

Cities call for a more sustainable and equitable European future

An open letter to the European Council and its Member States

President of the European Council,
Heads of States and Governments of the European Union Member States,

We, the undersigned mayors and heads of local governments have come together to urge the Heads of States and Governments of the Member States to commit the European Union (EU) and all European institutions to a long-term climate strategy with the objective of reaching net-zero emissions by 2050 – when they meet at the Future of Europe conference in Sibiu, Romania on 9 May, 2019.

The urgency of the climate crisis requires immediate action, stepping up our climate ambition and pursuing every effort to keep global temperature rise below 1.5°C by mid-century, as evidenced by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C. Current energy and climate policies in place globally, set the planet on a global warming pathway of 3°C. We are reminded of the inadequacy of our response to climate change, by the thousands of young people demonstrating each week on the streets of European cities - and around the world. We cannot let the status quo jeopardise their future and those of millions of European citizens. We owe it to the next generation to make more ambitious commitments to address climate change at all levels of government and in every aspect of European policy-making. We acknowledge and support the positions of the European Parliament and of the Commission to pursue net-zero emissions as the only viable option for the future of Europe and the world. Now, we believe that the European Council has a unique opportunity to deliver this vision.

We ask you to step up the EU's climate commitments, to show global leadership and drive ambition to make appropriate and rapid progress in the implementation of the Paris Agreement. We urge you to:

- Develop a just and inclusive European long-term climate strategy that enhances resilience and ensures emissions in the EU peak by 2020, more than halve by 2030 and reach net-zero by 2050;
- Enhance the 2030 EU climate and energy targets and Nationally Determined Contribution to ensure a resilient, rapid and just energy transition in line with the above goals;
- Align the next EU long-term budget with this strategy, remove fossil fuel subsidies and mainstream climate action as a priority across all funding programmes; and
- Commit all member states to binding net-zero emissions reduction targets and the above goals.

We the mayors and heads of local governments stand ready to support and contribute to the climate leadership of Europe, as the impacts of climate change threaten the fair, equal and enduring access to opportunities that our great European cities offer. More than 9,000 cities have joined the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, of which nearly 8,000 in Europe. Many of us are already committed to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050 and have put in place city climate plans compatible with the Paris Agreement - many more are working towards it. Collectively, cities are paving the way towards 2050 with impactful actions by 2030 and by developing integrated strategies and adopting ambitious sectoral commitments. These include bold objectives to advance towards zero waste by 2030, to meet net-zero carbon standards in all buildings by 2050, to move towards 100% renewable electricity by 2035 and 100% renewable energy in cities by 2050, and finally to deliver inclusive climate action that benefits all citizens equitably.

We, as mayors and heads of local governments, can play a central role in delivering on the 1.5°C goal of the Paris Agreement, by developing and implementing ambitious local plans and working with citizens, business and civil society to achieve sustainable change. However, we need an enabling European framework and action by national government to guarantee long-term stability, determination and resources to support our climate efforts.

We hope that our leadership will inspire you to raise your ambition and give you confidence that net-zero emissions by mid-century is not only necessary and desirable – it is achievable if we work together. We encourage you to embrace this responsibility, and we, the mayors, will share the task of implementing it, for the benefit of European citizens and the wider world.

Signed by:

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Mayor of Paris, France
Chair of C40 Cities

Dr. Eckart Würzner
Mayor of Heidelberg, Germany
President of Energy Cities

Juan Espadas
Mayor of Seville, Spain
Climate change spokesperson of CEMR

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