

Ready for COP26

Key messages for local-led implementation
of the Paris Agreement | November 2021



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Local and Regional Governments are ready to take concrete action at COP26, the next Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Conference on Climate Change hosted in Glasgow next November. CEMR, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, would like to present its key messages:

1. The Paris Agreement needs to be delivered now covering both mitigation and adaptation at all levels.
2. Local and regional leadership and action are key to strengthening work at international level within UNFCCC and in collaboration with global partners.
3. Providing appropriate regulatory frameworks, financial and technical resources is essential for the implementation of Local and Regional Governments' climate action.
4. The localisation and territorialisation of the Sustainable Development Goals are fundamental to have a positive impact on the ground.
5. Climate justice and social equity need to go hand in hand to combat climate change inequalities efficiently.
6. Resilience and recovery should be the opportunity focus to guide society out of the pandemic crisis.

1. The Paris Agreement needs to be delivered now covering both mitigation and adaptation at all levels

The European Union, its Member States and other European countries have contributed greatly to international efforts to tackle climate change under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) since 1992. The Paris Agreement of 2015, adopted by all UNFCCC Parties (COP15), is the first universal, legally binding global climate agreement. The Parties renewed their commitments in 2020.

Local and Regional Governments remain committed and ready to contribute to this task together with National Governments, highlighting the need to combine efforts on mitigation (reduction of emissions) and adaptation (capacity to resist to impacts), providing that they receive the necessary means and support from their government and the European Union.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created an unprecedented situation. It should not be an excuse to delay the implementation of the Paris Agreement.

It should rather be an occasion to start building resilient societies. We also need to enhance more the place of biodiversity and nature-based solutions in policymaking as we also cannot continue ignoring crisis in these areas.

2. Local and regional leadership and action are key to strengthening work at international level within UNFCCC and in collaboration with global partners

The level of change required to mitigate emissions and to adapt can only be achieved by strong political commitment and leadership, with all levels of government and in partnership with citizens, the private sector, civil society and peers across the globe. The local level plays a key role in achieving the goal of carbon neutrality by 2050. In many countries the local level is at the forefront working with ambitious climate targets and local solutions and initiatives to global challenges.

Since the COP15 in Paris, Local and Regional Governments have increasingly been welcomed as important partners for the international agreements. CEMR continues to work at this level through the Local Governments and Municipal Authorities constituency (LGMA) at the United Nations, coordinated by our partners the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG).

At COP24 in Katowice all countries attending agreed to involve "domestic institutional arrangements" in formulating the Climate Action Plans that would deliver the carbon emissions agreed in each state's Nationally Determined Contributions. We need a statement from all participating governments at COP26 demonstrating how they involve Local and Regional Governments in formulating their climate action plans on an ongoing basis.

The international community should promote multi-level cooperation, particularly within the framework of the Global Covenant of Mayors and through the support of Decentralised Cooperation projects¹.

3. Providing appropriate regulatory frameworks, financial and technical resources is essential for the implementation of Local and Regional Governments' climate action

We need supporting regulation and financing for Local and Regional Governments to take on the necessary actions. International agreements, European rules and national regulations must respect the diversity of regional and local conditions allowing for different local and regional solutions to achieve commonly agreed targets.

¹ CEMR is a founder of the Covenant of Mayors and the GCOM and coordinates [PLATFORMA](https://platforma-dev.eu). PLATFORMA is a pan-European coalition led by CEMR with 34 partners including associations representing local and regional governments at the national, European and global level. They are all key players of international

cooperation for sustainable development: <https://platforma-dev.eu>. Further reading PLATFORMA [Thematic note](#): "Tackling climate change through decentralised cooperation".

Policy should be, wherever possible, technology neutral. There is no single solution, since climate, resources, capacities and socio-economic factors vary across nations.

In Europe, the European Union, its Member States and other European countries should recognise an active role for Local and Regional Governments in the design of climate mitigation and adaptation policies and regulations, including the National Energy and Climate Plans.

There is also a need for EU and national financial instruments for awareness-raising and development education, capacity-building and investment to implement policy. The European Commission should recognise that more funding and investments need to reach directly local actors in order to implement actions and allow them to develop projects.

The new Green Deal is a very appropriate means to reaching the objective of carbon neutrality by 2050. In the same way, a just transition needs to fully recognise and accommodate the social effects through designated support and funding. The situation in countries, and also within countries between different regions, are different and flexibility is therefore needed, but they need to assure a clear involvement of the local level here.

4. The localisation and territorialisation of the Sustainable Development Goals are fundamental to have a positive impact on the ground

We recognise the large-scale challenges that exist and the fact that they require a decentralised, bottom-up approach, with clear actions in which all levels of government are required to contribute and are given the capacity to do so.

We advocate for a model of governance based on partnership with decentralised actions and cooperation to make a real difference in reaching decarbonised societies, in a coherent and inclusive way. The outcomes of COP22 in Marrakech were intimately linked to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the New Urban Agenda of Habitat III. CEMR and PLATFORMA continue to support global climate agendas through the localisation of the SDGs in Europe, as well as across the globe through more innovative partnerships with peers (also known as decentralised cooperation).

Estimates show that 65% of the 169 targets underpinning the 17 SDGs cannot be reached without engagement of and coordination with local and regional governments.

CEMR continues to support its members' work on the localisation of SDGs and the territorialisation of sustainable development actions in the areas of climate, energy and environment that can be

integrated into a larger EU Strategy to achieve the UN 2030 Agenda.

The local and regional level plays an essential role in turning these international ambitions into practical realities. The localisation process of the 2030 Agenda should therefore come with a real commitment to strengthening multi-level and multi-sectorial alliances, respecting the principle of diversity, vertical and horizontal policy coherence, and different local and regional solutions to leave no one and no place behind.

5. Climate justice and social equity need to go hand in hand to combat climate change inequalities efficiently

Poor and vulnerable groups (in particular women) are the ones who suffer the most from the negative impacts of climate-related crisis and this only increases the existing inequalities among populations. Only by providing the appropriate means in an equitable and just manner can a real level playing field be put in place for actors to act locally and progress towards sustainable and decarbonised societies. Despite the gendered impacts of climate change, women's unequal representation in decision-making processes – including at local level - often prevents them from having effective influence and voice in climate-related planning, policy-making and implementation.

Our efforts to become climate-neutral and sustainable societies from the ground up require a gender-sensitive and intersectional approach which responds to the needs of boys, girls, men and women in all their diversity, as called for also by the 2030 Agenda.

6. Resilience and recovery should be the opportunity focus to guide society out of the pandemic crisis

The current COVID-19 crisis and all the other pandemics and biodiversity crises in the past have shown that local action can be very quick, targeted and efficient and is the closest to the citizen during emergencies. The year 2020 also demonstrated how vulnerable our world is with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, bearing many similarities to the climate crisis, especially in how disproportionately it affects our most vulnerable. The post-COVID-19 economic recovery cannot simply be "business as usual". Local and Regional Governments are striving towards a green and sustainable recovery path which is socially just and resilient. National Governments need to get involved in a dialogue and action with the subnational governments for the right implementation of the current resilience and recovery plans.

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About CEMR: CEMR is the broadest organisation of local and regional governments in Europe, with over 60 national associations of municipalities and regions from 41 European countries. These represent some 130,000 local and regional governments. CEMR's objectives are twofold: to influence European legislation on behalf of local and regional governments and to provide a platform for exchange between its member associations and their elected officials and experts. Moreover, CEMR is the European section of United Cities and Local Governments, the worldwide organisation of local government.

