

# ENGAGEMENT GUIDELINES

Narrative and Advocacy Guidelines for Implementing the European Green Deal at the Local Level



Center for Transport and Energy



DOOR



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# Objective of the Engagement Guidelines

This document aims to describe how national NGOs and other stakeholders can best develop advocacy documents that translate the European Green Deal agenda to the local level and motivate local authorities to step up their climate action. Inherently, it links to the availability of EU funding instruments.

The introduction part of this document aims to provide an overarching narrative on the role of local authorities in implementing the European Green Deal. In its following chapters, engagement and advocacy talking points and guidelines are included to support national NGOs and other stakeholders in explaining how national briefings can be written in order to convince local actors to step up climate action.

As the national circumstances differ substantially, this document does not provide “one size fit all recommendations” but encourages NGOs and stakeholders to adapt these guidelines to their country contexts.

## Introduction

The European Green Deal aims to be Europe's “growth strategy” that accelerates the transition to climate neutrality in Europe and ensures a more prosperous society and sustainable economy.

Given that over 70% of EU citizens are expected to live in urban areas by 2030 [1], European cities will play a crucial role in implementing the European Green Deal. Cities will need to manage societal transformations that will change our daily lives. On the other hand, the European Green Deal brings unprecedented opportunities for the local authorities, as it will give clarity on the direction and speed at which they need to invest in renewable energy, buildings renovation, waste management, nature protection, sustainable transport and many other policies.

Local authorities are one of the key actors in these discussions. They are on the forefront of climate change and know how it will affect their territory the most. This also means that they are the closest to their citizens, and the first institution that the citizens will turn towards when the effects of climate change become more and more clear. By making sure that all citizens have a voice and are part of the necessary transition the local authorities will also make sure that citizens feel connected and see the benefits for them and the environment.

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[1] <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3217494/7596823/KS-01-16-691-EN-N.pdf>

They are also among the most important drivers of change. Cities have the capacity and experience to lead the environmental and societal transformation we need by developing comprehensive policies and measures in key areas like transport, renewable energy, and building renovation.

Recently, mayors and local authorities taking part in the Covenant of Mayors have repeated their commitment to climate action by endorsing the EU's climate neutrality objective. In addition, they renewed their ambition for a just and inclusive climate and energy transition.

**Given the increased cost of climate inaction and positive dynamics that translates the EU's climate ambition to national and local level, it is time for all European cities to step up and join the rising tide of local authorities taking climate action.**

## 1. The European Green Deal and the increased EU climate ambition

In this section, national NGOs and stakeholders are recommended to provide an overview of national climate and energy policies and how the EU's increased climate ambition for 2030 is affecting current national climate and energy policies. To do that, it is possible to provide more information on the following topics:

- national targets and their compliance with the EU and the Paris Agreement objectives on climate neutrality.
- specific areas that need improvement to reach the Paris Agreement objectives.
- how the new climate and energy legislation might influence the national and local situation.

After the presentation of national climate and energy policies, national NGOs and stakeholders can point out the importance of ensuring coherence between municipal, regional and national planification. It might be useful to remember that local action is necessary for implementing the increased climate ambition and adapt and implement these European and national targets to the specifics of the local level.

## 2. Why we need local level climate action

In this section, national NGOs and stakeholders can present areas, such as renewable energy deployment, energy poverty, nature protection, sustainable mobility etc. where the local level climate action can make a difference at the national level and help member states to reach and even overshoot their targets.

Good examples of local level climate action should be used to share best practices.

It would also be important to emphasise that a transparent and inclusive process of local climate planning, that includes active participation of all civil society's actors, can make a real difference. The citizen's inclusion can give a more durable and lasting local policy, but also a more adapted one.

## 3- Covenant of Mayors and Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan

The Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy was launched in 2008 for voluntary commitments of the local authorities to reach the EU climate and energy targets. The signatory cities pledge to accelerate the decarbonisation of their territories and strengthen their capacity to adapt to climate impacts. In order to present concrete measures and projects that will serve to this objective, Covenant signatories submit a Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan (SECAP) within two years following their commitment to the Covenant.

In April 2021, European Covenant of Mayors pledged to reach climate neutrality by 2050 with access to affordable, secure and sustainable energy. This endorsed vision of cities certainly requires increased climate action.

To encourage local governments to become signatories of the Covenant of Mayors, it is important to present SECAPs as the backbone of climate/energy planning at the municipal level.

If possible, it would be useful to share some best practices on how SECAPs have led to greener and more prosperous cities. This can include some results of emissions reductions, reduced air pollution, better building renovation, increased energy savings and renewable energy, more green spaces, active mobility and higher life quality.

## 4. Recommendations

In this section, national NGOs and stakeholders could describe a number of recommendations that local authorities should focus on in their Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plans. This document has listed a number of them below, however the list can go well beyond these points:

- Energy management and smart district grids
- Renewable energy prosumerism and energy communities
- “Renovation wave” and energy efficiency in buildings
- Sustainable mobility and low emission zones in cities
  - support and increase sustainable transports (rail transportation, bike, active mobility, while targeting first vulnerable families households)
  - reduce or stop polluting transportation (air transportation, individual cars etc.)
- Nature protection, nature-based solutions and green infrastructures
- Agroecology, sustainable food
  - support vegetarian, bio and local food
  - support agroecology and reduce intensive agriculture, especially intensive cattle farming
- Zero waste and circular economy
- Urban planning, densification and artificialization
- Trainings, continuing professional education (if relevant)
- Employment and companies subsidies (if relevant)

## 5- Financial tools

A link to financial tools, with a specific focus on the relevant EU funding instruments (this will depend on the focused municipalities/regions), can be a key added value of this endeavour. It will also help move beyond normative statements and recommendations to practically informing the municipalities.

In this section, national NGOs and stakeholders can highlight the importance for local authorities to pressure national authorities for allocating a significant share of EU funds directly to local entities for climate action, since urban areas are home to a large majority of the population and a major source of greenhouse gas emissions. Member States and the European Commission must ensure that the unprecedented amount of money (a financial package of €1.8 trillion up to 2030) is spent wisely.

When introducing all of the climate/energy-relevant measures mentioned above, national NGOs and stakeholders can therefore refer to concrete financial instruments that municipalities may make use of (for the drafting of the strategic documents as well as in the context of their implementation).

## Reference documents/ websites

Covenant of Mayors: <https://covenantofmayors.eu/about/>

Covenant of Mayors Interactive Funding Guide : <https://www.eumayors.eu/support/funding.html>

JRC Guidebook “How to develop a SECAP” (2018), <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/publication/euro-scientific-and-technical-research-reports/guidebook-how-develop-sustainable-energy-and-climate-action-plan-secap>

Implementing the European Green Deal at local level: Lessons on the role of cities in Poland in planning climate policy: Mitigation, Adaptation, and Just Transition. <https://think2030.eu/publications/implementing-the-european-green-deal-at-local-level/>

EUROCITIES: <https://eurocities.eu/>

Energy Cities: <https://energy-cities.eu/>

CEMR :<https://www.ccre.org/>



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