Dear ENVE members,

Welcome to the second ENVOY bulletin! Today we invite you to read about the environmental impact of the coronavirus pandemic, particularly as regards waste management and air pollution, as well as the European Green Deal as the best growth strategy for Europe in these challenging times.

We share with you the latest ENVE commission activities and forthcoming events, including the ENVE meeting in June where our special guest will be Virginijus Sinkevičius, Commissioner for the Environment, Oceans and Fisheries.

The ENVE rapporteurs for the Climate Law (J.M. Moreno Bonilla) and Climate Pact (R. K. Trzaskowski) shed some light on why the European climate-neutrality ambitions are more important than ever and how Andalusia and Warsaw see the role of local and regional authorities in the green, digital transition and post-COVID economic and social recovery.

Despite closed borders in some EU countries and lockdown everywhere, a lot is happening in Brussels (though mostly via online channels). The EU institutions are looking for the best solutions to the COVID-19 crisis, adapting their strategies, plans and the EU budget to the new reality. Our environmental and climate change topics, now more than ever related to people’s health and wellbeing, are at the top of the agenda.

You will also find some of the latest facts and figures on climate change and the environment and how Europeans see the related challenges.

We hope you will enjoy reading ENVOY Bulletin!

ENVE CHAIR AT EUROPE DAY

I am convinced that in addition to support for the health budget, the European response to the COVID pandemic in our cities should comprise the European Green Deal, which supports the 2030 Agenda, sustainable mobility, energy efficiency, renewables, the renovation wave and the circular economy. This particular crisis was completely unexpected and it has shown our fragility. The climate crisis, however, is a crisis that we can anticipate and can prepare for. We need to dedicate economic resources to avoiding it and becoming more resilient in the future.

ENVE Chair, Juan Espadas at Europe Day for Regions and Cities, 9 May
WASTE MANAGEMENT AND AIR POLLUTION IN THE TIME OF CORONAVIRUS

Air quality and COVID-19

Considering that air pollution is responsible for 400,000 premature deaths in the EU each year, EU air policy is crucial for the health of EU communities. Therefore, the CoR is currently preparing an outlook opinion on the Future of EU clean air policy that will contribute to the zero pollution action plan provided for under the Green Deal. This fundamental topic has gained even more attention due to the growing discussions on the links between air quality and COVID-19. Media frequently report on the impact of lockdown measures on air quality. The European Environment Agency (EEA) has created a page providing updated information on this impact. Since these reductions might only last for as long as the lockdown is in effect, there is a growing debate on how the recovery strategy can be linked to the zero pollution ambition.

Scientists are analysing the available data and discussing possible links between air pollution and deaths from COVID-19. We don’t yet have evidence of a direct link to mortality, but we know that if you are exposed to air pollution you are increasing your chances of being more severely affected, says Dr Neira, director of the Department of Public Health, Environmental and Social Determinants of Health of the World Health Organization (WHO); more in the following article. A recent Harvard study is often mentioned in this debate.

ENVE vice-chair Rastislav Trnka, Chairman of Košice Self–Governing Region

The current situation underlines the fundamental link between health and the environment and gives us Europeans even more impetus to rethink our way of life and support an ambitious approach for the zero pollution action plan for water, air and soil proposed by the Green Deal. These difficult times show that we need to move faster towards a real, functioning green, circular and digital transformation of our society that will protect the most important things we have: our life, health and the environment in which we all live.

Waste and COVID-19

The COVID-19 outbreak has created new challenges for waste collection and management for local and regional communities, such as maintaining normal service during lockdown situations while protecting the safety of staff, dealing with waste from households with infected people, and managing the increased amount of medical waste in hospitals. These challenges need to be faced with efficient solutions applicable at local and regional level. Many institutions and organisations are working to respond to them:

- The Association of Cities and Regions for sustainable Resource management (ACR+) is collecting practices on municipal waste management during the COVID-19 outbreak.
- The Green Deal Communication and the new Circular Economy Action Plan include multiple proposals on waste. In response to the new conditions, the European Commission (EC) has published guidelines on waste management in the context of the coronavirus crisis.
- In order to ensure a common approach to waste shipments across the EU while protecting public health and the environment, the EC has recently published guidelines on shipments of waste in the EU in the context of the coronavirus crisis, and opened a consultation on EU rules on waste shipment. The Commission intends to review the EU rules on waste shipments to ensure that EU policy on waste shipments promotes recycling in the EU to support the transition to the circular economy.
- The UN Environment Programme has described waste management as an essential service in the fight against COVID-19, issuing information on this matter and highlighting the role of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal.
- The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has also issued information on waste and COVID-19 and on cities’ policy responses.
Dear ENVE members,

We will start with a simple mathematical formula:

**Green Deal = Green Recovery**

It is now clear that the way out of the crisis will be guided by the framework established in December and the related legislative developments to come. Thus, the Green Deal is a growth strategy to improve the economy in the long term while adapting the EU to a more sustainable and environmentally-friendly future. The climate emergency cannot be put on the back-burner on the grounds of the COVID pandemic, and the Green Recovery will lead the exit from the two crises and prepare our societies to be more resilient.

Citizens in our regions and cities have shown responsibility and solidarity; they now need determined leadership that will help provide short-term jobs and wealth that are sustainable over time. The renovation wave, clean transport and the circular economy are good examples, and green public procurement enables subnational administrations to make it visible. Above all, the transitions should apply the cohesion principle so that no one is left behind. **Let’s adapt. Let’s make it happen!**

**Update on the CoR’s Green Deal activities**

- 5 June: launch of the Green Deal Going Local webpage;
- 15 June: launch of the Green Deal Going Local Working Group;
- 2 July: debate at the CoR plenary session on the Green Deal at the heart of local and regional COVID-19 recovery.

The CoR has supported the Green Deal since the very beginning and sees the Climate Pact as an excellent opportunity to ensure a more inclusive and effective approach to the implementation of the Green Deal. The CoR has launched a study to investigate the specific point of view of cities and regions in this ambit and highlight what LRAs need from the Climate Pact in order to be supported in their transition towards climate neutrality.
The next ENVE meeting will be held remotely (due to the pandemic) and will take place on 8 June between 3 and 5.30 p.m. Members will focus on several topics and opinions ranging from water and air quality, through clean hydrogen, the European Climate Law and Climate Pact to the Circular Economy Action Plan. Exceptionally, voting on the opinions will be conducted offline. More information is available here. The special guest for the meeting will be:

Virginijus Sinkevičius, Commissioner for the Environment, Oceans and Fisheries

On 8 June 2020, ENVE members will also discuss the pandemic’s impact on the five-priority policy areas around which the ENVE 2020 work programme is structured. Commissioner Sinkevičius will debate with ENVE members on the EC’s reviewed 2020 work programme, with a focus on the Circular Economy Action Plan and the EU Biodiversity Strategy, and other relevant environmental inter-institutional challenges ahead. It will be an opportunity to reflect together on our ambition for the Green Recovery Plan.

Due to cancellations and modifications resulting from the pandemic, the topics and possible dates of the 2020 events with DG ENV have been postponed until autumn as follows:

- The Green City Accord launch event during EURegionsWeek (see below)
- 8/09: Platform meeting on the Circular Economy Action Plan implementation in the context of COVID
- A third platform meeting may be considered on the forthcoming zero-pollution proposal

The ENVE secretariat has submitted three proposals:

**Biodiversity 2030: your say, our future.**
The event, co-organised with ICLEI and Regions4, will be an invitation to hear from EU cities and regions on their long-term goals and vision for 2030. They will share good practices and success stories on the topic of biodiversity.

**Governance models for climate neutrality. The Covenant of Mayors and the Climate Pact.** This session, co-organised with the EU Covenant of Mayors Office, will engage in a dialogue on how to achieve climate neutrality by 2050, linking it with the Climate Pact and reflecting on how to integrate new governance models in the post-COVID recovery context.

**Launch event for the Green City Accord**, in collaboration with DG ENV and Eurocities - the Green City Accord will mobilise cities to engage in more ambitious action with a view to fulfilling the requirements of the EU’s environment acquis. It will also support the delivery of the European Green Deal’s environment ambition.
J.M. MORENO BONILLA (ES/EPP)

President of the Region of Andalusia
Rapporteur on the
European Climate Law

The European Commission published its proposal for a Climate Law before the COVID-19 outbreak. Should the efforts to achieve climate neutrality by 2050 remain a priority within the economic and social recovery plan?

We must remember that, prior to the current situation, our society was already immersed in an industrial revolution and dealing with the consequences of global warming. The COVID-19 recovery plan is an opportunity to carry out a truly green revolution. We must therefore make greater use of sources of renewable energy, promote energy efficiency and effective infrastructures, and further develop sustainable transport systems, all the while keeping a focus on job creation.

What are the areas in which local and regional authorities can have a greater impact on the path towards climate neutrality?

Some of the carbon-intensive sectors in which we need to act fall under the competencies of local and regional administrations. This is the case for transport, housing and public buildings as well as waste management. The importance of taking a regional and local approach to climate change is evident, since global warming impacts each region in different ways and on the basis of multiple factors.

What modifications to the Climate Law would you propose to guarantee that regions and cities are better considered and more involved in the process?

National Energy and Climate Plans (NECP) need to be complemented with regional and local ones. As such, developing regional angles would increase our chances of achieving the collective objective we are working on: to become the first climate-neutral continent in the world by 2050.

Read the whole interview on the CoR website
Take a look at the opinion Factsheet to find out more!

R.K. TRZASKOWSKI (PL/EPP)

Mayor of Warsaw
Rapporteur on the
European Climate Pact

You are CoR rapporteur for the Climate Pact: can you tell us why this topic is important?

For me it is plain and simple: without local communities an ambitious goal for the Green Deal will simply not happen. This is why I defend and encourage close cooperation between the European Commission and the European Committee of the Regions so as to achieve our common goal of making the EU climate neutral.

Do you think that the Climate Pact can still be useful in the new context of the health and economic crisis?

I think it is even more relevant today than it was before the COVID-19 outbreak. Once again, the pandemic has proven how vital local governments are, standing on the frontline and directly addressing citizens’ needs and fears. In the context of the Green Deal, LRAs need to be equipped with a set of tools allowing us to deliver real change on the ground that people can actually see.

If you were to give one piece of advice to the European Commission on the Climate Pact, what would it be?

The pandemic has moved our societies and economy into uncharted waters. Thus, dear European Commission – please learn the lesson and stay close to citizens as much as possible. You have strong allies among LRAs which are willing to help in delivering the goal we share: climate neutrality. Cities across the EU, like Warsaw, should get direct funding from the Commission as we know where and how to invest efficiently so that people see clear results in their daily lives.

Read the whole interview on the CoR website
Take a look at the opinion Factsheet to find out more!
UPCOMING ENVE OPINIONS

ENVE MEETING ON 8 JUNE

Rapporteur: Piotr CAŁBECKI (PL/EPP)
Adoption planned for the plenary session on 1-2 July.

✓ Opinion on The Future of EU clean air policy in the framework of the zero-pollution ambition. Factsheet
Rapporteur: János Ádám KARÁCSONY (HU/EPP).
Adoption planned for the plenary session on 1-2 July.

✓ Towards a Roadmap for Clean Hydrogen – the contribution of local and regional authorities to a climate-neutral Europe. Factsheet
Rapporteur: Birgit HONÉ (DE/PES)
Adoption planned for the plenary session on 1-2 July.

✓ European Climate Law: enshrining the 2050 climate neutrality objective. Factsheet
Rapporteur: Juan Manuel MORENO BONILLA (ES/EPP)
Adoption planned for the plenary session on 1-2 July.

✓ The European Climate Pact. Factsheet
Rapporteur: Rafał Kazimierz TRZASKOWSKI (PL/EPP)
Adoption planned for the plenary session on 12-14 October.

ENVE MEETING ON 9 SEPTEMBER

Rapporteur: Tjisse STELPSTRA (NL/ECR)
An exchange of views will take place at the ENVE commission meeting on 8 June. The opinion is set to be adopted by the ENVE commission on 9 September, and by the plenary session on 12-14 October.

✓ Bio-diverse cities and regions beyond 2020 at the UN CBD COP15 and in the next EU strategy. Working document
Rapporteur: Roby BIWER (LU/PES)
An exchange of views took place at the ENVE commission meeting on 27 February. The opinion is set to be adopted by the ENVE commission on 9 September, and by the plenary session on 12-14 October.
ENVE MEMBERS IN ACTION

MAY

- 8 May: Mr Stelpstra took part in the EESC working group meeting on the new Circular Economy Action Plan and presented his ongoing work as CoR rapporteur.
- 12 May: ENVE chair Mr Espadas participated in the presentation of the Circular Economy Action Plan and spoke during the debate on the Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 organised by the European Parliament’s ENVI committee with Commissioner Sinkevičius. The Commissioner mentioned that he is looking forward to the CoR opinion on Bio-diverse cities and regions beyond 2020.
- 13 May: Mr Calbecki, CoR rapporteur for the Water Framework Directive, contributed to the UN Habitat’s Local2030 Spotlight Series with a video about his region’s response to COVID-19 and about his opinion.
- 21 May: Natura 2000 Awards and Natura 2000 Day: Awards timeline postponed (new dates TBC). Mr Biwer delegated by the president to represent the CoR as jury member.
- 27 May: European Urban Resilience Forum took place as an online event, more information here.

JUNE

- 4 June: CoR hosted Thematic Webinar on biodiversity finance as part of the Edinburgh Process. Mr Biwer (LU/PES) presented the results of the CoR study on biodiversity finance.
- 5 June: World Environment Day 2020 will be devoted to biodiversity and conducted online. Sign up here
- 16 June: Webinar to learn more about a potential European Partnership on Driving Urban Transitions will give regional representatives and urban stakeholders an opportunity to learn more about the state of play, the concept of the Driving Urban Transitions Partnership and the results of a recent stakeholder consultation. Sign up here
- 25 June: European Week for Waste Reduction awards: originally planned to take place at the CoR as a pre-conference event for Green Week, now postponed to June as an online event. Ms Tüttő will represent the CoR as jury member.
- 25 June: Mr Biwer (PES/LU) will speak at the Water Innovation Europe conference, session on the Biodiversity Strategy for 2030: A Water Smart Society for protecting aquatic biodiversity and habitats, from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m.
- 22-26 June: EU Sustainable Energy Week 2020 (EUSEW) will take place as an online event, focusing on "Beyond the crisis: clean energy for green recovery and growth". Registration will launch in June.

SEPTEMBER

- 30 September-2 October: 9th European Conference on Sustainable Cities and Towns in Mannheim. The CoR, through its longstanding cooperation with ICLEI, is an Official Partner of this event.

OCTOBER

- 12-15 October: 2020 European Week of Regions and Cities. ENVE secretariat has submitted three session proposals
- 20-22 October: 2020 Green Week: postponed to October/online event. The agenda is being prepared.

NEXT YEAR

- 1-12 November 2021: UNFCCC COP26 in Glasgow. CoR delegation will take part.
The European Commission published its updated work programme 2020. The CoR will adopt a resolution at the plenary session on 1-2 July setting out its political recommendations for this programme. One of them will be ensuring that the post-pandemic recovery strategy is fully aligned with the objectives of the European Green Deal.

The European Commission plans to launch the first call for the Innovation Fund in mid 2020; the expert group will hold a virtual meeting on 5 June.

The European Parliament’s ENVI committee highlighted on 4 May during the debate on a draft opinion on the establishment of the Just Transition Fund that the €7.5 billion of “fresh money” allocated by the Commission to the JTF is not sufficient to support the green transition and the objective of 2050 climate neutrality.

On 13 May, the European Parliament adopted the Regulation on Water Reuse establishing the minimum requirements to allow the safe use of treated urban wastewater in agricultural irrigation and preventing water shortages in the EU. "Today marks another important milestone towards the transition to a circular economy for water resources. In this way, step by step, we are achieving real results for the environment", said rapporteur Simona Bonafè MEP (S&D, IT). More [here](#).

By the end of May, the European Commission will publish the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The European Commission expects to publish an EU strategy on energy system integration by the end of June, probably accompanied by a self-standing H2 strategy. Sector integration means linking various energy carriers (such as gas, solid and liquid fuels, electricity, heat and cold) with each other and with end-use sectors such as buildings, transport and industry.

The European Commission plans to publish its work programme for the Renovation Wave Initiative by the end of September 2020. This initiative could play an important role in the recovery plan currently being drawn up by the Commission.

The European Commission plans to present its offshore wind strategy in October 2020.

Coal Regions in Transition Platform – due to the pandemic, the planned activities have been modified. DG ENER proposes the following webinars: 3 June: Environmental rehabilitation and repurposing; 18 June: Sustainable employment and welfare support.
The European Commission has released new data showing that economic growth is compatible with the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Compared with 2018 levels, GHG emissions from all sectors covered by the EU’s Emissions Trading System fell by 8.7% in 2019. Emissions fell the most in the power sector, declining by 15% thanks to a shift away from coal toward renewable and gas-fired power production.

An EU Opinions survey conducted by the Bertelsmann Foundation found that 58% of Europeans want the EU to be carbon-neutral by 2030, compared with 8% who agree with the EU’s objective of 2050. The survey also gauged public opinion on who bears primary responsibility for addressing the climate crisis: 48% said national governments, 39% said the EU, 36% said businesses, while 33% said individuals bear the principal responsibility.

- IPSOS poll: according to the new Ipsos poll conducted in 14 countries and published on 22 April 2020, 71% of adults globally agree that, in the long term, climate change is as serious a crisis as COVID-19.

- Public opinion monitoring (March 2020): in the last Standard Eurobarometer, EU citizens would like most of the EU budget to be spent in the second place on “climate change and environmental protection” (41%), which implies an increase of six points over the past year.

- Ecological footprint of European countries: are Europeans using more than their share of the world’s resources?

#EuropeansAgainstCovid19 Share your experience with us!

We invite CoR members, presidents of regions, mayors and other local or regional partners to kickstart our exchange platform by contacting covid19@cor.europa.eu.

There are now more than 200 contributions on the COVID-19 map and gallery.

Contact us: enve@cor.europa.eu