

# BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR EVERYONE, EVERYWHERE

C40  
CITIES

## C40's mission

Under the leadership of mayors, C40 speeds up climate action at the urban level, prioritising a science-driven and people-centred approach. In 2023, C40 refocused efforts on two main missions:

- 1. Help to halt climate breakdown by halving fossil fuel use in cities by 2030.**
- 2. Address the impacts and inequities resulting from the climate crisis.**

## C40 stands for a strengthened European Green Deal with an urban and social beating heart

The European Environment Agency's first-ever European Climate Risk Assessment warned Europe is getting hotter twice as fast as the rest of the world, with heat-related deaths increasing by 30% in the last two decades. Nearly all C40 cities – 98% – have already faced severe climate threats that jeopardise their economic and social prosperity.

Given that the Global North is primarily responsible for the climate crisis, the European Union must significantly reduce its emissions, following the European Scientific Advisory Board's recommendation of a 90% to 95% cut by 2040 compared to 1990 levels.

The European Green Deal should remain the foundation for European multi-level climate action, accelerating the shift away from fossil fuels, increasing climate resilience, and achieving climate neutrality. To create a climate-neutral and resilient Europe, the transition must be fair and

inclusive, generating good, green jobs and benefiting all residents equitably. This approach will also enhance Europe's competitiveness and security ambitions.

In addition to pursuing climate neutrality, the European Union (EU) should strengthen its global climate leadership and foster international cooperation. This includes developing global partnerships to address cross-border challenges such as climate breakdown, biodiversity loss, and social inequities. Europe should also support developing countries in their sustainability efforts, including financial assistance.

**We must prioritise climate action with a renewed European Green Deal, ensuring it has a strong urban and social beating heart that benefits everyone, everywhere.**

Mayors represent the closest level of government to residents and are the first responders in emergencies. They have the power to convene local stakeholders and partners, coordinating swift action with their unique local knowledge about the most vulnerable in their communities. This combination makes cities essential partners in delivering and converting EU and national targets into tangible action.

# **To empower city leaders, drive social equity, and achieve a safer, healthier and climate-neutral Europe, we urge the European Union to:**

## **1. RECOGNISE CITIES AS CRUCIAL DELIVERY PARTNERS AND SUPPORT MULTILEVEL PARTNERSHIPS**

Cities and regions bear the greatest responsibility for implementing the European Green Deal. For successful implementation, the EU and national governments must ensure cities are included in policy development and decision-making at all levels. This includes giving mayors a direct voice in EU policymaking and ensuring a single point of contact for urban affairs in the European Commission.

The European Commission needs to support member states in redesigning and assessing effective multi-level governance processes that give full recognition, visibility, and support to cities and subnational governments while acknowledging their diverse conditions and resources.

Cities are the doers and implementers of climate action and can significantly contribute to national climate plans if properly supported. As the EU discusses a 2040 climate target to update the EU Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) ahead of COP30, we invite the EU to formally endorse the Coalition for High Ambition Multi-level Partnerships (CHAMP), as recommended by the European Committee of the Regions. CHAMP, launched at COP28, is an ambitious coalition of countries that signal their commitment to multilevel partnerships and inclusive governance and support mayors in delivering greater climate action. Endorsing CHAMP is an opportunity for the EU and European countries to achieve international

recognition for their multi-level climate governance and highlight how European subnational governments contribute to overall EU ambition.

## **2. SECURE DIRECT ACCESS TO FUNDING FOR ALL CITIES AND FURTHER MOBILISE PRIVATE INVESTMENTS**

A swift transition to climate neutrality and resilience is essential, but cities face a significant investment gap. Cities need resources to achieve climate neutrality, resilience, and a just transition without compromising their ability to deliver quality services.

We call for more direct access to EU, national, and regional funding to support integrated investment plans and private investments, in line with the work initiated by the Climate City Capital Hub. The next EU budget must include a strong cohesion policy to enhance social, and economic unity while promoting a carbon-resilient future. The European Commission and member states should enhance support for private finance in cities by developing incentives and regulatory frameworks, and by supporting capacity-building projects around public-private partnerships to leverage private capital for sustainable urban development. Access to blended finance instruments will enable cities to implement large-scale climate initiatives effectively.

The EU must increase financial support for countries and cities most exposed to climate breakdown, but poorly equipped to respond. It is crucial to listen to their demands and concerns when providing support. Enhanced financial and technical support should reflect mutual economic and social interests, uphold human and labour rights, and align with international climate commitments.

## **3. PUT FAIRNESS AND JUSTICE AT THE CENTRE OF CLIMATE ACTION**

With over 22% of Europe's population facing poverty or social exclusion,

European institutions and national governments must act decisively. Inequalities that are worsened by the climate crisis, such as economic security and health, require urgent attention.

Efforts to achieve climate neutrality must also promote social equity. Upcoming policies must broaden thinking on justice and fairness, integrating these considerations with environmental goals. This necessitates strengthening democratic participation, propelling social innovation, and harnessing the health-environment connection to reduce inequalities and effectively ensure the full implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights. Protecting and supporting those most in need to access healthier, cleaner solutions—and the benefits they provide—is essential. Additionally, rigorously applying the ‘polluter pays’ principle will help address current challenges, such as the rising cost of living, while enabling faster action to tackle the climate emergency.

Cities face a climate and health inequity crisis due to outdated planning, leading to fragmented food systems, polluted air, sedentary lifestyles, excessive heat, poor access to nature, and lack of services and social cohesion. These factors contribute to chronic diseases and premature deaths. EU policymakers must promote systemic approaches to address these challenges, prioritising the one-health approach and supporting the creation of inclusive, healthy urban environments and sustainable food systems.

Quality green jobs with strong worker protections are key to a green and just transition. Following Europe’s C40 cities’ lead, where there are already 2.3 million green jobs, the European Commission and member states should prioritise skilling and reskilling programmes, invest in higher education, innovation, and research, and support European businesses and workers in advancing the green transition.



# Europe must accelerate its transition efforts

Cities are already taking decisive steps to eliminate dependency on fossil fuels, boost renewable energy deployment, promote clean construction practices, renovate homes, improve urban mobility, and enhance resilience. These efforts highlight the importance of localising the transition. By ensuring the transition is fair, aligning funding and investments with cities' needs, and strengthening multilevel governance, the European Union can leverage city actions and accelerate progress on both mitigation and adaptation to:

## **SUPPORT THE DELIVERY OF TANGIBLE STEPS TOWARDS FOSSIL FUEL PHASE-OUT**

Fossil fuels drive climate breakdown and lead to severe health and economic impacts through pollution and energy price shocks. The influence of the fossil fuel industry and public subsidies are hindering climate action. It is imperative to rapidly phase out fossil fuels and redirect these subsidies to support a just transition, reinforcing initiatives like the Social Climate Fund. Collaboration with subnational leaders is essential to achieve this goal.

## **ACCELERATE THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE BUILDING SECTOR**

The EU should harness the full potential of zero-emission, fossil-free, highly efficient, and resilient buildings. This means addressing both the emissions created during the construction of buildings and those produced while they are in use while intensifying efforts to implement and champion policies that prioritise social justice. This includes safeguards to lift people out of energy poverty and ensure affordable housing, thereby improving health, wellbeing, and equity.

## **CHAMPION SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY**

Daily urban mobility is a vital component of emissions reduction and a creator of quality green jobs. Low and zero-emission zones are also effective tools for cities to mitigate the negative impacts of transport on climate and health. The EU should renew its commitment to local public transport and increase financial support and capacity-building for local authorities to develop or expand low and zero-emission zones. Additionally, to support the decarbonisation of urban fleets in the Global South, the EU should facilitate knowledge transfer of procurement practices and promote partnerships between European companies and local buyers.

## **STEP UP ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE**

Europe is warming faster than any other continent, with extreme heat and weather threatening public health, food, water, and energy security. The European Union should enhance its resilience and boost adaptation efforts to protect health and secure essential resources for the future. This can be achieved by fully integrating adaptation measures into all levels of governance and sectoral policies, setting intermediate targets aligned with Europe's 2050 climate commitments, prioritising funding for nature-based solutions, and urgently delivering the Water Resilience Initiative to manage water resources effectively. Additionally, increased