



**European Committee
of the Regions**

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PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS
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Dear Mayor,
Dear Rector,
Ladies and gentlemen.

There has been considerable momentum since the Paris Agreement was signed (in 2015) that the world is coming together for a cleaner, sustainable future.

Yet our climate and environment is still in crisis. Recent protests and the recent "green wave" in the European elections were a clear message that citizens are demanding more ambition.

Transforming our energy systems is not only about our environment, it is also about citizens: as many as 80 million Europeans suffer from energy poverty. The shift to a carbon-free economy will create much-needed jobs, making the EU more competitive and reducing our energy dependency.

It is therefore not for debate whether we should decarbonise our economy, but how. What is clear is that it needs all of us – governments at all levels, industry, civil society and citizens – to take action and deliver locally.

I am therefore pleased this edition of the SET Plan conference focusses on the local and regional dimension of the clean energy transition. The fight against climate change and the transformation we need starts locally, in and with our regions and cities.

The EU must provide the right targets and policy framework: to respond to the European Commission's recent call for a carbon-free EU by 2050 – something our Committee has demanded since 2015 – is the only way we can uphold our international climate commitments.

The Romanian Presidency recently concluded the Clean Energy Package negotiations: We need better energy performance in buildings, more renewable energy, better energy efficiency, a better design for the EU electricity markets and drafting national energy and climate plans (NECPs).

Member States must finalise their 2021-2030 plans together with local and regional actors through an effective multi-level climate and energy dialogue. Not involving local and regional authorities will reduce the impact of the plans and hold Europe back.



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We must continue to invest heavily in research and innovation to unlock the potential of green technology. We need all cities and regions to embrace new technologies, cooperate across borders and support businesses. Regions and cities need to create the environment to accelerate regional innovation.

Nevertheless, we cannot expect innovation to solve everything.

Cities and regions are the answer to the climate and energy challenge. They are not just implementing decisions but taking the lead.

Today over 9 000 cities have joined the EU's Covenant of Mayors voluntarily committing to surpassing the EU's climate and energy targets. It allows them to localise the EU and national objectives, adapting them to local circumstances. It is one of the most powerful tools to boost climate and energy action at local level.

Nevertheless, this transition goes beyond energy efficiency and renewable energy: it must be a fair and well-managed transition.

The EU's Coal and Carbon-Intensive Regions in Transition initiative is providing tailor-made assistance to at least 13 pilot regions in seven Member States. Islands can apply to the EU for assistance to advance the development of individual renewable energy and energy efficiency projects in their local communities.

We need to decentralise, democratise and revolutionise our energy systems empowering local communities to take control and produce their own renewable energy.

By 2050 half of EU citizens could meet 45% of the EU's energy demand. This would need political will, systematic coordination across the EU, national, regional and local level, and sufficient investment.

Yet if we want a green Europe, we need Member States to give us – local and regional leaders – the financial means. Our Committee rejects cuts to cohesion policy in the EU budget post-2020 as it will undermine not only the EU's objective of territorial cohesion, but also efforts by local and regional authorities to improve our transport systems, build energy efficient homes and green our economy.

We need a budget that matches our ambitions which is why we, as well as the European Parliament, are calling for an increase from 1.1% of GNI to 1.3% of GNI of the EU27. We need to better coordinate our local, regional, national and EU budgets so that all regions and cities can access other financing streams such as the European Fund for Strategic Investment.



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Ladies and gentlemen,

No one alone can make the clean energy transition and tackle climate change. After the European elections, we need to join forces further empowering regions and cities so they can make the urgent shift to a carbon-free Europe.

We need to demonstrate that the EU can deliver a sustainable future that leaves no country, region, city or village behind.

Time is short, we have a duty to act.

Thank you for listening.

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY