



**European Committee
of the Regions**

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WORKING DOCUMENT

Commission for Environment, Climate Change and Energy

**Fostering the potential and synergies of EU Green Deal initiatives for
regions and cities**

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Member of the Flemish Parliament

This document will be discussed at the meeting of the **Commission for Environment, Climate Change and Energy** to be held from **11 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. on 14 February 2023.**

Reference document

Own-initiative opinion

**Working document of the Commission for Environment, Climate Change and Energy (ENVE) –
Fostering the potential and synergies of EU Green Deal initiatives for regions and cities**

INTRODUCTION

Cities and regions are considered as key implementation grounds for many EU policies, such as the EU Green Deal roadmap and objectives. At the same time, the EU's upgraded climate and energy objectives and the **current energy crisis caused by the unstable geopolitical situation** have changed the context in which local and regional authorities operate. More than ever, the local implementation of the energy and climate transition needs to be **accelerated** and **EU initiatives supporting local and regional governments are only gaining in importance.**

At the same time, various existing EU initiatives are trying to provide support to local and regional authorities. They vary from **sector-specific initiatives** to initiatives providing a more overarching framework either supported by a **strong political commitment** or more oriented towards **providing supporting mechanisms**. Committee of the Regions members, alongside many other local and regional authorities, have expressed the need to shed light on what these different initiatives can do and how a city can benefit from them in a coordinated way. The existing [One Stop Shop for Cities](#) is a first attempt in this direction, but it is still far from providing clear guidance to cities in finding their way through the EU initiatives.

The aim of this opinion and the debates ahead is to reflect on whether the existing EU initiatives adequately reach all local governments in an inclusive manner, considering:

- the proliferation of initiatives and commitments that could counteract willingness to come on board;
- the need to focus on tangible, measurable impact and realisations on the ground;
- the call to mobilise more stakeholders, enterprises and citizens than ever.

OVERVIEW OF MAJOR INITIATIVES

The **EU Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy** ([link](#)) is the world's largest movement for local climate and energy actions, bringing together 11 000+ local and regional authorities voluntarily committed to implementing EU climate and energy objectives. Signatory cities pledged to actively support the implementation of the EU 40% GHG-reduction target by 2030 and agreed to adopt an integrated approach to climate change mitigation and adaptation and to ensure access to secure, sustainable and affordable energy for all. In April 2021, the Covenant added a new commitment for cities to reach climate neutrality by 2050. Every municipality can join the Covenant of Mayors at any time. The municipality needs to submit an adhesion form signed by the mayor or equivalent. After joining the initiative the municipality has two years to develop a Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan (SECAP).

The **Mission on Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities** ([link](#)) was launched as a part of the Horizon Europe programme. The Mission involves local authorities, citizens, businesses, investors and regional and national authorities to (i) deliver 100 climate-neutral and smart cities by 2030, and (ii) ensure that these cities act as experimentation and innovation hubs to enable all European cities to follow suit by 2050. The Mission takes a cross-sectoral and demand-led approach, creating synergies between existing

initiatives and basing its activities on the actual needs of cities. Only a limited number of cities will be able to participate in the Cities Mission. Dedicated calls were organised in 2022 aimed at selecting these cities. The 100 selected cities are asked to develop Climate City Contracts, which will include an overall plan for climate neutrality across all sectors such as energy, buildings, waste management and transport, together with related investment plans.

The **Green City Accord** (GCA) ([link](#)) is an initiative to mobilise European mayors committed to safeguarding the natural environment. It aims to improve the quality of life of all Europeans, and accelerate the implementation of relevant EU environmental laws at the local level. By joining the GCA, cities commit to stepping up their efforts in five areas – water, air, nature and biodiversity, circular economy and waste, and noise – by 2030. The GCA covers five areas of environmental policy: air quality; water quality and efficiency; nature and biodiversity; waste and circular economy; noise.

The **Green Capital/Green Leaf Awards** ([link](#)) recognise and reward local efforts to improve the environment, and thereby the economy and the quality of life in cities. The Awards are given each year to cities that are leading the way in environmentally friendly urban living. The Awards encourage cities to commit to ambitious goals for further environmental improvement.

The **European Climate Pact** ([link](#)) is a movement of people united around a common cause, each taking steps in their own worlds to build a more sustainable Europe. Launched by the European Commission, the Pact is part of the European Green Deal and is helping the EU to meet its goal to become climate-neutral by 2050.

The **Circular Cities and Regions Initiative** (CCRI) ([link](#)) specifically targets EU cities and regions, and supports them in improving circularity in their economic sectors, value chains and services. The CCRI works with a set of European cities and regions acting as Pilots and Fellows for the initiative with high circularity potential. Local authorities benefitting from tailor-made assistance are selected via dedicated calls.

The **Energy Poverty Advisory Hub** (EPAH) ([link](#)) is the leading EU initiative aiming to eradicate energy poverty and accelerate the just energy transition of European local governments. EPAH provides technical support to local authorities via (i) tailor-made assistance, consisting of a 9-month period of strong collaboration between the local government, the EPAH team and an expert organisation selected based on the actions planned for each proposal; (ii) support that is open to all via online training courses and resources. Local authorities benefitting from tailor-made assistance are selected via dedicated calls.

The **European City Facility** (EUCF) ([link](#)) is a European initiative to support municipalities across Europe to develop investment concepts to accelerate investments in sustainable energy. The EUCF provides grants of € 60 000. The grant is not meant to directly finance investments. It is used to access services and develop an investment concept, which might become a door-opener for many follow-up investments (such as from ELENA, to PDA, to private investments). Local authorities benefitting from the grants are selected via dedicated calls.

The **CIVITAS** ([link](#)) initiative supports cities to make smart and sustainable urban mobility a reality for all in Europe and beyond. In so doing, it is ensuring that mobility is a driving force behind the creation of climate-neutral and resilient cities. It does this by acting as a network of cities, for cities, dedicated to sustainable urban mobility. Through peer exchange, networking and training, CIVITAS fosters

political commitment and boosts collective expertise, equipping cities to put mobility at the centre of decarbonisation.

The **Intelligent Cities Challenge** (ICC) ([link](#)) is a European Commission initiative that supports 136 cities in using cutting-edge technologies to lead the intelligent, green and socially responsible recovery. The ICC cities and their local ecosystems will be engines for the recovery of their local economy, create new jobs, and strengthen citizen participation and wellbeing.

The **Smart Cities Marketplace** ([link](#)) is a major market-changing undertaking that aims to bring cities, industries, SMEs, investors, researchers and other smart city actors together.

Living-in.EU ([link](#)) sets the following objectives: (i) support and accelerate the development and scaling up of green and digital solutions such as interoperable digital platforms, data spaces and (local) digital twins in and for cities and communities; (ii) measure the impact of green and digital solutions to achieve the SDGs in an EU context; (iii) create awareness and increase the capacity of cities and communities involved in the use of digital and green solutions to be more effective and create results for the long term and embrace the digital transformation. Cities sign the Living-in.EU declaration which commits them to multilevel governance and undertaking a series of digital actions.

The **European Urban Initiative** ([link](#)) supports cities in developing innovative solutions for sustainable urban development. The initiative supports urban areas of all sizes with innovative actions, capacity and knowledge building, as well as policy development and communication on sustainable urban development. It also provides funding to cities: projects are selected via dedicated thematic calls for proposals.

The CoR opinion aims to contribute to the ongoing reflection as to how these initiatives are supporting implementation of the EU Green Deal on the ground and what improvements can be suggested to ensure cities and regions can make the most out of them.

QUESTIONS FOR DEBATE

- What are the main achievements of these initiatives? What are the best elements and what are the lessons learned?
- What could be improved to achieve greater impact? How is the impact calculated?
- Are there regional initiatives that could inspire the evolution of future supportive EU initiatives?
- Are there topics that are underrepresented? Are there topics that overlap?
- How can mutually reinforcing synergies between these initiatives be fostered?
- What are the main benefits for cities and regions that are part of the initiatives?
- How could these initiatives better support local policy implementation?
- How can impact and progress be monitored and visualised more transparently?
- What is the impact of these initiatives on citizens' and enterprises' involvement?
- What is the impact of these initiatives on leveraging public and private investments?
- What are the budgetary ratios between these initiatives?

I. PROCEDURE

Title	Fostering the potential and synergies of EU Green Deal initiatives for regions and cities
Reference(s)	
Legal basis	Own-initiative opinion
Procedural basis	Rule 41 b) ii RoP
Date of Bureau/President's decision	7 February 2023 (tbc)
Commission responsible	Commission for the Environment, Climate Change and Energy (ENVE)
Rapporteur	Andries GRYFFROY (BE/EA)
Analysis	
Discussed in commission	Scheduled for 14 February 2023
Date adopted by commission	Scheduled for 10 May 2023
Result of the vote in commission (majority, unanimity)	
Date adopted in plenary	Scheduled for 5-6 July 2023
Previous Committee opinions	
Date of subsidiarity monitoring consultation	