

EUROPEAN UNION



Committee of the Regions



Regions and cities on the road to Copenhagen

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The EU's Assembly of Regional and Local Representatives



Regions and cities on the road to Copenhagen

Between 7 and 18 December 2009, the 15th Conference of the Parties under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP15) will convene in Copenhagen, Denmark, in order to find a successor agreement to the Kyoto Protocol on climate change adaptation and mitigation. COP15 is the occasion for the EU to speak with one voice on climate change at global level. Led by the Swedish Presidency, the EU will present the joint position of the EU Member States and institutions and the Committee of the Regions intends to represent the interest of regions and cities within the EU delegation. With this aim, the Committee of the Regions adopted a resolution during its Plenary Session on 18 June 2009 in order to send a clear message to the newly elected European Parliament, the Swedish Presidency and the European Commission. Reaching a deal by the time the COP15 meeting ends will depend not only on the political negotiations but also on public pressure from around the globe. With members drawn from the level of government closest to the citizens, the Committee of the Regions has a privileged position when it comes to judged and influencing public opinion and implement political agreements on the ground.

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Foreword

Europe's regions and cities are active partners in the fight against climate change. Given the scale of the challenges lying ahead on the road to Copenhagen, the Committee of the Regions, the EU's assembly of regional and local representatives, believes that regional and local authorities play a key role in three key areas. First, many of them are already implementing coherent strategies and projects in order to 'green' regional economies, public facilities and budgets. In many EU Member States, regional and local authorities are making more significant investments in this area than the national government. Second, many of Europe's regions and cities cooperate and exchange best practice, both with each other and with partners from outside the EU, on prevention, adaptation, energy efficiency, renewable energies, transport and other issues, often supported by EU institutions and funding. Last but by no means least, as political leaders look for concrete solutions to tackle climate change, regions and cities are becoming increasingly involved in policy-making, and in negotiating and implementing agreements at both the EU and international level. This is why the Committee of the Regions has intensified its activities on climate change together with the other EU institutions and with European and international associations. Copenhagen, I am sure, will not be the end of our road in the fight against climate change; indeed, it is likely to be merely the beginning of a global 'green new deal', a change that has become all the more necessary given the current economic climate.

This brochure gives an overview of the recent and ongoing activities of the Committee of the Regions and our Commission on Sustainable Development. It is in the vital interest of Europe's regions and cities that the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in December puts in place a new global agreement on carbon emissions. The Committee of the Regions will continue to keep climate change at the top of its agenda, stressing that sub-national responses must play a role alongside international, European and national policies.

Let's build Europe in partnership!

Luc Van den Brande

President of the Committee of the Regions



The Copenhagen conference must be remembered as the place where the world came together, and all nations signed up to fight climate change. To my mind there are three essential ingredients for success: ambitious mitigation targets for developed countries, significant mitigation action by major developing economies, and credible offers of financing for mitigation and adaptation. We will need agreement on all three if the conference is to meet its objectives.

The developed world must lead by example, which is why the EU is pressing for a collective emissions cut of 30% below 1990 levels by 2020. An impressive funding package will be needed to get developing countries on board, but the benefits are clear to all: early action will cost less, and investing now in energy efficiency and low-carbon technologies will bring jobs, innovation, growth, and long term energy security.

An effective carbon market will give all countries an incentive for getting emissions under control, so the EU is aiming for an OECD-wide carbon market by 2015. Our proposals are ambitious and realistic, but we understand the importance of flexibility. We will get there by working with all parties – including at regional and local levels – to facilitate a successful outcome in Copenhagen.

Stavros Dimas

European Commissioner for the Environment





Climate change – A challenge for local and regional authorities

On 18 June 2009, the Committee of the Regions adopted a resolution during its Plenary Session emphasising the important political challenge that climate change represents and the key role that local and regional authorities have in tackling it. In that resolution, the Committee of the Regions:

- urges the European Union to step up its efforts at the highest political level to boost the international coalition against climate change, guaranteeing post-Kyoto agreements based on ambitious, transparent and legally binding reduction targets;
- calls on the European Commission and the Member States to apply the subsidiarity principle when developing and negotiating new policies on climate change issues that may have significant impact on local and regional authorities and citizens;
- welcomes the EU's commitment to reduce the impact of climate change and calls for the post-2010 Lisbon Strategy to pursue a single development framework covering the social, economic and environmental action of the Union;
- recommends revising the post-2013 EU budget, programmes, policies and especially key legislation. Consistent investments in green infrastructure have to be made and suitable policy responses to climate change developed that take into account the possibility of new sustainability indicators in the framework of the Structural Funds;
- highlights its support for the Covenant of Mayors as a response by cities to global warming through the pledge to reduce their CO₂ emissions beyond the EU's 2020 objectives. The CoR invites all relevant subnational authorities to sign up to the Covenant;
- expresses its strong belief that through promoting sustainable energy and energy efficiency, the Covenant of Mayors can spur cities and regions on to implement changes that will protect their most vulnerable citizens from possible increases in energy costs by offering them support to make their homes more energy-efficient;
- supports the implementation of the 'polluter-pays' principle in the relevant Community policies internalising the environmental costs of goods and services;
- insists on the fact that energy policy and climate protection policy are closely interrelated and must be coordinated, and regrets the failure to introduce a binding energy efficiency target in the 2008 climate change and energy package, which is the missing link in moves to achieve the necessary CO₂ reduction; the CoR also calls for more resources to be provided in order to continue research into energy efficiency and carbon capture technologies, as well as other methods of reducing greenhouse gas emissions;

The full text of the resolution 189/2009 "Climate change: on the Road to Copenhagen" is available on the Committee of the Regions' website: www.cor.europa.eu/climatechange

A European framework for action

In the Committee of the Regions' Opinion due to be adopted in October 2009, **Henning Jensen** (PES), Mayor of Næstved Municipality, Denmark, welcomes the European Commission's White Paper on 'Adapting to climate change: Toward a European Framework for action', and states that action against climate change requires involvement of all relevant actors. As the consequences of climate change affect each region of the EU in a different way, it is essential for any European framework to develop flexible instruments in order to take into account the need for different responses. As the Opinion states:

"Climate change does not distinguish between geographical, organisational and administrative boundaries, and the CoR therefore urges that a horizontal joined-up approach be taken by local, regional and national bodies affected by common features such as estuaries, coastal and river flood plains. From a vertical perspective, adaptation efforts require bottom-up action and the CoR recommends that joint actions on adaptive measures be undertaken by all relevant levels of government outlining the respective actions, financial responsibilities and time scales to achieve the proposed goals, and allowing for an integrated response and shared responsibility for the outcome."

The Opinion highlights the fact that an effective climate policy can boost other sectors as well, and has the effect of promoting a green "new deal" that will also pave the way for a more sustainable economy within the framework of the post-2010 EU jobs and growth strategy. Measures, tools and guidelines for tackling climate change not only have to be based on sound scientific knowledge, but they also need to be simple enough for every level of governance to implement. This is particularly important for local and regional authorities who are frequently unable to implement the most effective 'green' measures because the costs are too high. That is why the Committee of the Regions "backs the Commission's idea that, from 2013, Member States should earmark at least 50% of the revenue generated through the auctioning of emission rights to tackle the climate issue through adaptation, and feels that the use of available funding for adaptation purposes must also be contingent on specific local and regional conditions".

Local and regional authorities can also play an important role beyond the borders of the EU. Municipalities, cities and regions can help transfer their expertise to developing countries, which are facing the greatest adaptation challenge. This again underlines the need to ensure that local and regional authorities are recognised as pivotal actors within the UNFCCC framework.



Researching thin solar cells

Funded by the EU research programme between 2008 and 2011, two leading research institutes and five companies from Belgium, France, Germany and Spain are looking into ways of developing more efficient solar cells that are half as thick as the ones currently on the market. Solar panels made with cells that thin could be up to 30% less expensive to produce, and would thus improve the competitiveness of European solar cell manufacturers.

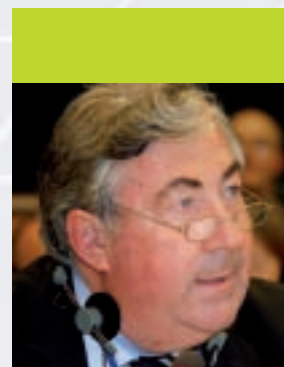


Prevention of natural and man-made disasters

In the Committee of the Regions' Opinion due to be adopted in October 2009, **Helmut M. Jahn** (EPP), Head of the Hohenlohe County Authority, Germany, underlines that it is impossible not to note the sharp rise in the quantity and intensity of disasters the last few years, not only in Europe but also all in the rest of the world. In its Opinion, the Committee of the Regions stresses that even if most disasters are highly localised, they do not respect administrative boundaries. The development of a system of coordination and cooperation within the EU should be encouraged – indeed, areas that face a common threat have an obligation to work together to find a common solution.

"The Committee of the Regions agrees with the European Commission that prevention is to be understood in two ways: firstly, as far as possible preventing disasters before they occur, and secondly, containing the consequences of those that cannot be avoided", the Opinion states.

As they are the first to act when disasters occur, local and regional authorities have a key role to play in disaster prevention, starting with the drawing up of prevention measures and a common strategy with other local and regional authorities likely to be affected. In order to do this, they need to have a better understanding of why disasters occur and what their options are for prevention and management. That is why the Committee endorses the proposal to compile an inventory of tried and tested practices, so that it is easier for local and regional authorities across Europe to compare the level of risk they face. The CoR is wary of large scale uniform approaches to disaster management, however, as these do not allow local specificities to be taken into account. Other initiatives could be taken to improve disaster management: hazard/risk mapping, guidelines for disaster prevention priorities, training or/and awareness-raising measures. Coordination of disaster prevention could be improved by more effective networking between the representatives of various national departments such as fire or flood control agencies, or through specific instruments such as the European Grouping on Territorial Cooperation.



Predicting climate change impacts

ENSEMBLES, a project on future climate projections led by the Centre for Climate Prediction and Research in Exeter, United Kingdom, brings together 70 partners from the EU, Switzerland, Australia and the US, with EU funding of €15 million. The project aims to develop and test a prediction system for climate change, using several different models, which is designed to be more accurate and reduce the uncertainty surrounding the likely impact of climate change-related disasters on the Earth's eco system.





Energy from renewable sources

ALDE member **Paula Baker** from Basingstoke, United Kingdom, was the appointed rapporteur of the Committee of the Regions (CoR) on the draft EU Renewable Energy Directive, which aimed for the EU to meet 20% of its energy requirements through renewable sources by 2020. It also set binding targets for individual Member States. The CoR welcomes the Directive as a legislative framework that provides long-term stability for investment decisions. The move to renewable energy sources often involves energy production at a more local scale and, in fact, many local and regional authorities have already shifted energy production in their regions to renewable sources. The Opinion suggested amendments to the Directive so that it would not add complexity to planning regulations and that the European Commission should encourage better take up of existing financial support schemes for renewable energy. As the Opinion states, those schemes should be accessible to local energy producers and the support for renewable energy should be accompanied by the phasing-out of subsidies for the production and use of fossil fuels. Other issues, such as trading and accounting schemes, seem too complicated and need to be improved with the aim of better transparency and efficiency.



Exchanging best practices

The MORE4NRG network, an EU INTERREG IVC programme, aims to facilitate the development of regional strategies for renewable energy sources and energy efficiency. The project brings together 11 regions from all over Europe and the Assembly of European Regions.

Local and regional authorities have a major role to play as large consumers of energy, procurers, planners, community leaders, owners and managers of public land and property, and as transport providers. The Opinion concluded that LRAs should play a major role in education, training and communication and be fully involved in developing and implementing renewable energy national action plans (NAPs). It further suggests a comprehensive research framework on local renewable energy sources.

The Opinion was adopted in October 2008 and the Rapporteur then promoted the Committee's view to key EU decision makers. Ms Baker met with the European Commission, the French Presidency, Members of the European Parliament, and the UK national government to influence the Council of Ministers' views. The Directive was finally adopted in April 2009. It now recognises our role in decentralised renewable energy and makes the link between renewable energy and local job creation. EU Member State governments will by June 2010 each submit their NAPs to the EC to show how they are meeting their renewable targets. Thanks to the CoR, local and regional authorities will be involved in this process. The process demonstrates the value of the Committee of the Regions as an influential EU institution. It has helped highlight that local and regional views can be taken forward, and can impact on final decisions.



Reducing industrial emissions

In an Opinion prepared by **Cor Lamers** (EPP), Mayor of the City of Houten in the Netherlands, and adopted in November 2008, the Committee of the Regions welcomes the proposed EU Industrial Emissions Directive as an important tool for Member States to meet emission reduction targets by 2020. The Directive's aim is to prevent and control emissions from industrial installations passing into the air, water and soil. It also proposes a clearer and more coherent legal basis by merging six directives, as well as setting minimum standards for environmental inspections of industrial installations. It also sets out to extend EU legislation to cover other polluting activities in order to ensure the same high level of environmental protection across the EU.



PPP for research and economic recovery

In June 2009, the European Commission launched three research-driven public-private partnerships (PPPs) as part of the European Economic Recovery Plan. Over €3 billion will be available to support projects on 'Factories of the Future', 'Energy-Efficient Buildings' and 'Green Cars'.

The Committee of the Regions insists on the fact that the reduction of industrial emissions is particularly urgent in the case of air pollution, for which the Directive sets targets which the CoR believes are not ambitious enough. It believes in particular that the emissions targets for large combustion plants are weak, especially given the five-year time frame for their implementation. As the Opinion states, reference and control tools are also not implemented correctly and the CoR emphasises the fact that better regulation does not always mean reducing the number of legislative texts. In addition, the Committee of the Regions suggests that more needs to be done to stimulate innovation and to offer opportunities for cooperation.

In addition, the Committee of the Regions "strongly disagrees with the Commission's proposal to establish criteria for the granting of derogations based on local conditions in accordance with the comitology procedure". This would effectively postpone the definition of derogations to a later stage. The Committee of the Regions also considers that cost-efficiency and cutting red tape are essential for better regulation, but adds that the Directive fails to take these issues fully into account.

"The Committee of the Regions cannot endorse the proposed use of comitology to establish several criteria, such as soil and ground monitoring and criteria for risk-based analyses. It holds the views that these criteria should be established in the Directive itself and debated in relation with the on-going legislative procedure", the Opinion states.

The European Emissions Trading System

Prepared by **Pietro Marrazzo** (PES), President of the Lazio region in Italy, the Committee of the Regions' Opinion on the improvement and extension of the EU greenhouse gas emission allowance trading system was adopted in October 2008. The Opinion welcomes the efforts to build a European carbon market that quantifies the price of pollution: to pursue this aim, the Committee warmly welcomes the proposed adjustment and updating of the Emissions Trading System (ETS). The ETS is based on the recognition that creating a price for carbon offers the most cost-effective way to achieve the deep reductions in global greenhouse gas emissions that are needed to prevent climate change from reaching dangerous levels. The ETS, established through binding EU legislation in force since 2005, is based on a 'cap-and-trade' system, mandatory participation of businesses in the sectors covered, and compliance framework linked to emission saving projects carried out under the Kyoto Protocol such as the Clean Development Mechanism. The Opinion stresses the importance of achieving an international agreement in the various sectors involved in order to create a level playing field worldwide. The Committee of the Regions points out the lack of initiatives proposed within the Directive concerning the waste management sector, which is one of the most important sectors concerning emissions and land-use.

In addition, the Committee "calls for due consideration to be given to the demands of regional development policies and notes that in order to promote a more transparent and effective carbon market, a number of industrial installations could be thoroughly restructured so as to rid the production system of the least efficient installations or those that are already in crisis".

The Committee considers that it is particularly important to step up the work of local and regional authorities in terms of training and information for end-users, operators of medium-sized businesses covered by the ETS directive. Following debates in Council and the European Parliament, the Directive was finally adopted in April 2009.



Quantifying transport emissions

Financed by the EU research programme, the QUANTIFY project brings together partners from 15 European countries and the USA who are working on methods to better quantify the contribution of transport emissions to climate change, ozone depletion and changes in atmospheric composition. The project is assessing the climate impact of various transport modes and their emissions of long-life greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide and nitrous oxide, ozone precursors and particles.



Cities as drivers in the fight against climate

An outlook Opinion prepared by EPP member **Kay Twitchen** from Essex County Council, United Kingdom, on the Covenant of Mayors initiative highlights that local and regional authorities are a crucial link to the individual behaviour change which is essential if we are to meet EU targets for energy consumption. The aims of the Covenant of Mayors have obvious links to the international climate change negotiations in 2009, as local and regional governments will play a huge part in helping to achieve any targets for CO₂ reduction set under the UN agreement, through both their provision of services and community leadership.



The Covenant of Mayors

By August 2009, more than 600 municipalities had signed the Covenant of Mayors, an initiative of the European Commission that commits its signatories to go beyond the EU targets of reducing CO₂ emissions and energy consumption in their cities by 2020. The Committee of the Regions and President Luc Van den Brande actively support the initiative. For more information, see www.eumayors.eu

The Opinion recognises that regional and local authorities have already taken action to tackle climate change and that the Covenant of Mayors provides a strong impetus to achieve even more. It also points out that the Covenant provides opportunities for all levels of sub-national authorities, including regional authorities.

By developing relationships with Members of the European Parliament, national government and the European Commission, as well as liaising with local government networks such as the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, CoR members can ensure that the important role played by local and regional authorities in tackling climate change is recognised throughout the decision-making process and that appropriate support is available.



Housing and Regional Policy

Based on an Opinion prepared by **Flo Clucas**, President of the ALDE Group in the Committee of the Regions and Deputy Leader of Liverpool City Council, the European Commission decided in December 2008 to enable all Member States and regions in the European Union to invest in energy-efficiency and renewable energy measures in housing by means of EU structural funds. First mentioned in the Opinion 'Housing and Regional Policy', which was approved by the Committee of the Regions in February 2007, the decision was a major success for the Committee of the Regions.

In the Opinion, Mrs Clucas pointed out that funds from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) should be used to improve energy efficiency in housing for all Member States. At the time of writing the Opinion, only Member States which acceded to the EU in or after 2004 could use the funds for this purpose. Specifically, the Opinion called for "the European Union directive on energy efficiency to include the rehabilitation and regeneration of historical housing stock as a priority area for action". The Opinion was quoted by the European Parliament; and Mrs Clucas frequently raised the matter at meetings with the European Commission and at international meetings, in particular as the financial crisis, climate change and energy supply problems in Europe grew. The Opinion saw the opportunity to focus on new employment potential, new business start-ups and new technological answers to those problems.



Energy performance of buildings

Prepared by **Jean-Louis Joseph** (PES), Mayor of La Bastidonne in France, the Committee of the Regions adopted Opinion on 'Energy Performance of Buildings' and the 'Second Strategic Energy Review' was adopted in April 2009. The Opinion recognises the importance of energy-efficient building if Europe is to reach its climate change targets. The necessity of safe security of supply and the limited role of local and regional stakeholders in energy efficiency legislation were also noted by the Rapporteur.

In addition, the Committee of the Regions "draws attention to the 'trias energetica' model, which sets out, in ascending order of importance, the three policies capable of limiting the impact of energy use on climate change: energy efficiency, the promotion of renewable energy and optimising fossil fuel use".

The CoR suggests strengthening the level of expertise on energy efficiency at the EU level by creating a working group involving local actors. Improving the energy efficiency of buildings is not only a question of investment but also of making the best use of knowledge and sharing best practice. In its Opinion, the Committee of the Regions also supports the European Commission's proposal to provide increased access to structural funds for energy efficiency investment in buildings, to allow reduced VAT rates in the housing sector and to develop financial instruments in partnership with the EIB and EBRD to improve energy efficiency.



Award-winning cities

In 2008, the cities of Helsinki and Rotterdam won the 'European Regional Champions Awards' in the fields of energy and environment. The competition is supported by the Committee of the Regions, and saw Helsinki's district-heat and power company rewarded for its world leading co-generation operations, which use the extra energy made when producing electricity to heat public housing across the city. All 16 municipalities in Rotterdam, meanwhile, were rewarded for their commitment to reduce CO2 emissions by 40% in 2025, including a programme for developing energy efficiency in housing and the use of sustainable resources.

Background: Climate change and Europe's regions and cities

The impact of climate change on regions and cities throughout Europe will vary depending on their location. Recent research suggests that 170 million people - more than one third of the EU population - live in regions significantly affected by climate change. Regions at the highest pressure are generally located in the South and East of Europe, while limited impact is predicted for Northern and Western Europe, apart from lowland coastal regions around the North and Baltic Seas with a high exposure to coastal erosion. European citizens see climate change as one of the three most serious problems facing the world today, though the seriousness of this issue has declined in the face of the economic downturn, which now dominates public opinion. However, still over two-thirds of Europeans feel that climate change is a very serious problem, and that the seriousness of climate change has not been exaggerated. At the same time, they feel that climate change can be stopped and the proportion of those thinking that fighting it can have a positive impact on the economy has increased.

Green industries and services can certainly be a source of economic growth by encouraging innovative clean technologies, fostering efficient energy use or eco-tourism. European eco-industries are very competitive, accounting for around 3.4 million jobs and one third of the world's turnover in that sector. Many regions and cities have recognised the opportunities stemming from 'greening' the economy, not least with the help of EU funding. For example, EU structural and cohesion funds have earmarked €100 billion to support eco-innovation, environmental risk protection measures and clean technologies and enterprises at local level. In addition, funding for climate-relevant research on themes such as environment, energy, transport, space and global monitoring for environment and security has been substantially increased to €9 billion as part of the 7th EU Framework Programme.

The EU has taken the world lead in developing policies to fight against climate change. The two main targets set by the European Council and agreed by all institutions and bodies of the European Union are a reduction of at least 20% in greenhouse gases and a 20% share of renewable energies in EU energy consumption by 2020. Those objectives are assisted by the European Union Emissions Trading System, which provides a market-based solution to cut greenhouse gas emissions.

The Committee of the Regions and its members believe that all levels of government need to co-operate in order to tackle the impact of climate change and are actively involved in related projects, networks and conferences. In this context, the Committee works closely with other institutions and associations. For example, the Committee of the Regions has given its support to the Covenant of Mayors initiative since 2008, and many CoR members are among the signatories who have pledged to go beyond the EU 2020 objectives on emission reductions, energy efficiency and renewables. In June 2009, the Committee contributed to the Local Government Climate Change Leadership Summit in Copenhagen and adopted a resolution the same month (see page 4 of this brochure). The Committee of the Regions took part in a high-level conference of the Swedish EU Presidency on Sustainable Cities on 14 and 15 September 2009 in Stockholm. On 7 October 2009, the Committee's Plenary Session will debate the subject and numerous workshops and debates during the parallel OPEN DAYS, the European Week of Regions and Cities, will focus on climate change. Finally, during the UN negotiations in Copenhagen, the Committee of the Regions intends to represent the interest of regions and cities alongside the other EU institutions.

Climate change will remain on the Committee's agenda beyond Copenhagen. For example, the Committee of the Regions will support the 6th European Conference on Sustainable Cities and Towns organised in May 2010 by ICLEI, Local Governments for Sustainability, in Dunkerque, France. More information at: www.dunkerque2010.org/

The Committee of the Regions

Around two-thirds of EU legislation is implemented by local and regional authorities in the Member States. The Committee of the Regions (CoR) was created in 1994 to give representatives of local government a say over the content of these laws. The CoR organises five plenary sessions a year, where its 344 members vote on opinions issued in response to proposed legislation. The European Commission, which initiates EU laws, and the Council of Ministers, which determines the final content of the legislation (usually in tandem with the European Parliament), are obliged to consult the CoR on a wide range of policy areas including the environment, employment and transport. The Lisbon Treaty will strengthen the position of the Committee of the Regions further. In future, the Committee must be consulted by the European Parliament on all issues that are important for regions and municipalities. The Committee could also appeal to the EU Court of Justice if its rights are infringed or it believes that an EU law violates the subsidiarity principle or fails to respect regional or local powers.



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Committee of the Regions
Rue Belliard/Belliardstraat, 101 _ 1040 Bruxelles/Brussels _ BELGIQUE/BELGIË
www.cor.europa.eu