



Conseil des Communes
& Régions d'Europe
Council of European
Municipalities & Regions

CEMR key points on climate change

Climate change

Context:

Climate change has become one of the most relevant political issues in the past years. It is now a reality and action should be taken to avoid more extreme consequences and to prepare for its impacts. Local and regional authorities are aware of the challenges ahead and already initiating strategies to reduce their footprint on climate and prepare for a changing climate, while encouraging individuals and private sector to actively contribute.

The European Union committed itself to play a prominent role in tackling climate change. The EU energy and climate package adopted last year – aiming at reducing 20% of greenhouse gas emissions, reducing energy consumption by 20%, and increasing the share of renewable energy of 20% by 2020– is intended to show the way on climate. The White paper on adapting to climate change recently published is a further step to coordinate action at EU level in order to strengthen resilience to the impacts of climate change and ease the development of adaptation strategies at all levels.

On the international scene, negotiations are in progress to reach a new climate agreement following the Kyoto Protocol ending in 2012. Targets for the reduction of emissions in developed countries, including the United States that are now accepting to take on binding agreement, financing of climate mitigation and adaptation in developing countries and the governance structures to manage those funds are the main issues to be decided on the occasion of the United Nations climate summit to be held in Copenhagen in December 2009.

At the moment, the financial and economic crisis is dominating the political agenda, but it should not undermine the fight against climate change. Instead, the economic potential of tackling the climate challenge is worth being explored in this context. Investment in 'green economy' and further innovative solutions will pave the way towards a low-carbon economy and help to foster growth and employment.

CEMR key points on climate change

1. The effect of climate change is very much experienced at local and regional level: local and regional authorities have to deal with floods, droughts, heat waves, energy shortages, and their impact on financing, planning and provision of services, in particular utilities, health and social care, etc.
2. Many local and regional governments have already developed local and regional strategies on mitigation and adaptation. They realise the costs of inaction and see the opportunity of early action, including ways to save money, create jobs and enhance the competitiveness of their economy.
3. European municipalities and regions are willing to lead by example and many are engaging in ambitious initiatives such as the Covenant of Mayors, committing themselves to reduce their emissions and promote sustainable energy beyond the climate and energy objectives set up at European level.
4. Furthermore, local and regional authorities dispose of relevant political levers to take action, such as spatial planning, green public procurement, water management, building environment and infrastructure management, promotion of energy efficiency and promotion and production of renewable energy.
5. Local and regional authorities are catalysts for fostering a change of behaviour among different actors, including citizens and the private sector. They understand that the fight against climate change requires a collective approach and provide impetus for local actors to take action, through financial incentives, awareness raising on the reality of climate change and what can be done, targeted campaigns or support to initiatives developed by NGOs.

6. Moreover, local and regional authorities are well positioned to reach out to the most vulnerable population that may be hit first by the negative impacts of climate change.
7. European cities and regions also actively cooperate at international level, assisting with political and technical support to their counterpart in developing countries, thus contributing to the fight against climate change globally.
8. Despite these efforts, there is still a lack of information and uncertainties as regards the scale, timing and consequences of the climate change on the local and regional level. The European Union and the national governments should support and stimulate research activities, ensuring that the results can and will be applied at the relevant level.
9. They could also provide tools for assessing the impacts of climate change at sub-national level and act as a "clearing house" for information and the exchange of best practices, while making sure that they will be relevant for local and regional authorities.
10. It is necessary to apply integrated approaches e.g. mainstreaming climate protection into policies, climate-proof legislation and ensuring coherence with mitigation and adaptation policies at all levels.
11. Local and regional authorities are willing to take their responsibilities but they also need the right support, notably financial. National governments and the European Union are expected to provide the necessary long-term policy objectives and financial instruments in order to adequately support local and regional authorities in their climate efforts.
12. Many local and regional governments are determined to contribute to the international negotiations on climate. In particular, they are engaged, via their representative associations, in the Local Government Climate Roadmap that aims to include a reference to the role of local and regional government in the post-2012 international agreement on climate. The "Local Government Climate Change Leadership Summit", organised in Copenhagen from 2 to 4 June 2009, is an essential step in this strategy.
13. On the occasion of the 1992 Earth Summit of the United Nations, national governments stressed the essential role of local authorities in achieving sustainable development, leading to dynamic implementation of Agenda 21 by municipalities. On this model, the EU Member States, the European institutions and the international community are required to include the recognition of local and regional governments in the international agreement on climate and accept their role as partners in the fight against climate change.

CEMR position papers related to climate:

CEMR response to the Green Paper "Adapting to climate change in Europe, options for EU action", COM(2007) 354, November 2007

http://www.ccre.org/docs/climate_change_cemr_response.pdf

CEMR position paper on the directive on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources, COM (2008) 30 final, June 2008

http://www.ccre.org/docs/cemr_position_paper_renewables.pdf

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