Message from the ENVE Chair, Mr Juan Espadas Cejas, Mayor of Seville

Dear ENVE Colleagues,

As Chair of our commission, I am honoured to address you in this very first edition of the ENVE Commission Bulletin. This is launched during a very challenging situation for our cities, regions and for the EU itself. The regular publication of our Bulletin allows us, members of the ENVE commission, to stay tuned in to our political priorities many of which are already affected by the challenges resulting from the pandemic. The ENVE commission will look to the future through its green lenses and our members will have the opportunity to create real change in our regions and cities.

The unprecedented crisis caused by the pandemic is having enormous effects on all aspects of our society; we are putting all our efforts into facing it. But our reaction as elected leaders also requires us to work to re-establish the economy via a green recovery strategy in order to become more resilient and future-proof. Not doing so would be a “dereliction of duty”, in the words of VP Timmermans during the hearing at the European Parliament’s ENVI committee on April 21st.

Finding a balance between all the different needs of the EU territories will be a significant challenge: the responses will be different, dependant on each specific territory and community. This is why more than ever, LRAs will need to be at the table of decision-makers to promote solidarity and subsidiarity.

The way forward is to find complementarity and synergies between protecting human lives, economic recovery and moving towards climate neutrality, so we need more than ever to get our citizens on board by providing them with quick results in terms of sustainable jobs. We can turn this crisis into an opportunity, as long as economic recovery investments are made within the Green Deal framework.

The Green Deal can become a fundamental reference in order to make the economic recovery an opportunity for sustainable and future-proof development for Europe. This is why I have written to the CoR President, Mr Apostolos Tzitzikostas, to suggest a reinforcement of our commitment to the Green Deal and its evaluation within the complex situation within which we find ourselves.

The recent Green Recovery Alliance, an initiative of the chair of the European Parliament’s ENVI Committee, Mr Canfin, which I have joined as Mayor of Seville, has more than 180 corporate leaders, European Ministers, members of the European Parliament, trade unionists and civil society leaders. It calls EU governments to apply green investment programmes to their post-Covid19 economic recovery plans. My objective as President of the Green Deal Going Local Working Group, where a virtual meeting is to be held as soon as possible, is also to follow this line of work and identify concrete actions.

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Focus on COVID-19: the impact on environment

The COVID-19 crisis will certainly stand as one of the defining moments of our recent history. It will also be remembered as a time when local and regional leaders stepped up rapidly and effectively to respond to their citizens’ needs, despite limited means and highly unfavourable conditions.

The European Green Deal: Europe finds itself at a turning point and the choices and actions taken now cannot be undone in the future without significant cost. Therefore, it is critical that the measures taken to mitigate the negative consequences of the pandemic do not deviate from the long-term climate-neutrality narrative and that the economic recovery plans are aligned with the Green Deal’s objectives. In a sense, the COVID-19 outbreak can be seen as a ‘perfect storm’ to prove the EU’s collective ability to transform its economy and society.

The European Green Deal should guide the general economic recovery in order to support the development of a more resilient and sustainable system that will mitigate the repercussions of similar crises in the future.

It is important to see the COVID-19 pandemic as a learning opportunity – most EU countries are now facing a huge health emergency with drastic and immediate measures being taken to limit its impact. A similar or even more serious situation will arise if climate action is side-lined and climate-related threats are not tackled in time. In order to avoid disastrous consequences in the near future, it is crucial to demonstrate discipline and commitment to the long-term goals of the European Green Deal in short-term post-COVID-19 remedial actions.

Considering this, the CoR needs to highlight the link between post-COVID economic recovery actions and Green Deal objectives, and ensure that this link is respected in all measures taken at the European, national, regional and local level.

Covid-19 & Biodiversity: Local and regional authorities (LRAs) can and must contribute to conservation and preservation of nature and biodiversity as a preventive measure to future outbreaks of epidemics and pandemics. The transmission of pathogens, such as COVID-19 and SARS viruses, from wildlife to humans, has increasingly happened due to the progressive destruction and alteration of ecosystems resulting from human activity which increasingly degrades pristine areas for settlement and often illegal hunting, fishing and agriculture/livestock production. To preserve our health and our wellbeing it is necessary to guarantee the conservation and preservation of nature and biodiversity, as well as the restoration of already damaged habitats and ecosystems.

#EuropeansAgainstCovid19 – share your experience with us!

CoR Action Plan on COVID-19: Regional and local leaders are at the forefront of the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. The CoR has recently endorsed the Action Plan to help regions and cities fight the COVID-19 in the European Union and created the COVID-19 Exchange Platform. We invite CoR Members, Presidents of Regions, Mayors and other local or regional partners to kick off our exchange platform by contacting covid19@cor.europa.eu
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The Bulletin of the Commission for the Environment, Climate change and Energy (ENVE)

ENVE at work

Upcoming meetings 2020/modifications:

**ENVE meeting – 8 June 2020 (online)**
The next ENVE Commission meeting will take place remotely on 8th June. Members will soon receive relevant practical information.

**External meetings moved to the second half of the year**
The external ENVE seminar (originally to take place on 7th May in Poland) and the ENVE external meeting (scheduled to take place on 8-9 June in the Azores) have both been postponed. They will be rescheduled during the second half of the year.

**Green Deal Working Group**
Following the nomination of the 13 members, the Working Group Green Deal Going Local, chaired by the ENVE Chair, plans to hold its first meeting on 9th June by videoconference. A dedicated webpage will soon be online on the CoR website, including relevant information on the Green Deal and the activities on the working group.

ENVE draft opinions ready for your consultation on the CoR website

**Fitness Check of the Water Framework Directive and the Floods Directive**

*Rapporteur: Mr Piotr Całbecki (PL/EPP); President of the Kujawsko-Pomorskie Region.*

During the Corona pandemic, we are facing completely new challenges at both local and regional level. This crisis shows more than ever that we must pay special attention to the environment and to the health of our citizens. Water quality and delivery as well as sanitation operations are challenging tasks for authorities, as well as for local operators. Tap water must remain safe and access to water must be secured for all, even if some people cannot pay the bills after losing their jobs or income. I intend to include this new perspective in my water opinion. Our local needs related to financing, digitalization and capacity building should be reflected in the future EU budget and Green Deal legislation.

Take a look at the opinion [Factsheet](#) to find out more! **Deadline for amendments:** 25 May 2020 by 15:00 (Brussels time)

**Towards a Roadmap for Clean Hydrogen and the contribution of local and regional authorities to a climate-neutral Europe**

*Rapporteur: Ms Birgit Honé (DE/PES), Minister for Federal and European Affairs and Regional Development (Lower Saxony)*

Tackling climate change will only succeed if the expansion of renewable energies and the establishment of a strong hydrogen economy are brought forward at a European level.

Green hydrogen can play a key role in energy transition. It creates great opportunities for innovation, value creation and employment in many European regions, such as Lower-Saxony. We urgently need a European strategy that supports regional and local authorities in developing green hydrogen and that make proposals for the design of EU initiatives and legislation, particularly in relation to the European Green Deal.

Take a look at the opinion [Factsheet](#) to find out more! **Deadline for amendments:** 25 May 2020 by 15:00 (Brussels time)
The Future of EU Clean Air policy in the framework of the zero-pollution ambition

Rapporteur: Mr János Ádám Karácsony (HU/EPP), Member of a Local Assembly: Local Government of Tahitótfalu.

New researches are showing possible links between air pollution and COVID-19 death risk, making the fight against air pollution even more important. We must not forget that air pollution was already responsible for 400,000 premature deaths in the EU each year before the coronavirus pandemic outbreak.

The reduction of pollution in lockdown areas is a temporary gain at best. We need to prepare for a difficult economic recovery process that cannot undermine the EU Zero pollution ambition, which is not just a "green decoration" to be forgotten in time of crisis. We should work to ensure that the Zero pollution action plan foreseen by the Green Deal can be an integral part of the economic recovery strategy and can deliver concrete benefits for the population in particular in the crucial health sector. We need to support scientific research to have reliable detailed information to help us prepare practical actions in our local and regional communities.

Take a look at the opinion Factsheet to find out more! Deadline for amendments: 25 May 2020 by 15:00 (Brussels time)

Studies and consultations

The ENVE commission has recently published the following studies available in English:

- Financing biodiversity action: opportunities and challenges for EU subnational governments
- Integrated water management and policy coherence in regions and cities

The secretariat is currently developing the following studies:

- "Local and Regional dimension in the new circular economy action plan"
  → See related consultation here: you can contribute until 1 May!

- "Adapting to climate change: challenges and opportunities for LRAs!"
  → See related consultation here: you can contribute until 31 May!

- "Boosting the capacity of LRAs to implement the Green Deal: a toolbox for the Climate Pact"
  → See related consultation here: you can contribute until 31 May!
What the EU is doing? Inter-institutional developments

EU leaders underlined the continued centrality of the green transition programme and digital transformation. In its last Joint European Roadmap towards lifting COVID-19 containment measures, the European Council and the Commission emphasized the need for “integrating the twin green and digital transition” aims in the preparation of the measures necessary to get Europe’s societies and economies back to a normal functioning and to sustainable growth.

The Council adopted new rules intended to minimise the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak on the most deprived EU citizens. On 23rd April 2020 EU leaders followed up, by video conference, on the EU’s response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

The European Commission is responding to the COVID-19 outbreak and has adapted its calendar and agenda to the circumstances. However, the European Green Deal will remain at the core of its policies.

The European Parliament created an Intergroup in relation to the "Green new Deal" and a Green Recovery Alliance which was informally launched on 14th April 2020, led by Mr Pascal Canfin, Chair of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI).

At the last ENVI Committee meeting on the 21st April 2020, the Parliament organized an exchange of views with the Executive Vice-President of the Commission, Mr Frans Timmermans, on the European Green Deal and on the European Climate Law. During the hearing, the Vice-President stressed that “the European Green Deal is not a luxury, but a lifeline to get out of the corona virus crisis”.

Coming next

The European Commission will soon announce its Working Programme 2020, modified due to the Corona virus pandemic and defining new legislative deadlines. We look forward to providing you with more information in our next ENVOY bulletin!