



**European Committee
of the Regions**

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WORKING DOCUMENT

Commission for the Environment, Climate Change and Energy

**A Clean Planet for all – A European strategic long-term vision for a
prosperous, modern, competitive and climate neutral economy**

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This document will be discussed at the meeting of the **Commission for the Environment, Climate Change and Energy** to be held **from 11 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. on 28 January.**

Reference document

Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the European Investment Bank: A Clean Planet for all – A European strategic long-term vision for a prosperous, modern, competitive and climate neutral economy

COM(2018) 773 final

**Working document of the Commission for the Environment, Climate Change and Energy –
A Clean Planet for all – A European strategic long-term vision for a prosperous, modern,
competitive and climate neutral economy**

I. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to steer the debate on the CoR opinion on Communication COM(2018) 773 – A Clean Planet for all – A European strategic long-term vision for a prosperous, modern, competitive and climate neutral economy.

The prime aim of this strategy is to combat climate change and it incorporates and harmonises environmental, social and economic strategies in order to ease the transition towards a sustainable economy that can bring social and environmental benefits to all the people of Europe. Against the worldwide backdrop set by the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to which both the EU and its Member States have fully subscribed and which must guide all policies, this opinion will seek to explain the role that local and regional authorities (LRAs) must and can have in implementing the strategy in question; the opinion will also set out the CoR's position on the main issues the strategy addresses, picking up on earlier CoR opinions from both the ENVE commission and other commissions responsible for the cross-cutting concerns covered by the strategy.

The strategy being proposed aims to turn the EU into an efficient and sustainable economy in which the natural environment must be protected and developed alongside the health and well-being of the population. Measures to bring about a carbon-neutral economy are identified in the following seven strategic components:

1. Maximise the benefits from energy efficiency including zero emission buildings;
2. Maximise the deployment of renewables and the use of electricity to fully decarbonise Europe's energy supply;
3. Embrace clean, safe and connected mobility;
4. A competitive EU industry and the circular economy as a key enabler to reduce greenhouse gas emissions;
5. Develop an adequate smart network infrastructure and inter-connections;
6. Reap the full benefits of the bio-economy and create essential carbon sinks;
7. Tackle remaining CO₂ emissions with carbon capture and storage.

II. A European strategic long-term vision for a prosperous, modern, competitive and climate neutral economy

Cross-cutting elements

Execution of the strategy first requires the EU and the regions to explore and clarify together what short, medium, long- and very long-term strategies should be drawn up to implement the decarbonisation roadmap in line with Community policies.

The cost/benefit analysis of the various scenarios put forward in the strategy must, of course, include not just "environmental" costs, but "social" ones as well.

The long-term strategy constitutes a framework for planning and is aimed at providing a stable environment for investment and sustainable development that respects the planet's ecological integrity. However, although the EU has an excellent legal framework, implementation remains weak, particularly in terms of internal rules on the transposition of EU regulations by Member States and in terms of financial and non-financial resources. These aspects are, in fact, the challenges that must be faced in making the European legal system consistent with the objectives of the strategy under discussion.

As a result, in order to address effectively the strategic components identified, the following cross-cutting components are proposed:

- a. **Cross-cutting and multilevel governance of decarbonisation and an integrated approach to urban and regional public policies:** one of the main sources of problems in executing climate policies is their lack of incorporation into other areas, such as energy, urban, industrial and agricultural policy. In addition, communication difficulties between the different tiers of regional government in many cases make implementing the policies very laborious and sometimes ineffective. To implement the strategy, sustainability criteria need to be incorporated into all EU policy and financial instruments, providing for a simpler approach targeted and based on an integrated framework that brings together the specific objectives to be attained in the medium and long term and identifying the appropriate financial resources to allocate for public policies to Member States starting as early as the next multiannual programming period for Structural Funds. Efforts are required at all levels of governance and specific challenges and responses must be identified for the various territories according to the different components, developing means and procedures to coordinate their action internally, but also horizontally and vertically.
- b. **Financing and support for accessing appropriate financial resources:** funds allocated have not always turned out, over time, to be adequate and accessible enough. If we really want to implement an ambitious decarbonisation strategy such as that outlined in the Commission communication, all EU funds must be conditional upon criteria of climate neutrality and environmental, economic and social sustainability and local and regional bodies must be guaranteed access to them.
- c. **Development and dissemination of knowledge sharing and communication:** implementing a decarbonisation strategy requires both additional efforts in terms of research, to solve the remaining issues and ensure the feasibility of innovative solutions, and capacity-building and dissemination of knowledge. These efforts should be directed not only at authorities responsible for the implementation of policies at every level, but also, in appropriate forms, at civil society in order to nurture the necessary change in a whole range of aspects of everyday life. It is particularly important to settle on specific action to support investment in human capital so that current and future generations can enjoy and avail themselves of better education and better training to acquire the necessary skills (including in green and digital

technologies), with education systems that respond promptly to developments in the labour market.

- d. **Managing the social impacts of the transition:** the transition to a carbon-free economy is a complex process: it must be socially fair. It is essential to align the Union's policies with those of the Member States and regional and local administrations, thereby facilitating a fair and well-managed transition that leaves no region, community, worker or citizen behind, in line with the framework provided by the SDGs.

A number of questions arise from the above:

- What other cross-cutting components would you suggest? What steps/measures do you think are needed to implement these components at your level of government or in your official capacity?
- What tools could be envisaged for the implementation of the single European climate strategy in your area?
- What are the challenges and opportunities for local authorities, the most important experience to build on and the major obstacles to be removed to promote adequate capacity building and to bridge the gap between research, innovation and implementation at local level?
- What are the most serious social impacts we can expect from the transition to a climate-neutral economy and what are the main measures to be taken to address them?

Strategic elements

As stated above, there are seven parts to the strategy¹: these are some questions that could frame the discussion:

1. Maximise the benefits from energy efficiency including zero emission buildings
 - What are the challenges entailed in implementing an ambitious and wide-ranging policy of energy-efficient refurbishment of buildings and promoting nearly zero-energy buildings (NZEBs)?
2. Maximise the deployment of renewables and the use of electricity to fully decarbonise Europe's energy supply.
 - What are the challenges of the clean energy transition? What is the public's role in nurturing and supporting the energy transition?

¹ For more information about the strategy components, see [COM\(2018\) 773](#) itself.

3. Embrace clean, safe and connected mobility
 - What role do you see for your authority/area in promoting a transition to carbon-free, connected and automated mobility? How does this relate to urban and regional planning?
4. A competitive EU industry and the circular economy as a key enabler to reduce greenhouse gas emissions
 - What opportunities and challenges do local and regional authorities have to face in boosting the EU's industrial competitiveness by achieving a circular and digitalised economy? What are the most promising innovative hybrid and transitional technologies?
5. Develop an adequate smart network infrastructure and inter-connections
 - What are the main infrastructure opportunities and challenges for local and regional authorities?
6. Reap the full benefits of the bio-economy and create essential carbon sinks
 - Do you agree with the need to promote a sustainable bio-economy, diversifying agriculture, livestock, aquaculture and forestry and further increasing productivity, while at the same time adapting it to climate change?
7. Tackle remaining CO₂ emissions with carbon capture and storage
 - What are the opportunities and challenges for local and regional authorities with regard to carbon capture and storage?

III. PROCEDURE

Title	Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the European Investment Bank: A Clean Planet for all – A European strategic long-term vision for a prosperous, modern, competitive and climate neutral economy
Reference	COM(2018) 773 final
Legal basis	Article 307(4)
Procedural basis	Rule 41(b)(i)
Date of Commission letter	29/11/2018
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Commission responsible	Commission for the Environment, Climate Change and Energy (ENVE)
Rapporteur	Michele Emiliano (IT/PES) President of Puglia Region
Analysis	31/01/2019
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Date adopted by commission	Scheduled for 4 April 2019
Result of the vote in commission (majority, unanimity)	
Date adopted in plenary	Scheduled for 26 or 27 June 2019
Previous Committee opinions	
Date of subsidiarity monitoring consultation	