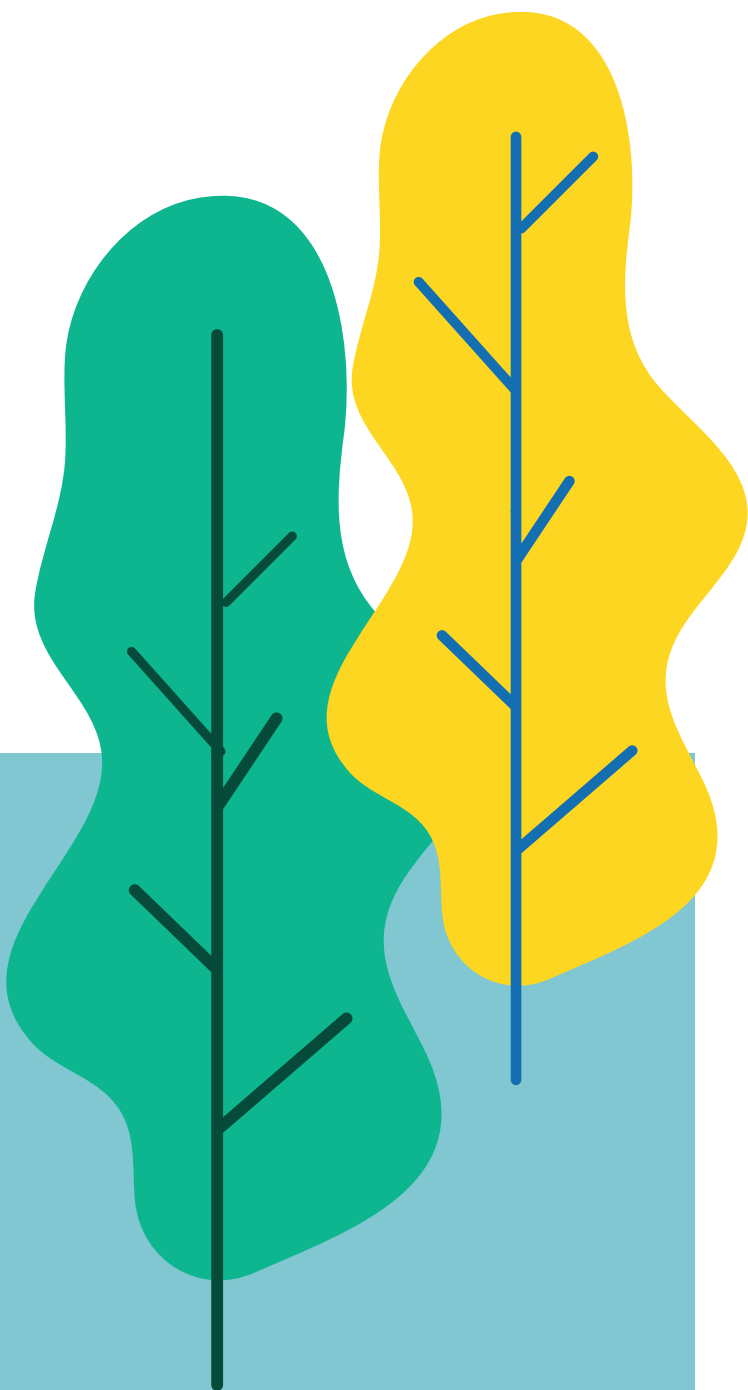


### Increase efforts for resilience and adaptation to climate change

Adaptation is a shared competence between the EU and member states, and the EU climate law contains provisions for national implementation of climate adaptation plans and mainstreaming. All EU member states have adopted an adaptation strategy, and the EU adaptation strategy is a first step in the right direction. However, there is a need for more coordinated action at the EU level to ensure adaptation is mainstreamed in EU policies and that member states will do the same at their level. The EU should also climate-proof and risk-proof all new initiatives going forward, in order to minimise losses due to climate change impacts.

Binding and measurable targets for EU and member states' adaptation policies that take into account local actions should be established. Such targets could be integrated in the national adaptation strategies and in the long-term strategies that member states must set up to comply with the Governance Regulation. This would encourage member states to jointly plan their actions on mitigation and adaptation with cities when updating the plans, and assess the co-benefits and trade-offs.

The EU capacity to support local governments should be increased, leveraging voluntary initiatives such as the 100 Climate Neutral and Smart Cities Mission, the Mission on Adaptation to Climate Change, Covenant of Mayors and Green City Accord, for example, through technical assistance and standardised approaches for evaluating policies and emergency response, and boosting cross-border cooperation between member states, cities and regions.





## Promote healthy cities for people and planet

It's now time to connect the dots between the functioning of ecosystems, climate action and citizens' health and well-being — In practice, this means mandatory EU member states' targets for noise and air pollution reduction, Extended Producer Responsibility schemes on all environmental pollution, stricter requirements for sources of pollution, implementing and enforcing the 'polluter pays' principle across Europe, a long-term strategy to transition to sustainable food systems including the promotion of sustainable and healthy diets (nutritious, respectful of the planetary boundaries and economically fair and affordable), and fair revenues for farmers, stricter standards for the release of PFAS ("forever chemicals") and additives in the environment, healthier soils, reducing use of pesticides and limiting soil sealing.

Working on One Health for All will require increasing coherence between EU policies, addressing trade-offs, and supporting integrated planning at the national and local levels. As recent events have shown us, cities' food systems are also highly vulnerable to the impacts of geopolitical turmoil, worldwide pandemics and climate change. Reducing our water consumption, the use of pesticides, improving the health of soils, improving affordability and access to healthy and sustainable diets, and increasing the resilience of local ecosystems is vital not only for the health of the ecosystems themselves but also for the vitality of our food systems, of our agricultural sector and the health of all.

## Make cities strategic partners of the Green Deal Industrial Plan

Cities have a central role to play in the deployment of the Green Deal Industrial Plan (GDIP) locally. The EU should encourage partnerships with local industries and support cities to become shareholders in strategic net-zero projects. Investments in local utility companies should be made, leveraging their potential to provide public goods and services while contributing to the EU's strategic autonomy.

The Green Deal Industrial Plan initiatives should strengthen local innovation ecosystems, based on regenerative and distributive dynamics, contribute to sustainable value chains, and harness the potential of clean technologies to benefit the local community, for instance from carbon capture and storage industrial facilities, to foster public support and balance local benefits and burdens. With the participation of cities in the design and monitoring of the deployment of the GDIP locally, with the support of flexible public procurement, many more people would benefit.



Many European cities have viable industrial ecosystems and can leverage their convening power to bring together industry/SMEs, citizens, and public sector authorities to strengthen local markets for net zero technologies and train/retrain workers in line with Corporate Social Responsibility practices. Local industry dialogues could provide a valuable entry point for deployment and scaling up of clean technologies and make cities attractive hubs for clean technologies and new employment opportunities.

### **Promote multi-level governance and financing**

The EU should establish permanent and structured dialogues with the local and regional level at both EU and national level to achieve the necessary transformation, and appoint an Urban Envoy, centrally placed in the European Commission, with a mandate to oversee and coordinate all EU policies and initiatives for cities and urban areas.

There is a crucial need for coordination in terms of timelines and processes. It is essential to ensure effective participation at the local level in the design and implementation of plans, developed by EU member states under EU law (NECPs, air quality plans, social climate plans, and Nature Restoration Plans, etc.). Cities often have limited resources and capacity to engage, but their contribution is crucial to successful implementation, much of which happens locally.

The EU should provide cities with adequate financial capacity to drive and implement urban transformation. This includes more direct access to EU funding by cities and redefining the EU's budgetary rules for greater flexibility on cities' long-term investments, as well as maintaining and expanding the urban earmarking beyond the European Regional Development Fund to all relevant EU programmes and reinforcing the support Cohesion Policy provides to the implementation of the European Green Deal in cities. In addition to the European Investment Bank's (EIB) investment in green urban transformation, cities should be provided with de-risking solutions – guaranteed funds at the EU and member state level and an EIB ring-fenced fund, or a separate Green Investment Bank – to finance newer solutions, that are currently considered higher risk, to develop the market for upscaling.

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