

CoR and German environment minister discuss how to achieve a green, resilient and just recovery



□□ Local leaders: EU Member States must raise climate ambitions and agree at least 55% carbon emissions reduction target for 2030

Local and regional leaders stressed today that Europe must draw the right lessons from the COVID-19 crisis and pave the way for a green recovery by empowering its cities and regions to lead the fight against climate change. This message emerged from the debate of the Members of the European Committee of the Regions with Svenja Schulze, German Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety. The European Committee of the Regions also called on all the EU27 Heads of State and Government to raise their ambition and agree this week on at least a 55% emissions reducing target for 2030.

At this week's European Council meeting, leaders of the 27 EU Member States will seek agree on a new EU emissions reduction target for 2030. The European Commission's proposes to cut greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030 in relation to 1990 levels, a position supported by the European Committee of the Regions. During the Committee's virtual plenary debate, leaders of EU regions, cities and villages highlighted that the COVID crisis should not hinder the EU's commitment to tackling the climate and biodiversity crises by setting a new more ambitious 2030 target. The successful implementation of the European Green Deal – the EU's new growth strategy – must be turned into [concrete projects locally](#) and be based on a decentralised approach.

Apostolos Tzitzikostas, President of the European Committee of the Regions, and Governor of Central Macedonia in Greece, [said](#): "Our economy and our climate are at breaking point: we need a balanced, just and green European recovery for every region, city and village. EU member states must agree to cutting carbon emissions by at least 55% by 2030 and approve the EU's long-term budget and recovery plans without delay. This is crucial to pave the way to a carbon-neutral Europe by 2050 and to guarantee a rapid transition to more sustainable economies, protecting jobs and creating new opportunities."

Speaking at the CoR plenary session on 8 December, **Federal Minister Svenja Schulze** said: "Just as in the fight against COVID-19, we know a key success factor in environmental and climate policy: good cooperation between all political levels – European, national, regional and local. The Green Deal is the strategy for the economic relaunch of Europe, making it more resilient, competitive and liveable. It is essential that the Member States reach an agreement soon on the Multiannual Financial Framework and the Recovery and Resilience Facility, which includes huge expenditure on climate protection and biodiversity."

Mayor of Seville **Juan Espadas (ES/PES)** , chair of the CoR's [ENVE Commission](#) and the [Green Deal Going Local working group](#) , said: "The recovery from the COVID-19 crisis is an opportunity to rebuild Europe in a sustainable way and to accelerate the much needed ecological transition. We have no time to waste, whether it be to save our economies with a strong European budget or to implement bold climate actions. The 2030 Climate Target Plan can become one of the major achievements of this Presidency this week. Cities and regions are ready to act."

Showing the German government's commitment to a strong local and regional involvement in climate policy, the current Council Presidency – which will end its 6-month term on 31 December – requested two opinions from the CoR. The [first of them](#) assesses the opportunities of precautionary adaptation to climate change and urges the European Commission to develop a new EU Adaptation Strategy with clear goals and indicators in line with the principles of active subsidiarity and proportionality.

Rapporteur **Markku Markkula (FI/EPP)**, Chair of Espoo City Board and former CoR President (2015-2017), said: "Political leadership should treat climate change as an emergency that needs to be tackled collectively with innovative measures breaking down silos and barriers and integrating mitigation and adaptation policies. This means raising the climate ambition bar much higher than the EU is discussing today and providing cities and regions with the tools necessary to develop territory-based solutions. No adaptation policy will work unless it takes into account the needs, views and expertise of regions and cities."

The [second opinion](#) , which focuses on the impact of climate change in regions and provides a first assessment of the Green Deal, will be presented on Wednesday by rapporteur **Andries Gryffroy (BE/EA)**. The member of the Flemish parliament said: "The Green Deal will be successful only if it regions and cities are at its core. Although several regions and cities have adopted energy transition plans or Local Green Deals, these are rarely reflected in national plans and strategies. We stand ready to work with the Commission and its Joint Research Centre to set up a Regional European Scoreboard to monitor and track progress in the implementation of climate and Green Deal related legislation, policies and financing at regional level."

Background information

At the European Council meeting this week (10-11 December), the leaders of the 27 EU Member States will seek agree on a new EU emissions reduction target for 2030. This would allow the EU to submit its updated nationally determined contribution to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change before the end of 2020. The European Commission's Climate Target Plan for 2030 proposes to cut greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% in relation to 1990 levels, a position supported by the European Committee of the Regions.

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