Dear ENVE members, dear colleagues,

2020 has been an unforgettable year. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the socio-economic crisis will hit our communities even harder in 2021. Nevertheless, 2020 has also shown that solidarity and resilience are words that are not unknown in Europe. Despite all the negative effects of the crisis, COVID-19 has also revealed the capacity of local and regional authorities to react quickly and in an appropriate manner. In particular, 2021 comes with opportunities in the fight against climate change and to halt biodiversity loss.

Recovery from the COVID-19 crisis can be a green recovery genuinely involving local and regional authorities. The ENVE commission will continue its efforts in 2021 on coordination of the European Green Deal activities for the European Committee of the Regions. After the adoption of the Climate Law, the ENVE commission will focus on the "Fit for 55 Package", to ensure that the post-pandemic recovery strategy gives a strong push to the transition to climate neutrality, in line with the Green Deal objectives and with the EU commitments under the Paris Climate Agreement. This revision of the current EU legislation will be key with a view to preparing for the UNFCCC COP26 climate summit.

Acknowledging the link between loss of biodiversity, climate change and the pandemic, the work of the ENVE commission on environment policy will also be crucial. The circular economy, biodiversity and a toxin-free environment will be three key ongoing topics in this regard. In 2021, the ENVE commission will present an opinion on the EU Chemicals Strategy and an opinion on biodiversity in the context of the UN CBD COP15.

2021 must also be the year of regional and local implementation of the European Green Deal. The ENVE commission will continue to focus on some specific activities aimed at ensuring that the voices of local and regional authorities are heard at European level: the Green Deal Going Local working group and related activities, the CoR4Climate Pact project and the EU Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy. The European Green Deal encompasses many areas which fall within the remit of local and regional authorities. We must all be drivers for change. In December, Seville hosted the event opening the New European Bauhaus, with the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen. The event illustrated the fact that the high ambitions of the European Green Deal must be combined with a bottom-up approach.

For all these reasons, I wish you good health and excellent work for 2021. I look forward to our next ENVE meeting on 1 February 2021. Local means working together!

Juan Espadas Cejas
Mayor of Seville
Chair of the ENVE Commission
Green Deal Going Local: join the network of Climate Pact Ambassadors

Are you interested in promoting the Green Deal? Do you want to engage with your constituency in implementing sustainable policies?

As a part of the Climate Pact initiative, the CoR is launching a call for CoR Climate Pact Ambassadors.

The CoR Climate Pact Ambassadors will actively promote the different aspects of the Green Deal in their regions through political activities and best practices: they will represent the CoR and their own constituency in the larger network of Climate Pact Ambassadors launched by the European Commission.

How can you get involved? Please complete the following online application form in your own language.

More information about the Climate Pact Ambassadors call is available here.
Since the mid-1970s, EU environment policy has been guided by action programmes that define priority objectives to be achieved over a period of years. The CoR has produced legislative opinions on past Environment Action Plans (EAPs) and in 2019 adopted an own-initiative opinion entitled Towards an 8th Environment Action Programme¹ (rapporteur: Cor Lamers (NL/EPP), mayor of Schiedam), supported by a study².

The current programme ended in 2020 and the European Commission has approved a proposal for the new EAP for the period up to 2030, intended to complement the European Green Deal.

As provided for by the Treaties, the CoR is now preparing a legislative opinion on the new proposal that will be voted on at the plenary session on 3-5 February after a general exploratory debate at the ENVE commission meeting on 1 February. For this accelerated procedure the CoR appointed Dimitrios Karnavos³ (EL/EPP), mayor of Kallithea, as rapporteur-general and is organising both written and virtual consultations with stakeholders.

- **priority objectives**: one long-term priority objective for 2050 and six thematic priority objectives;
- **providing the necessary conditions** for achieving priority objectives;
- **a new monitoring framework** to assess and report on progress made in achieving specified objectives.

The 8th EAP is of significant importance for local and regional authorities (LRAs) and for the CoR.

Many of the specific environmental policies of the EU have strong local and regional aspects and the EAP can support efforts to ensure that LRAs are given the right conditions to be able to implement environment policies on the ground effectively.

In 2021, the European Committee of the Regions and the European Commission will continue to work together closely to ensure the effective implementation and development of environmental policies through the Technical Platform for Cooperation on the Environment.
Dimitrios Karnavos (EL/EPP)
Mayor of Kallithea, Greece
Rapporteur for the 8th Environment Action Programme

From a local and regional perspective, what priorities should the 8th Environment Action Programme focus on?

The 8th Environment Action Programme provides a long-term strategic vision and guidance for achieving a climate-neutral, resource-efficient and sustainable economy by 2050, in line with the European Green Deal, the new EU strategy for achieving climate neutrality by mid-century. The 8th Environment Action Programme, along with the six priority objectives described in the proposal, reflects the objectives and expectations of local and regional leaders. The COVID-19 pandemic has taught us that a healthy living approach needs to be at the basis of all EU policies promoting human health, a healthy planet, a healthy economy and a healthy society with opportunities for everyone. In this context, a better link between health and environment is both fundamental and necessary. We need to ensure that the 8th EAP contributes to a toxin-free environment, provides better living standards for people and creates communities that are more resilient. We must also ensure that the 8th EAP promotes a sustainable business environment and fosters green investments at all levels (EU, national, regional and local). All this is needed if we want a stronger and sustainable EU in the post-COVID era.

How can the new EAP ensure better integration of environment and climate prerogatives with other EU sectorial policies? How is the 8th EAP connected with the European Green Deal?

Integrating environment and climate with other EU sectorial policies more effectively is not always easy, as different sectors have different priorities. Sometimes, even environment and climate policies themselves seem to work as opposing forces. For example, climate protection and carbon emission reduction policies promote the installation and operation of renewable energy projects. On the other hand, the particularly important policy of halting biodiversity loss and maintaining the cohesion of the Natura 2000 Network seems to clash partly with climate protection policy, for instance, when renewable energy projects are deployed and operated in protected areas. We must therefore be consistent and move in the same direction as we all face the same challenges. It is important to make maximum use of available tools and methods so as to put in place a framework for ongoing monitoring and continuous improvement of environmental performance, including investments in environment and climate protection. We should also agree on a clear roadmap that will lead our journey to climate neutrality by 2050. As far as cities and regions are concerned, we must not forget that local and regional authorities have a special role to play in bringing together businesses, research institutes and academia as well as in engaging individuals and local stakeholders in designing and implementing environment policies.

How can we ensure full implementation of environmental policies in all EU communities?

I certainly welcome the fact that the 8th EAP identifies more effective and efficient implementation as a key priority. In order to improve the implementation score, local and regional authorities should be equipped with the right instruments and adequate resources. We are responsible for implementing 70% of EU legislation, 90% of climate adaptation measures and 70% of climate mitigation actions. We need innovative approaches that empower local and regional authorities to provide tailor-made solutions to improve the implementation of environment policies on the ground, be it in urban, rural or mountain areas, islands or coastal areas. More
research, data and knowledge are needed to enable us to address the specific environmental challenges we face and seize opportunities in different types of local and regional communities, as each geographical area has its own challenges, weaknesses and strengths. Therefore, in my opinion on the 8th EAP, I call for a holistic, place-based or area-oriented approach as the best way to achieve healthy living standards. We will not be successful if we do not put in place a functioning multilevel governance framework and encourage all levels of governance to promote cross-administration, interregional, inter-municipal and cross-border cooperation on environment policies. We also need to strengthen the environmental knowledge base, harnessing the potential of digital and data technologies and increasing the use of nature-based solutions and social innovation to improve the implementation of environment objectives. For example, in Kallithea, the eighth largest municipality in Greece and the fourth biggest in the Athens urban area, we have implemented a project based on the use of digital technologies (Beacons technology and Augmented Reality) to motivate residents and visitors to use sustainable forms of transport, such as walking and cycling, in order to reduce carbon emissions, improve air quality and highlight the need to preserve the city's historical and cultural heritage.

The full interview will be available soon on the CoR Website.

ENVE AT WORK

ENVE COMMISSION MEETING, 1 FEBRUARY

In light of the current COVID-19 related restrictions, the meeting will be held by videoconference only (INTERACTIO) and will take place on 1 February from 11.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. (Brussels time). Voting on the amendments and opinions will take place online from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on two consecutive days.

The special guests of the meeting will be:

Florika Fink-Hooijer, Director-General of the DG Environment at the European Commission. Ms Fink-Hooijer will attend the ENVE commission meeting to discuss the 2021 Annual Work Programmes of the European Commission and the ENVE commission. This will be an opportunity to debate with ENVE members the main environmental legislation and Commission's initiatives, such as the Green City Accord.

Kestutis Sadauskas, Director for Circular Economy and Green Growth of DG Environment at the European Commission. Mr Sadauskas will attend the ENVE commission meeting to discuss the opinion on Safe and sustainable chemicals for a toxic-free environment in Europe’s cities and regions (rapporteur Adam Struzik (PL/EPP)).

Joke Schauvliege, member of the NAT commission at the CoR and rapporteur for the opinion Experiences and Lessons Learned by Regions and Cities during the COVID-19 crisis. This will be an opportunity to exchange with ENVE members on the different measures taken at these levels to deal with the pandemic.

More information is available on the Members Portal and the ENVE website.
FORTHCOMING ENVE OPINIONS

- **Powering a climate-neutral economy: An EU Strategy for Energy System Integration** – exchange of views
  Rapporteur: Gunārs Ansīns (LV/RE), Member of Liepāja city council
  Adoption in the ENVE commission: 1 February 2021. **Adoption in plenary session: 17-18 March 2021**

- **A Renovation Wave for Europe - greening our buildings, creating jobs, improving lives** - vote on draft opinion
  Rapporteur: Enrico Rossi (IT/PES), Municipal Councillor, Signa Municipality
  Adoption in the ENVE commission: 1 February 2021. **Adoption in plenary session: 17-18 March 2021**

- **8th Environment Action Programme**
  Rapporteur-general: Dimitrios Karnavos (EL/EPP), Mayor of Kallithea
  General Exploratory Debate in the ENVE commission: 1 February 2021. **Adoption in plenary session: 3-5 February 2021**

- **Safe and sustainable chemicals for a toxin-free environment in Europe’s cities and regions**
  Rapporteur: Adam Struzik (PL/EPP), President of Mazovia Region
  Exchange of views: 1 February 2021, adoption in the ENVE commission: 26 March 2021. **Adoption in plenary session: 5-6 May 2021**

- **Stepping up Europe’s 2030 climate ambition towards COP26**
  Rapporteur: Mr Vincent CHAUVET (FR/RE), Mayor of Autun
  Exchange of views: 1 February 2021, adoption in the ENVE commission: 26 March 2021. **Adoption in plenary session: 30 June-1 July 2021**

- **Local and regional authorities protecting the marine environment**
  Rapporteur: Ms Emma Nohrén (SV/Greens), Vice Mayor of Lysekil Municipality
  Exchange of views: 1 February 2021, adoption in the ENVE commission 26 March 2021. **Adoption in plenary session 5-6 May 2021**

ENVE MEETINGS 2021

- 1 February
- 26 March
- 7-8 June (external - tbc)
- 13 September (tbc)
- 10 November
MEMBERS IN ACTION – OTHER EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

DECEMBER
3/12 V. Chauvet (FR/RE) speaks in the UNFCCC’s Presidency’s Open Dialogue. Video.
10/12 T. Stelpstra (NL/ECR) speaks at the event The energy dimension of Circular Economy.

JANUARY
13/01 A. Struzik (PL/EPP) holds an online stakeholder consultation for his opinion on Chemicals strategy.
IUCN World Congress in Marseille, France In view of the sanitary situation, France and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) have decided to postpone the Congress. More at https://www.iucncongress2020.org/.
22/01 V. Chauvet (FR/RE) holds an online stakeholder consultation for his opinion on Stepping up Europe’s 2030 climate ambition Investing in a climate-neutral future for the benefit of our people.
27/01 E. Rossi (IT/PES) organises an event on Financing the Renovation Wave, as support for his opinion on A Renovation Wave for Europe - greening our buildings, creating jobs, improving lives.

FEBRUARY
04/02 J. Karácsony (HU/EPP), CoR Rapporteur on Air Policy, speaks at the ENVI Committee of the European Parliament in the debate on the report on the Implementation of the Ambient Air Quality Directives.
15/02 The Green Deal Going Local working group holds its 4th meeting

MAY
31 May-4 June EU Green Week 2021 will be dedicated to the "zero pollution ambition". It will also look at other relevant European Green Deal initiatives, such the climate initiatives and the upcoming Chemicals Strategy, as well as initiatives in the field of energy, industry, mobility, agriculture, fisheries, health and biodiversity.

OCTOBER
Date tbc 19th European Week of Regions and Cities
Date tbc UN CBD COP15 in Kunming, China

NOVEMBER
1-12 November UNFCCC COP26 in Glasgow. The climate talks will be the biggest international summit the UK has ever hosted; bringing together over 30 000 delegates including heads of state, climate experts and campaigners to agree coordinated action to tackle climate change. The CoR delegation will attend; the CoR opinion and related political activities are on the agenda.
WHAT IS THE EU DOING? INTERINSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

Nature:
19/10/2020: New publication of the EEA entitled: Latest evaluation shows Europe’s nature in serious, continuing decline.
21/10/2020: European Commission, in collaboration with the European Environment Agency, releases its first EU-wide ecosystem assessment, which provides evidence that none of the EU headline targets to 2020 have been met.
07/12/2020: December Publication Newsletter Large Carnivores platform, including multiple elements of interest in particular on the regional and local platform.
22/12/2020: Publication European Parliament Research Service on the link between biodiversity loss and the increasing spread of zoonotic diseases.

Environmental justice:
Council reaches agreement on improving access to justice in environmental matters. This agreement is connected with the two initiatives of the European Commission concerning better access to justice (updated rules)/Aarhus regulation and Legal action through national courts. The Communication and the Legislative proposal were published on 14 October. In the following press release, more details and the links to the texts can be found.

Circular Economy:
17/12/2020: Council approves conclusions on making the recovery circular and green.
Ongoing: Evaluation on the Sewage Sludge directive, a public consultation is open until 5 March.
Ongoing: Reducing packaging waste – review of rules, a public consultation was opened until 6 January.
Sustainable Products initiative planned for Q1 2021.

Batteries:
10/12/2020: The Commission proposes a new Batteries Regulation which aims to ensure that batteries placed in the EU market are sustainable and safe throughout their entire life cycle.

Plastics:
09/12/2020: European Chemical Agency (ECHA) - The Committee for Socio-economic Analysis (SEAC) has adopted its opinion on a landmark restriction proposal. More information here.
22/12/2020: Plastic waste shipments: new EU rules on importing and exporting plastic waste.

LiFE programme:
Ongoing: LIFE 2020: Call for Proposals from NGOs on the European Green Deal (NGO4GD) – Info session on 12/01/2021.
Publication of study: Bringing nature back through LIFE - The EU LIFE programme’s impact on nature and society.
Publication: FAQ on Covid-19 impact on LIFE projects.

Noise pollution: updated calculation method for environmental noise.

Zero pollution:
Ongoing: Consultation for the Zero pollution action plan open till 10 February.
Climate:
08/12/2020: Publication of the European Parliament Research Service (EPRS) on the EU climate target plan.
09/12/2020: The European Commission publishes the Communication and launches the European Climate Pact.
11/12/2020: The Council endorses a binding EU target of a net domestic reduction of at least 55% in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 compared to 1990.

Energy:
21/10/2020: Publication of a report from the European Commission on measuring the contribution of gas infrastructure projects to sustainability as defined in the TEN-E regulation.
19/11/2020: The European Commission publishes the Communication on an EU strategy to harness the potential of offshore renewable energy for a climate neutral future.
11/12/2020: The Council adopts its conclusions on Towards a hydrogen market for Europe, giving political guidance on the implementation of the hydrogen strategy presented by the Commission in July 2020.
14/12/2020: Video conference of energy ministers on energy system integration in the EU.

Portuguese Presidency: The European Environmental Bureau (EEB) developed a Memorandum on Environmental Priorities under Portugal’s Presidency of the European Union. This document presents "Ten Green Tests" on specific topics aimed at guiding the green recovery from the COVID-19 crisis.

Marine Environment Strategy:
25/06/2020: The European Commission has released its first implementation report on the Marine Strategy Framework directive. Acknowledging that its subnational dimension is not explored enough, the CoR will provide suggestions on how to make the implementation of the directive more efficient and effective, especially based on the experience and expertise of the Portuguese Presidency.

Space Policy:
Ongoing: Negotiations are currently being held on the Space Programme 2021-2027 and the European Union Agency for the Space Programme.

Other consultations can be found on this page of the European Commission.

Please submit your application as CoR Climate Pact Ambassador here.

Contact us: enve@cor.europa.eu

ENVE website: visit here