

ENERGY TRANSITION AND BUILDINGS

C4O
CITIES

Context

Reducing emissions in buildings and improving people's quality of life is a key climate, social, economic and health priority, as buildings are where people live, work, and spend most of their time. Europe must harness the potential of zero-emission, fossil-free, highly efficient, and resilient buildings. Accelerating and expanding renovations, and prioritising the worst-performing buildings within a fair energy transition framework, can create high-quality green jobs, alleviate energy poverty, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and improve indoor and outdoor air quality, enhancing health and comfort.

Cities not only hold the majority of building stock but also have the power to take significant actions to improve buildings for residents and workers.

Mayors are leading solutions for a fair and equitable transition, focusing on reducing fossil fuel demand and reliance, promoting energy-efficient buildings powered by renewables, and fostering decentralised, flexible, and democratised energy systems. By serving as innovation hubs, cities can inspire broader adoption of energy transition measures, crucial for garnering support at national levels and aligning with updated European climate and energy legislation.

Given that local and regional governments are responsible for implementing 70% of all European Green Deal legislation, their involvement is crucial for creating effective and inclusive policies to address building emissions at both European and national levels.

Policy Asks

1. PRIORITISE AMBITIOUS AND INCLUSIVE BUILT ENVIRONMENT EU POLICY THAT SUPPORTS MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE

Cities play a crucial role in translating EU climate and energy legislation, like the Energy Efficiency Directive and the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive, into tangible action on the ground. This includes implementing provisions on building renovation plans, setting minimum energy performance standards, addressing energy poverty, and establishing one-stop shops. The European Commission should develop guidance for Member States on engaging cities and subnational governments in national policy development and providing them with financial support and capacity building. Additionally, cities

and subnational governments must have a seat at the decision-making table when assessing progress on these policies to ensure effective implementation and alignment with local needs and challenges.

2. SUPPORT CITIES TO MOVE AWAY FROM FOSSIL FUELS THROUGH A CLEAR EUROPEAN HEATING AND COOLING STRATEGY

The European Commission should develop a comprehensive, updated approach focused on heating and cooling that prioritises phasing out fossil fuels and transitioning to renewable energy systems. This requires consistent implementation of existing legislation and strategies, alongside the adoption of new initiatives like the Heat Pump Action Plan. Effective strategies at the European and national

levels are essential for developing the local heating and cooling plans mandated by the legislation. Subnational governments require additional financial and capacity support to draft and implement these plans effectively, ensuring they are tailored to local contexts and contribute to the overarching goal of decarbonisation. With proper empowerment and support, cities can speed up the phase-out of fossil fuels from heating systems equitably.

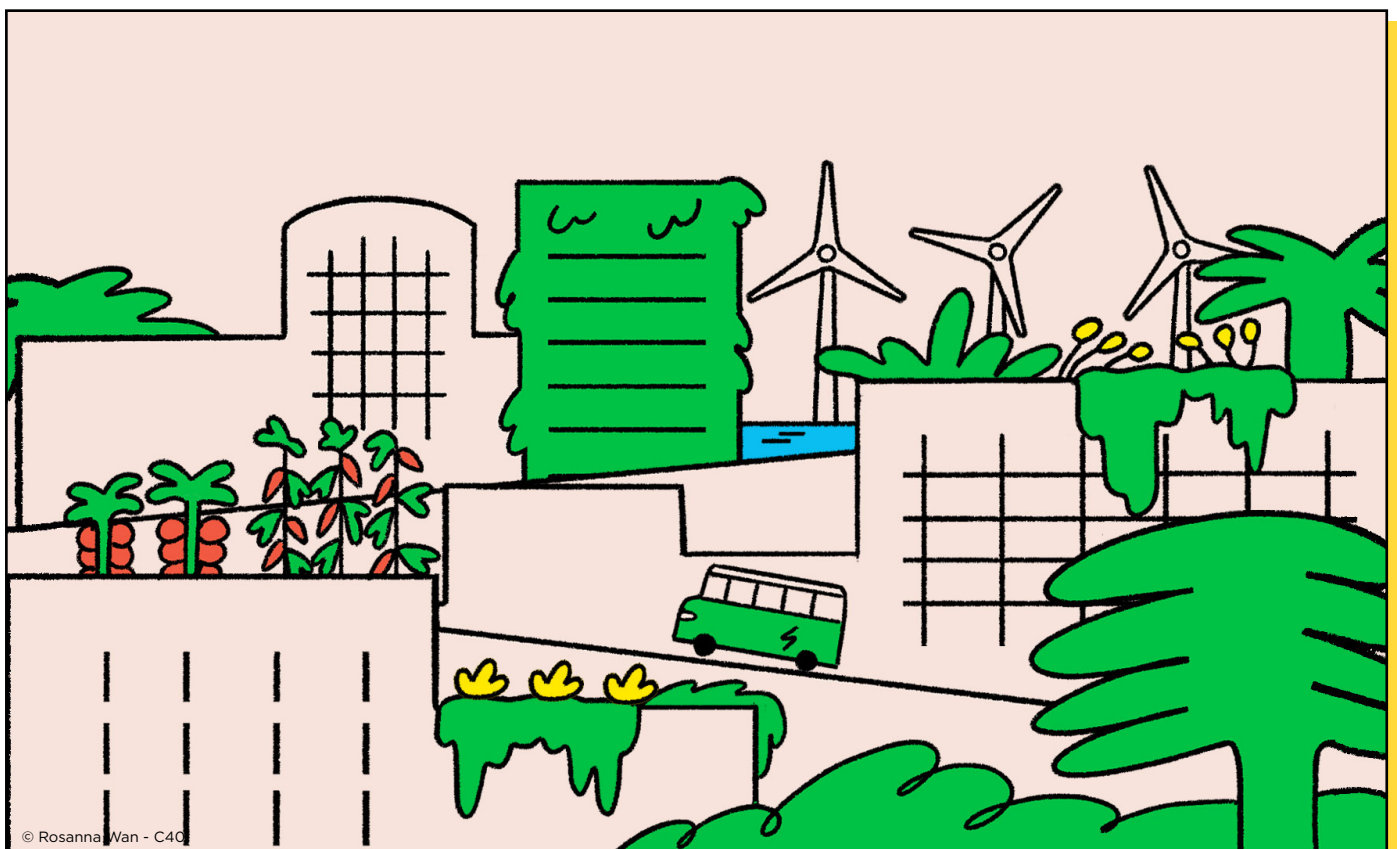
3. ENSURE VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES ARE PRIORITISED IN GRASPING THE BENEFITS OF A FAIR AND INCLUSIVE ENERGY TRANSITION

Localising the energy transition in and around urban centres is crucial for prioritising people, ensuring benefits reach those in need. National governments must collaborate with cities to ensure social safeguards and financial support reach vulnerable communities, including low-income individuals and ethnic and racial minorities, during the energy transition. Policies should focus on equity, aiming to lift people out of energy poverty and improve health, wellbeing, and quality of life. The preparation of National Social Climate Plans by 2025 is a key example,

requiring bottom-up governance, cross-sectoral collaboration, and meaningful participation of cities and stakeholders. The European Commission should ensure this approach when assessing plan quality and allocating funds, guaranteeing that vulnerable communities are not left behind in the transition to a sustainable future.

4. SUPPORT CITIES IN UTILISING RENEWABLE ENERGY SYSTEMS TO MEET LOCAL NEEDS

To build sustainable, equitable, and vibrant communities and ensure a just transition, shifting from fossil fuels to renewable energy and decarbonising the electricity used in our cities is essential. The Energy Performance of Buildings Directive gradually mandates solar installations on buildings, including public ones. The European Commission and national governments should equip cities and subnational governments with the necessary resources to develop plans, incentives, and efficient permitting processes to expedite the rollout of rooftop solar systems and harness the benefits of solar power.



City Action

REDUCING ENERGY CONSUMPTION THROUGH HOUSING RETROFITS AND RENEWABLES:

AMSTERDAM is investing in insulating the homes of vulnerable residents and aims to become natural gas-free by 2040.

MILAN'S Air and Climate Plan includes a commitment to install over 60,000 m² of solar panels to meet the energy needs of public buildings.

TACKLING ENERGY POVERTY:

ATHENS has launched an energy poverty office, prioritising the protection of vulnerable groups and providing free energy advice.

ROME and **BARCELONA** are participating in Sun4All, a European project helping low-income households switch to renewable energy and reduce bills.

Participants become co-owners of local photovoltaic (solar) plants at no cost and receive advice on efficient energy management.

REPLACING OLD AND POLLUTING HEATING SYSTEMS:

WARSAW'S Stop Smog programme covers 100% of investment costs for low-income households to replace coal-burning stoves with heat pumps and insulate buildings.

COPENHAGEN has collaborated with the Danish government to restrict older wood stoves.

PARIS and the Greater Paris Metropolis (Ile-de-France) are studying emissions from wood burning in heating to develop an action plan for tackling this leading source of ultrafine pollution particles.

