



**European Committee  
of the Regions**

**ENVE-VI/039**

**23rd ENVE commission meeting, 4 April 2019**

**WORKING DOCUMENT**

**Commission for the Environment, Climate Change and Energy**

**Sustainable Europe by 2030: Follow-up to the UN Sustainable Development  
Goals, ecological transition and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change**

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Rapporteur: **Sirpa HERTELL (FI/EPP)**  
City Councillor of Espoo

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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 4 April 2019.**

Reference document:

Reflection Paper "Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030" (COM (2019) 22 – final)

**Working document of the Commission for the Environment, Climate Change and Energy -  
"Sustainable Europe by 2030: Follow-up to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, ecological  
transition and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change".**

**I. Background information**

**The reflection paper and the transition to a low-carbon, climate-neutral, resource-efficient and bio-diverse economy by 2030**

On 30 January 2019, the European Commission adopted the reflection paper "Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030"<sup>1</sup>. This paper is part of the debate on the Future of Europe and expresses the EU's firm commitment to deliver on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, including on the Paris Agreement on Climate Change<sup>2</sup>.

Firstly, even though Europe has become a forerunner in sustainability, the EU faces complex global challenges it must tackle. The reflection paper identifies four policy foundations to tackle these challenges:

- a) From linear to circular economy;
- b) Sustainability from farm to fork;
- c) Future-proof energy, buildings and mobility;
- d) Ensuring a socially fair transition.

Secondly, the paper identifies 'horizontal enablers', which are education, science, technology, research and innovation; digitisation; finance, pricing, taxation and competition; responsible business conduct, corporate social responsibility and new business models; global trade and multilateralism, governance and ensuring policy coherence at all levels.

Finally, the reflection paper highlights the importance of Europe leading the sustainability transition globally.

The paper reflects the Sustainable Development Goals covering all dimensions of sustainable development from the economic, social, environmental aspects to governance. The SDGs require a comprehensive and systematic approach and policy coherence between their diverse dimensions.

Following the state of play, the paper opens the debate by proposing a set of three scenarios<sup>3</sup>. The first scenario calls for an overarching EU SDGs strategy, with a strong territorial approach, coordinating action between all levels of government, monitoring progress through a "European process for SDG

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<sup>1</sup> Communication COM (2019) 22 final.

<sup>2</sup> World leaders adopted at the 70th UN General Assembly on 25 September 2015 a new global sustainable development framework: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development having at its core the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The 2030 Agenda represents a commitment to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development by 2030 worldwide. The 17 SDGs and their 169 associated targets are global in nature, universally applicable and interlinked.  
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> These scenarios are out of the scope of this opinion.

policy coordination" and reflecting the cross-cutting nature of the SDGs. The second scenario would mainstream the SDGs in relevant EU policies, guide the development of a post-2020 growth strategy, but without being binding for Member States. The third scenario is the least ambitious and would focus only on the external dimension of the SDGs. None of these scenarios discuss the role of cities and regions.

The EU reflection paper stresses the importance of implementing all of the targets by 2030. The transition towards a low-carbon, climate-neutral, resource-efficient and bio-diverse economy is crucial, which the basis of this CoR opinion.

## **II. The role of cities and regions**

Cities and regions are on the front line and responsible for 65 % of the implementation of SDGs and targets in Europe.

Localising sustainable development actions in climate, energy and environmental policies is crucial to achieving the 2030 Agenda. This means setting local goals and targets, implementation actions and indicators to measure and monitor progress. Some forerunner regions and cities such as the Basque country in Spain and the city of Espoo in Finland have set up sustainable strategies and programmes to implement the SDGs locally. This process goes beyond the mere implementation of the sectorial policies and requires integrated, inclusive and sustainable territorial development and multi-level governance. Local and regional actors need to participate in the decision-making, implementation and consequently monitoring and reporting. This allows the goals and targets to be implemented fully.

## **III. Questions for debate and structure of the opinion**

According to the agreement between the ENVE and ECON chairs, this opinion focuses on the UN Sustainable Development Goals, ecological transition and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. This opinion will set out the strategic view of the EU cities and regions for achieving the transition to a resource-efficient, low-carbon and climate-neutral, bio-diverse economy, paving the way towards sustainable European cities and regions for 2030.

The rapporteur proposes the following questions for debate:

### **1. Evaluation of the reflection paper**

Do cities and regions welcome the shift from the Europe 2020 Strategy to Sustainable Europe 2030? Is the reflection paper ambitious enough? Or on the contrary, does it go too far? Are there any shortcomings identified? How are these UN SDGs linked to other long-term policies and instruments?

### **2. Towards sustainable Europe 2030: the path to follow**

What are the implications for cities and regions? Which are the challenges in implementing the SDGs at local and regional level? Which are the most important aspects to stress and what steps forward should be adopted in relation to the messages of previous CoR opinions? How can we

reconcile the differences in capacities and priorities of urban and rural, carbon-intensive and climate-friendly jurisdictions when moving towards more sustainable communities? In which aspects can cities and regions be stronger, from planning to awareness raising and education? How can the cities better share and replicate inspiring solutions to the SDGs across the EU? How can the cities increase the ownership of the SDGs to make local communities more sustainable? Beyond EU actions, which are the bottom-up commitments that the cities and regions may adopt (e.g. Covenant of Mayors, role of informal networks, sustainable neighbourhoods)?

3. Elements for a Sustainable Europe by 2030:

- a) Resource-efficient Europe including a local and regional vision for 2030 and aspects related to the European circular economy strategy
- b) Low-carbon and climate-neutral economy – Paris Agreement, Covenant of Mayors, relations with the long-term strategy on decarbonisation for 2050 (including coherence and environmental impacts), air quality aspects;
- c) Bio-diverse economy and bio-diverse life: includes the local EU Biodiversity Strategy and the Habitats Directive, the local and regional dimension of the Convention on Biodiversity, the role of cities and regions in implementing nature-based solutions, green infrastructures, eco-system services and preservation and integration of natural capital.
- d) Socially fair transition – 'No-one left behind', from the social and territorial point of view: a reflection on the environmental and energetic dimensions of poverty, environment and health, or the socio-political risks and opportunities. CoR emphasis on the territorial impact of the transition and the vulnerability factors for different territories; how can local and regional authorities accelerate the sustainability transition while safeguarding equal opportunities to benefit from the transition?
- e) The horizontal enablers mentioned in the Reflection Paper should not be underestimated at local and regional level, for example support to local energy communities, sustainable procurement, or innovation ecosystems. European partnerships and creating effective instruments for cities and regions are important in implementation.

4. Targets and indicators: A way forward requires forerunner programmes proposed by cities and regions such as the UN SDG 25+5 Cities Leadership Platform to act as lighthouses and inspire implementation of the SDGs. The inclusion of comprehensive key performance indicators, both quantitative and qualitative, at global, EU and local level is essential. This impact-driven approach includes at least energy, mobility and the housing sector at the local level. The opinion should address in detail the existing and future observatories such as urban mobility, energy transition, and how to involve local and regional authorities in the development of these targets and indicators.

5. Subsidiarity and multi-level governance: Which methodologies should be followed with a view to the correct future implementation of the environmental and climate transition? The opinion may highlight the role of cities and regions in mainstreaming the ecological and climate transition in all EU policies. This could involve co-planning, participation, climate and energy dialogue, and also

mention the development of existing instruments such as the Technical Platform for Cooperation on the Environment, the TAIEX Peer-2-Peer Programme or the CoR Regional Hubs.

6. Conclusions: The opinion could outline concrete recommendations on how to integrate the transition into the future work of the EU and the CoR. This includes the next Environmental Action Programme and post-2020 Covenant of Mayors commitments. At the global level, the involvement of cities and regions at the UNFCCC and UN CBD Conference of Parties will be fundamental. In addition, it could discuss how European and non-European cities and regions can cooperate in implementing the SDGs.

#### IV. PROCEDURE

<b>Title</b>	Sustainable Europe by 2030: Follow-up to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, ecologic transition and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.
<b>Reference</b>	Article 307(4) TFEU
<b>Legal basis</b>	Optional, first paragraph of Article 307 TFEU
<b>Procedural basis</b>	Rule 41(b)(i) CoR Rules of Procedure
<b>Date of Council/EP referral</b>	30 January 2019
<b>Date of Commission letter</b>	
<b>Date of Bureau/President's decision</b>	
<b>Commission responsible</b>	Commission for the Environment, Climate Change and Energy (ENVE)
<b>Rapporteur</b>	Sirpa Hertell (FI/EPP), City Councillor of Espoo
<b>Analysis</b>	11 March 2019
<b>Discussed in commission</b>	Scheduled for 4 April 2019
<b>Date adopted by commission</b>	Scheduled for 12 June 2019
<b>Result of vote in commission (majority, unanimity)</b>	
<b>Date adopted in plenary</b>	Scheduled for 7-10 October 2019
<b>Previous Committee opinions</b>	"Next steps for a sustainable European future — European action for sustainability" (2017/C 342/03) Rapporteur: Franco Iacop (PES/IT)
<b>Date of subsidiarity monitoring consultation</b>	—