



CITIES & REGIONS  
TALANOA DIALOGUES



# Taking stock and looking forward

Local authorities in action | Climate Alliance's  
Contribution to the Talanoa Dialogue



Climate Alliance

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## 1. WHERE ARE WE?

Local authorities are frontrunners when it comes to local level efforts to both fight and adapt to climate change. The 1700 **member cities, towns and districts of Climate Alliance**, spread across 26 European countries, have already made ambitious voluntary pledges to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, increase climate resilience and promote climate justice in partnership with the indigenous peoples of Amazonia.

The idea is simple and not at all new: each of us must act locally if we want to succeed globally. There is hardly a better way to drive local action than at the community level – be it in the cities of Europe or the forests of the Amazon Basin. In acting, however, we must understand that the effects our choices have on the world's most vulnerable people and places.

While CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are an important indicator of our progress, we must understand that the fight against climate change cannot be reduced to numbers alone. Tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> mean little to the average person. If we want success, we must first translate talk of emissions reductions into something more tangible – this is part of what the Talanoa Dialogues are trying to do. It is also true that numbers aren't available everywhere to the same level of quality. Discrepancies and varying conditions aside, we must nevertheless act. Finally, we must keep in mind that reductions goals and emissions targets cannot capture the way in which we make progress. It is crucial that we choose a path to emissions reductions that takes the big picture into account – one that is both equitable and socially acceptable.

It is this big picture perspective that Climate Alliance actively brings into its work on climate change, whether as one of the networks managing the **Covenant of Mayors** in several regions across the globe, in our awareness raising campaigns and in our work with local authorities.

### OUR GOALS

Each Climate Alliance town and city has passed a local resolution on membership, in which they embrace voluntary commitments that include:

- Reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 10% every 5 years, equivalent to the halving of per capita emissions by 2030 (from a 1990 baseline)
- Working towards climate justice in partnership with indigenous peoples by supporting their initiatives, raising awareness, and abstaining from the use of unsustainably managed tropical timber

Many Climate Alliance members are delivering on these goals and are reporting on their progress via Climate Alliance's emissions inventory tools (e.g. the **Climate Protection Planner**), the European **Covenant of Mayors** reporting platform or otherwise. Looking beyond emissions, there are also hundreds of inspiring examples of local climate action and partnership initiatives throughout the network. Among these are a number of partnerships in which local authorities support indigenous peoples in safeguarding their rainforest territories and thereby helping to protect the global climate.

## CLIMATE ACTION PRINCIPLES

The hurdles we face are not only environmental, but increasingly also of a social and economic nature. This means that measures taken to combat or adapt to climate change need to take the big picture into account. We cannot, for example, rely on high-tech fixes such as carbon capture and storage that only bypass the root of the problem, encouraging society to go about its resource intensive business as usual. Even putting safety concerns aside, we cannot look to nuclear energy as the answer when we have no sustainable solution for the waste it creates. Climate Alliance thus stands behind climate action that is:



### FAIR

Promoting the wellbeing of all the world's peoples in harmony with the environment



### NATURE-BASED

Supporting closed-loop systems that replenish and regenerate instead of extract and deplete



### LOCAL

Thinking globally but acting locally, concentrating on the regional sourcing of goods and energy



### RESOURCE-SAVING

Using fewer resources by doing more with less and using less to begin with



### DIVERSE

Recognising strength in diversity – there is no one-size-fits-all answer

By making use of these guiding principles in planning and undertaking ambitious climate action, Climate Alliance members have long been contributing to national and international level goals on both climate and sustainable development. Of course, more must be done.

**Where are we?** Thanks to the efforts of the local level, we are on our way.

## 2. WHERE DO WE WANT TO GO?

### CITIES' EMISSIONS REDUCTION POTENTIAL AND THE IMPORTANCE OF 1.5°C

Globally, the technical potential for emissions reductions in cities is significant and must be realised for us to get on track to meet Paris Agreement targets and limit global temperature increases. Work by the Global Covenant of Mayors<sup>1</sup> and its partners<sup>2</sup> has shown that focused city action in eight key sectors has the potential to deliver considerable additional emissions reductions, going beyond what is currently foreseen in existing national level commitments. Focused action in five key sectors in cities across the globe has the potential to deliver 8 GtCO<sub>2</sub>e annual savings by the year 2050. Climate Alliance members actions at local level are working towards this commitment.

Climate Alliance leads the European Covenant of Mayors office and supports the further shaping of the Global Covenant of Mayors initiative. Data from Covenant signatory's commitments show that cities will contribute to nearly one third of the EU's 2020 emission reduction commitment<sup>3</sup>. With increasing urbanisation globally, a focus on city action will be key to getting on track to meet emissions pathways compatible with a no more than 1.5°C temperature rise above pre-industrial levels.

The **Summary for Policymakers** of the IPCC report on global warming makes it clear that at a 1.5°C compared to 2°C temperature rise above pre-industrial levels, there would be:

- Fewer extreme weather events where people live, including extreme heat and rainfall
- 10 million fewer people exposed to risk of rising seas
- A lower impact on biodiversity and species
- Up to 50% fewer people exposed to increased water shortages globally
- Up to several hundred million fewer people exposed to climate-related risk and susceptible to poverty by 2050

Regions and municipalities have been working for many years with their national institutions to achieve national goals and play a significant part in delivering on the proposed Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) reduction goals.

Climate Alliance has developed various methodologies for CO<sub>2</sub> monitoring at the local level used by more than 2,000 municipalities in countries such as Austria, Italy, Germany and Luxemburg. These inventories demonstrate local government contributions to the Paris Agreement by shining a light on Locally Determined Contributions. In this way, local authorities are showcasing their collective as well as individual impact on global climate goals. These contributions can then be reflected in formal UNFCCC reporting and support action towards the 1.5°C goal.

### RECOGNISING LOCAL CONTRIBUTIONS

As proposed in the Paris agreement, national governments and the UNFCCC should fully recognise regions and municipalities as fundamental actors in climate protection and greenhouse gas emissions reductions. This also means giving local and regional actors a stronger voice in national communications and policies.

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<sup>1</sup> GCoM 2018 Aggregation Report: [https://www.globalcovenantofmayors.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/2018\\_GCOM\\_report\\_web.pdf](https://www.globalcovenantofmayors.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/2018_GCOM_report_web.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> C40 Infographics: <https://www.c40.org/researches/advancing-climate-ambition-infographic>

<sup>3</sup> The Juncker Commission's contribution to the One Planet Summit, Paris, 12 December 2017: [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/one-planet-summit-ten-initiatives-modern-clean-economy\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/one-planet-summit-ten-initiatives-modern-clean-economy_en.pdf)

Relevant national institutions should acknowledge municipal contributions as reflected in local level greenhouse gas emissions reporting. Within the country specific reports, the UNFCCC should add an additional chapter describing the contribution of regions and municipalities to national greenhouse gas emissions reduction. The UNFCCC should elaborate emissions accounting rules describing subnational contributions to the NDCs that recognise local methodologies. Such approaches would also allow and improve comparability between countries. By including this chapter in UNFCCC reports and using data in international agreements, the role and visibility of municipalities will be increased.

As an added benefit, the recognition and inclusion of municipal activities in national UNFCCC reports will improve data quality by improving calculation methods for emissions at the local level. The official recognition of municipal emissions monitoring reports, overseen by a neutral institution, should also enable increased access to investment-ready project pipelines and enhance deal flow.

Networks of cities and regions are fostering new partnerships. By bringing the lessons learned from these partnerships as well as the local perspective into national planning and international agreements, we can help raise ambition while enhancing climate emissions reduction and resilience plans.

At the 2018 Climate Alliance Annual Conference in Barcelona, cities and regions from across Europe backed the **Barcelona Declaration**, which calls on the EU and national governments<sup>4</sup> to:

- recognise explicitly the commitments undertaken at local and regional levels and the outcomes achieved under initiatives such as the Global Covenant of Mayors
- consult in an open, systematic and transparent manner and involve local and regional authorities in the preparation and implementation of their Nationally Determined Contributions
- integrate the regionally and locally determined contributions in their National Energy and Climate Plans to obtain a comprehensive picture of the overall progress towards long-term global goals
- work with local authorities on the development and delivery of long-term national building renovation strategies and supporting financing plans
- use the post-2020 EU budget to support the clean energy transition and increased resilience to the greatest extent possible – to reinforce funding for research and development as well as capacity building, to support the roll out of Paris-compliant solutions at local level and to end fossil fuels subsidies
- ratify the International Labour Organisation Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, taking into account the long overdue European Parliament resolution of 3 July 2018 on the violation of the rights of indigenous peoples, including land grabbing (2017/2206(INI)), in which Member States are called upon to effectively comply with the provisions contained in the ILO No. 169
- push for loss and damage as an issue on par with climate adaptation and mitigation and support the strengthening of the Warsaw International Mechanism at COP24 to ensure that it can fulfil its objectives such as the financing of studies and consultations with affected peoples and the establishment of comparable criteria for losses and damages including non-economic facts such as the loss of culture and knowledge.

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<sup>4</sup> Previous Climate Alliance resolutions, adopted by the Climate Alliance membership, make clear the links between **climate action and sustainable development goals** and **implementing adaptation to climate change at the local level**. Both resolutions include calls to encourage collaboration between levels of government on sustainable development and adaptation.

Climate Alliance also supported the **European Committee of the Regions Opinion on Climate governance after 2020**: a European and global perspective. This document calls for the UNFCCC regulatory framework to acknowledge bottom-up governance by formally recognising its role in decision-making processes. The Committee also called for NDCs to include an aggregation of Locally and Regionally Determined Contributions to recognise the role of subnational authorities in the achievement of international climate commitments.

Stepping up climate action while underlining the importance of coherence between Paris Agreement and Agenda 2030 goals will be key for both local level actors as well as national and international decision makers.

**Where do we want to go?** To equitable, 1.5°C degree compliant climate action that maximises local authority contributions

### 3. HOW DO WE WANT TO GET THERE?

The rapid process of transformation needed to meet science-based emissions reduction targets will require equitable societal change via powerful campaigns and broad stakeholder engagement. It will require connections both vertical and horizontal, based in mutual learning and dialogue, diverse networks and productive partnerships.

This transformation will take root in our cities and towns – it is therefore essential that local level perspectives on climate and sustainable development as well as local level efforts be fed into national plans and international agreements.

And it will require the setting of far more ambitious goals.

In the work of many local authorities, examples of how we can achieve the ambitious goals needed are abundant. Cities and towns are working hard within their local governments to set more ambitious goals, break down barriers and lend their voices to the work of higher levels of government. Many hundreds run campaigns such as ZOOM, which saw over 200,000 children in ten countries acting for the climate in 2017 or CITY CYCLING, in which some 900 municipalities, 300,000 residents and 4,500 members of local governments have set an example for sustainable transport this year alone. These cities are engaging their residents in climate action, experimenting with innovative climate measures, and forming climate partnerships with other communities – both here in Europe and in the Global South.

What follows are just a few examples of the many ways in which the local level is supporting national governments to achieve their goals while encouraging higher ambition and engaging with all sectors of society. These stories detail collaboration models that have delivered concrete, scalable solutions.



## NATIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT COOPERATION

### *A story from 102 municipalities across Luxembourg*

The national government in Luxembourg has set itself a target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 20% by 2020 as compared to 2005 levels – an ambitious goal, the success of which is dependent on the efforts of municipalities. In 2010, decision makers in Luxembourg showed they understood this by starting a process of exchange on how to best support and include the local level in emissions reduction efforts. How can a national government motivate and support cities and towns to undertake ambitious climate action?

Three years later, Luxembourg launched the **Climate Pact**, which has since been signed by each of the country's 102 municipalities. Within the Climate Pact, cities and towns commit themselves to developing and carrying out their own climate action strategies based on measures in the European Energy Award catalogue, introducing an energy accounting system for the municipal buildings and infrastructure, carrying out annual reporting via an independent auditor and setting up a climate team.

While these are no small tasks, each municipality gets a wealth of support in return. The national government finances climate consultants for its municipalities and also provides direct financial support. As this financial support for local level efforts is at least partially coupled to emissions reductions, the pact also has a built in incentive for higher ambition. To track progress and enable benchmarking, Luxembourg also makes a common emissions inventory tool available to all signatories, free of charge.

The Climate Pact is already paying off with some high profile examples. From 2013 to 2016, the municipality of Lac de la Haute Sûre decreased its emissions by 11% despite an 11% growth in population. The municipalities of Frisange and Schuttrange have reduced their per capita emissions over the same period by 10 and 9% respectively. To date, a total of 79 municipalities have received the European Energy Award, nine of which having achieved the Gold Standard.

**The Climate Pact story just goes to show what is possible when the national level recognises and fosters local level ambition.**

We look forward to keep working with the municipalities of Luxembourg are excited about the possibilities the Climate Pact presents!



**Claudia Mohr**, Energy and climate consultant,  
Climate Alliance Luxembourg

## MOVING FORWARD WITH BROAD STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

### *A story from Nantes, France*

As one of the first French cities to sign the European Covenant of Mayors, Nantes has long taken its responsibility to tackle climate change seriously. By extending our district heating grid, installing renewables on key buildings, improving our public transport system and conducting energy retrofits, we have made significant progress on our 2020 goal of reducing emissions by 30%. So far, we have seen a 23% drop in greenhouse gas emissions since 2003.

Yet as a European city with a historical responsibility to the rest of the planet, we must do more to meet the goals set by both the scientific community and the Paris Agreement. Nantes has thus set a new target: to reduce emissions by 50% by 2030.



Photos: Nantes Métropole

Achieving this target will no doubt take the work of many stakeholders – we know it is not only senseless but impossible to achieve such a goal through public means alone. We thus organised an Energy Transition debate lasting seven months with more than 53,000 people. Some 500 citizens directly invented and experimented with new ways of accelerating the energy transition. The debate helped gather a wide variety of stakeholders behind a common goal. The result: a roadmap consisting of 33 measures including commitments to foster an energy transition that is beneficial to all, especially with regard to transport and housing; that is completely based upon local renewable resources and that is empowering, enhancing inhabitants' ability to act.

The challenge now is getting it done: finding the financial means to get the necessary work done and keeping all the stakeholders united around a binding and positive action plan.

**To get there, we need to make sure that every investment made on all levels is useful for the future, facilitate access to financial means projects both big and small, and incentivise reliance on local businesses and resources.**

Cities are powerful actors but cannot act alone: the EU needs to ensure local governments have the means to really implement action on climate change.



**Julie Laernoès**

*Vice President of Nantes Métropole (France), Board Member of Climate Alliance*

## WHEN A LITTLE LESS CITY IS SO MUCH MORE

### *A story from Modena, Italy*

To solve a problem, you must first admit that it exists. Then you need the courage and political will to get the job done.

The problem of air quality in the Po River Valley is no different. The valley is Italy's economic heartland, with the country's largest concentration of inhabitants, businesses and roadways. At the same time, the valley's geographical position leads to the accumulation of pollutants. The situation led to a recent European Union ruling resulting in the Emilia-Romagna Region's Integrated Plan for the Quality of Air (PAIR). The plan imposes common rules for all the region's nine provinces and sets ambitious goals for 2020.

While this is a good start, we at the City of Modena realised that we need to do more. In addition to implementing PAIR, Modena decided to invest in forests and urban agriculture. As a result, a new public vegetable garden was inaugurated in 2017 and made available to citizens. This participatory approach has resulted in citizens caring for almost 2000 m<sup>2</sup> of land. Farm-to-table vegetables are just one of the rewards!



Photo: Municipality of Modena

Next we plan to step up urban reforestation and reduce soil consumption. On 87,180 m<sup>2</sup> in Modena's periphery, a new urban forest with more than 8,000 plants has replaced previous plans for new housing facilities. Similarly, instead of developing a 22,000 m<sup>2</sup> piece of land surrounding a residential area, the region's public utility company in charge of water, gas and energy services will create a new forest with over 200 species of trees. Citizens too, help fund reforestation efforts via the incentives they typically get for recycling.

**The result of our efforts: increased biodiversity, enhanced social cohesion and more green public space, natural carbon sinks and, of course, better air quality.**



**Giulio Guerzoni**, Councillor for Sport, Youth, Environment, Energy Policy and Civil Services, Civil Protection and Volunteering, Commune di Modena, Italy

## REACHING FOR AMBITIOUS TARGETS

### *A story from Ghent, Belgium*

In January 2009, the City of Ghent became the first Flemish city to sign the European Covenant of Mayors. With it, Ghent committed to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 20% by 2020 as compared to 2007 levels. Eager to keep the city on its pioneering path, we went on to renew our Covenant commitments in 2016, thus committing to not only reducing our emission by 40% by 2030, but also strengthening our capacity to adapt to unavoidable climate change impacts. With the **Ghent Climate Plan**, we have set the ambitious goal of becoming climate neutral by 2050, meaning that by then, the city will no longer have a negative impact on climate.

We plan to deliver on the Climate Plan's long-term vision with a social climate policy that benefits both residents and local businesses. In so doing, we are addressing a total of six key areas: housing, business, renewable energy, transport, being a role model and sustainable and local food.

We are working to empower Ghent's residents and businesses in the face of rising energy prices by supporting structural energy-saving measures and putting aside financial and other resources to help vulnerable families make energy-saving investments. In striving to make ours a low-traffic city, we are shifting policy to support bicycles and public transport. Although emissions from food are not included in Ghent's CO<sub>2</sub> inventory, we are implementing a local food strategy. In addition to developing new district heating networks, Ghent is also developing a completely fossil free district. Known as the New Docks, the area is aiming to be "ZAWENT", meaning zero wastewater and zero energy with nutrient recovery.

**The beauty of it all is that many of the measures that we are taking to reduce emissions go hand in hand with enhanced quality of life.**

Of course, local climate policy can reduce emissions. But it can also bring other benefits if properly designed, making our cities more liveable and energy independent while creating local, green jobs.



**Tine Heyse**, Mayor for Environment, Climate, Energy and North-South of the City of Ghent

## CYCLING FOR A BETTER CLIMATE – AROUND THE WORLD IN 21 DAYS

### *A story from Kempten, Germany*

Since 2008, the CITY CYCLING campaign has been inviting local politicians and the public to cycle for their municipalities. In so doing, they promote cycling and advocate climate action in the form of sustainable transport habits. Kempten is one of the almost 900 municipalities motivating close to 300,000 people to hop on their bikes with the CITY CYCLING campaign. There, even school children are getting involved at a number of schools throughout the city and thereby also contributing to the implementation of the city's climate strategy. The first educational facility to get on board was the Hildegardis school with it's "Around the world in 21 days" challenge.



Photos:: Hildegardis Gymnasium

CITY CYCLING became a part of the Hildegardis school curriculum in 2017. Posters, announcements, letters to parents and a special event launch the programme each year, but fun and a healthy sense of competition keep it going. During the campaign period, participants enter the kilometres cycled each week in a list that is openly visible in each classroom. Each class elects "climate ambassadors" responsible for informing their peers about progress made and taking care of the cycling lists – a setup that encourages the kids to take ownership of the programme. At the end of the three week period, the individual children, whole classes and even the teachers with the most cycled kilometres are honoured in an awards ceremony hosted by Kempten's mayor. Participants also get incentives throughout competition period, for example, in the form of sweets for kids who use their bikes on a rainy day. The efforts are paying off: In 2018, 472 kids and teachers cycled some 46,000 km during the three week period – up from 36,000 km in 2017.

**Perhaps the best thing about the programme, however, is the lasting effect it has had on children and teachers outside of the three week campaign period.**

As a result of CITY CYCLING more kids are cycling to school and Hildegardis is now installing additional bike parking – a very small price to pay to instil sustainable transport habits in our future generations.



**Hans-Jörg Barth**, Climate Protection Department Head, Eza!



## PARTNERING UP FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE

### *A story from 986 municipalities across Austria*

The partnership between Climate Alliance Austria and FOIRN, the umbrella organisation of indigenous organisations of the Rio Negro in Brazil, is an internationally recognised success story connecting two completely different worlds through the common goal of climate and rainforest protection.

Established in 1993, the partnership now links more than 970 municipalities, 560 educational institutions and 1,100 companies in Austria with around 50,000 indigenous people stemming from 23 different indigenous groups along the Rio Negro River Basin. Together they have succeeded in creating one of the world's largest continuous areas of protected rainforest – at 135,000 km<sup>2</sup> currently 1.6 times the size of Austria.



The continuous support from Austria has helped the indigenous of the Rio Negro achieve increased recognition for their culture as well as for their rights to territory, education and health. In economic terms, the peoples of the region have benefitted from the marketing of their handicrafts and regional products as well as community-based tourism. On the other side of the Atlantic, the partnership has helped a great many gain an appreciation for indigenous ways of life as well as for how these ways of life are under threat.

The partnership has allowed delegations of Austrian municipal representatives to visit select villages in the area and exchange directly with indigenous peoples whose livelihoods depend on forest agriculture and fishing. These delegates get a first-hand understanding of the people, habitats and livelihoods under threat by western lifestyles – be it via agribusiness, large scale resource extraction, megaprojects or irresponsible tourism. Poor soils and increasingly scarce fish stocks, as well as weather extremes as a result of the climate crisis and increased economic and political pressure make these peoples even more vulnerable.

The delegates return to Europe and act as multipliers. More eager than ever to make a positive change in their communities and intensify cooperation with indigenous partners, they share their experiences and sensitise others to the importance of climate justice.

In the words of Andreas Drack, former delegate and Climate Protection Officer of the Province of Upper Austria, "There are many problems, some of which are similar to ours, but there is also a great deal of cohesion in the village communities. We can learn from that...**the Climate Alliance partnership should serve as a model for good cooperation worldwide. We can be proud of what has been achieved here in more than two decades.**"



**Patrícia Kandler**, Project Coordinator for Climate Justice and Partnerships, Climate Alliance Austria

## IN CLOSING

Partnerships, stakeholder engagement, wide-reaching campaigns, ambitious climate goals – these elements and more are visible in the few examples given here as well as in the work of the other cities and towns that form Climate Alliance. Together, we are fighting to mainstream the **fair, nature-based, local, resource-saving** and **diverse** brand of climate action that we need. We cannot afford anything less.

**How do we want to get there?** By practising climate action that is fair, nature-based, local, resource-saving and diverse.

### THE CLIMATE ALLIANCE

For more than 25 years, Climate Alliance member municipalities have been acting in partnership with indigenous rainforest peoples for the benefit of the global climate. With some 1,700 members spread across 26 European countries, Climate Alliance is the world's largest city network dedicated to climate action and the only one to set tangible targets: each member city, town and district has committed itself to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 10 percent every 5 years. Recognising the impact our lifestyles can have on the world's most vulnerable people and places, Climate Alliance pairs local action with global responsibility. [climatealliance.org](https://climatealliance.org)