



Climate Alliance

Putting communities in the heart of the new energy system in Europe - and beyond

Back in 1980 the American futurologist Alvin Toffler defined the consumer with a more proactive role, a more professional one. The producing consumer, the “prosumer” creates new challenges for peoples and communities in terms of climate and energy related actions.

This is now becoming reality - Europe is in transition and everyone can have a role in the new energy system. Citizens and local governments are forming new initiatives to provide locally produced green energy for their community. Early signs of new energy systems are already seen in Germany where over 50% of new renewable capacity is decentralised owned by private people, farmers and cooperatives. Local authorities have an important role in facilitating citizen involvement and the creation of such cooperatives. In addition there are communities that have set a target for using 100% renewable energy or aim at becoming energy autonomous.

Local action on energy saving, energy efficiency and renewable energy contributes to the achievement of the [EU's 20-20-20](#) climate and energy targets. Ambitious European targets also ensure better framework conditions and therefore better support for local authorities. The same applies locally. [Climate Alliance's members](#) have used the Climate Alliance objective (halving per capita CO₂ emissions by 2030) as a motivating and driving force – encouraging the municipality to go beyond what is easy and conventional and setting ambitious policies and practices. This has also motivated local authorities to take a long term view and develop and implement ambitious and coherent local climate and energy policies.

The [Covenant of Mayors](#) initiative launched in 2008 by the European Commission is a great success and accounts more than 5,200 local authorities committed going beyond the EU climate and energy targets by 2020. With more than 3000 Sustainable Energy Action Plans under implementation, the Covenant signatories aim at reducing their CO₂ emissions almost by 30 % by 2020, thus showing the potential emission reduction target in Europe for 2020.¹

The UN Climate Conference in Warsaw conference this year is a key step towards a global and binding climate agreement to be agreed in Paris in 2015 (COP21). Even though Europe has been leading the way in the past in the international negotiations, the discussions around the [2030 climate and energy policy framework](#) can jeopardize the European leadership role. The enthusiasm and engagement of European local authorities – and the huge CO₂ emission reduction potential – should be used as an example for setting ambitious climate and energy policies also at the international level.

A growing number of committed cities and municipalities will continue to contribute to achieving the climate goals – also beyond 2020 – not only because these actions mitigate climate change, but also due to their positive economic and social impacts. In 2012 Europe used €545 billion for importing fossil fuels. Europe's import dependency has increased in the last two decades and is set to grow to more than 80% in the case of oil and gas by 2035.² We argue that competitiveness and security of supply are best met via increased energy efficiency and with more decentralised energy production with renewable sources. Continuous support for energy efficiency and renewable energy production

¹ Further information on Covenant indicators: http://www.covenantofmayors.eu/IMG/pdf/covenant_indicators.pdf

² European Commission, 2013, 'Energy Challenges and Policies, Contribution to the European Council 22nd of May': http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/energy2_en.pdf.

will reduce the dependency on energy imports, reduce energy prices, and boost local economies creating more value as well as new local jobs.

Two examples: **the Province of Barcelona (ES)** estimates that 1.400 jobs (employed-year) linked to energy efficiency and 200 jobs linked to biomass projects will be created/sustained as a result of the their investment programme (REDIBA). For example the cost of energy (electricity, gas and transport fuel) in the city of **The Hague (NL)** equals a total of approximately € 900 million a year. Each percent of energy savings in the city of The Hague corresponds to approximately € 9 million a year in lower energy costs. This is money that can be reinvested within the local economy.

We are building a new economy, which is clean and innovative. Governments at all levels need to change and adopt a new role as a facilitator and - “rethink all”.

[Climate Alliance of European Cities with the Indigenous Rainforest Peoples](#) is the largest European local government network dedicated to local climate policies and preservation of the tropical forests. The association represents some 1,700 European local authorities in 23 countries committed to ambitious target of reducing their greenhouse gas emissions by 10 percent every five years. Climate Alliance supports its members via various activities. It develops instruments and tools to help members in setting up local climate strategies, organises echanges of experiences, coordinates European projects with and for its member cities and represents its members interests at national and European levels.

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