

Local and regional authorities major contributors to EU Green Week 2021



Regarding the launch of the platform, the Commissioner for the Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, **Virginijus Sinkevičius**, said: “Cities and regions are at the forefront of implementing policies related to pollution, and are major drivers in the green transition. Many are already finding innovative solutions to clean their air, water and soil, and encourage more sustainable patterns of production and consumption. I am delighted to partner with the European Committee of the Regions to create this new platform to share these good ideas, and support zero pollution objectives on the ground.”

The President of the European Committee of the Regions and Governor of the Region of Central Macedonia in Greece, **Apostolos Tzitzikostas**, welcomed the platform stating: “We all have a responsibility to act to protect our environment, leaving the safe and healthy future our children and planet deserve. Governments, businesses and stakeholders must all come together to stop the pollution of our water, air and land. It needs local leadership which is why the European Committee of the Regions is delighted to launch the Zero Pollution Stakeholders Platform with the European Commission.”

Vasco Alves Cordeiro, First Vice-President of the European Committee of the Regions and Member of the Azores Regional Parliament, took part in the launch event of the Zero Pollution Stakeholder Platform, saying: “Local and regional governments are responsible for delivering 70% of EU policies, 70% of climate mitigation measures and up to 90% of climate adaptation measures. The Zero Pollution Action Plan is essential to save lives and create a more sustainable future. Its platform will help translate European goals into local and regional realities, as regions and cities are in a better position to assess the effectiveness of measures and the fulfilment of goals. To be a success, this will need to be an open and inclusive process, mobilising citizens, SMEs, businesses, social movements, and research institutions. Exploring synergies and ensuring territorial cohesion is essential.”

Tjisse Stelpstra (NL/ECR), Member of the Council of the Province of Drenthe, was one of the jury members of the **European Week for Waste Reduction (EWR) Awards**. The ceremony, held on 1 June, awarded the most outstanding awareness-raising actions on waste reduction implemented during the 2020 EWR. Stelpstra declared: “There is no waste! We need a mind shift in how to look at resources. Too often in our linear economy, materials are simply discarded and tossed away. But materials we no longer use, are the resources of our future. Governments at all levels have to lead in regulating and stimulating to make a fair transition to a circular economy possible. The Action Plan of the European Commission says good things on re-use and the right to repair. We can prevent a lot of waste if products are designed accordingly. Many people have excellent ideas, but more than that, there is a lot of activity. So this award ceremony is for me also a ceremony of hope and confidence.”

On 3 June, [János Ádám Karácsony](#) (HU/EPP), member of the Local Government of Tahitótfalu and CoR rapporteur on the [EU Clean Air policy](#), engaged in the session [LIFE for clean air– EU funding in pollution hotspots](#), which focused on the zero pollution projects that are being carried out through LIFE funding, and remarked: “The revision of the Ambient Air Quality directives in connection with the new World Health Organization guidelines is one of the proposals of greatest importance of the Zero Pollution Action Plan. The Ambient Air quality directives have a clear territorial dimension with the definition of zones and agglomeration and local and regional communities have a fundamental role in improving air quality in their areas. However, pollution does not stop at local, regional, national or European borders. To reduce pollution, we need cooperation and funding. The implementation of air quality programmes will only succeed if enough financial resources are allocated. EU funding opportunities, including LIFE, are crucial to achieve climate objectives.”

[Emmanuel Disabato](#) (BE/Greens), member of the Parliament of Wallonia, participated in the high-level session [Achieving zero-pollution cities through regional policy and the Green City Accord](#) on 4 June and stated: “The Zero Pollution Action Plan is fundamental if we truly want to obtain a green recovery and to achieve the objectives of the European Green Deal. Cities and regions will play a crucial role in its implementation and in ensuring that there are no gaps between what is proposed in Brussels and the reality on the ground. Thus, a new ‘Zero Pollution Stakeholder Platform’ to bring together stakeholders and experts from different policy areas will be established in order to assess the effectiveness of policies and share concerns. The CoR is willing to contribute to meeting the zero-pollution ambition and for this reason will continue to support the Green City Accord and its developments.”

The session presented the Green City Accord and showed how this initiative can support the delivery of the zero-pollution ambition at local level. [Niina Ratilainen](#) (FI/Greens), member of the Turku City Council presented the case of her city: “The City of Turku is committed to a climate-neutral and resource-wise future with zero emissions, zero waste, and a low ecological impact by the year 2040. Our goals are ambitious, but when we look at the scale and complexity of the ecological crises, no city can strive for less ambition. The next steps we are about to take include finalising a circular economy roadmap, establishing a local biodiversity plan and starting to operate the first large-scale end-of-life textile refinement plant of the Nordic countries.”

On 11 June, [Arno Kompatscher](#) (IT/EPP), President of the Autonomous Province of Bolzano, participated in the Green Week partner event co-organized by the CoR. The event was called [Rural and urban challenges in developing regional zero-pollution plans](#) and aimed to reflect on the potential solutions that cross-border EU regions should be aware of and how the CoR could support the process towards zero-pollution cross-border regions. Kompatscher stated: “Zero pollution is the vision which determines our goals: whatever we do, there will always be a certain degree of pollution noise, light, etc. However, we have to take the right track. Let’s push our efforts to reach close to zero, safeguarding our enterprises, consumers and territories. Rural

vs urban, cross-border, multilevel: those should be our milestones when transforming the vision and challenge of today into the reality and opportunity of tomorrow.”

During the previous weeks, [Mark Weinmeister](#) (DE/EPP), Secretary of State for European Affairs of the Land of Hesse, participated in the event [A BLUE NEW DEAL: Water's role in a sustainable and fair future](#) , where participants discussed the importance of the protection of water resources as a part of the climate adaptation strategy, and [Tjisse Stelpstra](#) (NL/ECR) took part in a seminar on [The role of the circular economy in zero pollution strategies for healthier people and planet](#) .

The 2021 edition of EU Green Week took place from 31 May to 4 June 2021, with Partner Events taking place between 3 May and 13 June.

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