



**9TH EUROPEAN CONFERENCE ON
SUSTAINABLE CITIES & TOWNS**

MANNHEIM | GERMANY | 30 SEPT - 2 OCT 2020

The Mannheim Message

Local Green Deals

for a carbon neutral, sustainable and inclusive Europe

Our challenge

Four years on from the 8th European Conference on Sustainable Cities and Towns and the launch of the Basque Declaration, the need to transform our societies towards climate protection and sustainability has become more urgent. In addition, the global COVID-19 pandemic has caused an economic crisis and made the social inequalities in and between our societies more visible. In a state of ongoing climate change and overuse of natural resources we have to ensure that a functioning local and regional economy and a just urban society are respecting planetary resource boundaries. Despite the efforts shown in the Recovery Funds, national interests and competition seem to be undermining the European Union, while the responses we need should be driven by solidarity and cooperation.

The importance of cities and regions for a thriving Europe

Local and regional authorities implement 70 % of EU legislation, 70 % of climate mitigation and 90 % of climate adaptation measures, as well as 65 % of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They handle one third of public spending, manage two thirds of public investment and in many instances are responsible for the direct provision of social services for their inhabitants. They give people direct experience of democratic procedures and opportunities for participation, involvement in decision-making and implementation. This supports transparency, inclusion and societal cohesion.

We, mayors and decision-makers of European cities and regions, would therefore like to offer our solidarity, cooperation and support for building a strong, united, sustainable and inclusive Europe.

Our background

With the *Mannheim Message*, the mayors and decision-makers of Europe's cities and regions are responding to the European Green Deal in the context of Mannheim2020 - the 9th European Conference on Sustainable Cities and Towns, 30 Sept-2 October 2020. The document builds on the legacy and principles of the Aalborg Charter (1994), the Aalborg Commitments (2004) and the Basque Declaration (2016) and reflects the aim of integrated sustainable urban and regional development, as supported by the Leipzig Charter.

The European Green Deal

We, mayors and decision-makers of European cities and regions, welcome the European Green Deal, which has the potential to become a new development model for Europe, its economy, society and environment and the anchoring of climate-neutrality by 2050 in EU legislation.

We believe the European Green Deal bolsters Europe's potential to take a leading role in implementing key international agreements such as the Paris Climate Agreement and the UN Agenda 2030 with its SDGs. We believe the European Green Deal will contribute to increasing Europe's resilience to environmental, economic and social crises and safeguard its citizens' welfare and health.

We see the European Green Deal as an opportunity to ensure the necessary transition of our societies to live within planetary boundaries that is based on values of democracy and justice and that will leave no one behind.

Local Green Deals

We, mayors and decision-makers of European cities and regions, actively support the European Green Deal by developing and implementing Local Green Deals together with our local communities. Our Local Green Deals will bring together our citizens and stakeholders around a strategy aligned with the goals, priorities and principles of the European Green Deal and the New Leipzig Charter.

The transformation we need to achieve will go beyond individual actions in particular fields, such as energy, mobility, or housing. Those actions will have to be rooted in a new systemic thinking and approach. This process can only be sustained with an active engagement of our citizens and stakeholders.

We therefore propose that both our Local Green Deals and the European Green Deal be built upon the following five core systemic changes, for which we commit to take action:

🔄 Transformation of our current local infrastructure and systems

We will apply agile and innovative solutions to transform our local infrastructure and service systems for a post-carbon society, including smart digital technology and green and blue infrastructure, to improve the quality of our public spaces, support adaptation to climate change, enhance biodiversity, and support public health and quality of life.

🔄 Local development beyond growth and competition

We will create local and regional economies that prioritize the protection of the climate, natural resources, biodiversity and ecosystems in economic development, and put the health and quality of life of current and future generations at their centre.

🔄 Cooperation, solidarity and inclusion

We will build urban and regional communities on principles of participation, transparency, inclusion and non-discrimination that make our cities and regions attractive, safe and healthy homes for all residents.

🔄 A lifestyle and culture of sufficiency and optimisation

We will ensure that our infrastructure, services, production methods and business models do not primarily support efficiency and maximisation of output, but circularity, sufficiency and optimisation, maintaining the value and utility of our assets in support of the quality of life for all. In this we note that culture is an important driver and supports dialogue and cohesion in the development and implementation of local sustainability strategies.

🔄 Re-orientation towards the common good

We will implement a local and regional governance model that strengthens the common good with the help of co-creation and social innovation, and supports social economy approaches and new forms of social enterprises and investment, as well as public private people partnerships. In this we increase the resilience of our local economies and communities in line with our sustainability agenda.

Co-Creating Europe's future

Based on these systemic changes, we, mayors and decision-makers of European cities and regions, promise to co-create and co-implement the European Green Deal together with our national governments and the EU. In order to support our commitment and efforts, we see a particular need for the following policy shifts:

⊕ **Safeguarded public income:**

In the light of the growing delocalisation of value generation and value capturing, brought about by internet trade and shopping, and platform and surveillance economies, we need a fair and level fiscal playing field, which safeguards public income for the development of our communities.

⊕ **Shifting taxes away from labour:**

We need better fiscal frameworks that rule out all subsidies for fossil fuels and shift the tax load from labour to natural resource use and pollution. In the light of the rapid development of capital intense digitalisation, automation and artificial intelligence, we need to consider a different share of taxation between labour and capital.

⊕ **Sufficient Financial Support:**

Considering their roles as key implementers of the Green Deal and their limited capacities to generate income for their budget through local taxes and fees, it is highly important that local and regional authorities receive sufficient continuous financial support from European and national levels. This requires appropriate and coordinated programmes across all levels of governance, which in the first place means an alignment of their policies, programmes and investments to work in support of the Green Deal goals.

⊕ **Local and regional value chains:**

Financial and regulatory frameworks that support opportunities for local and regional social economy approaches and solutions, circular business models and the inclusion of local enterprises; local green or social bonds in our financing portfolio, to enable and support civic investment, transparency and active participation in the implementation of transformative action.

⊕ **Integrated land-use:**

Regulatory and financial frameworks that support an integrated land-use policy and urban-regional development with the aim of soil protection,

The New Leipzig Charter

We welcome that the current draft of the *New Leipzig Charter* urges that urban development needs to be coordinated in an integrated, place-based, multi-level and participatory approach. We appreciate that it also highlights the transformative power of cities and emphasises the importance of an urban policy for the common good, looking at making cities just, green and productive.

reducing biodiversity loss, and improving the quality of life and public health by minimising the consumption of greenfield land and enhancing green and blue infrastructure.

⊕ **New use of urban space:**

Transformation of urban space and service systems to make them more attractive places for people to enjoy and to adapt to the changes caused by accelerated digitalisation, the impact of online shopping, and increasing work from home.

⊕ **Needs-driven research and innovation:**

Redirection of financial support towards research and innovation processes that are driven by the global and local challenges that we have to address, and the resulting demands that have to be met. We need intelligent and challenge oriented technology that provides necessary and relevant information for better planning, decision-making, management and monitoring.

⊕ **Replacing products with services:**

Innovation and regulation that drive the development of products designed for a real circular economy, and that encourage more services and less product ownership and consumption of resources.

⊕ **Guaranteed living income:**

To avoid negative social consequences caused by the necessary rapid transformations, we need social systems that support an equitable distribution of income and opportunities. To that end, we need appropriate levels of minimum living wage and a guaranteed basic income in an increasingly flexible labour market to enhance re-skilling and life-long learning for our citizens.

A joint way forward

We, mayors and decision-makers of European cities and regions, are committed to close Local Green Deals designed in cooperation with our citizens and key stakeholders - including business, industry, research and innovation sectors. We aim to build the strong foundations for the implementation of the Green Deal in Europe, and to accelerate the transformation of our societies to being carbon neutral, sustainable and inclusive.

We consider the integrated urban planning approach, as supported by the draft of the New Leipzig Charter, as a concept that takes into account all relevant interests and actors simultaneously and fairly.

We shall only be able to achieve this if our voices are heard, and our needs are respected in a multi-level governance system that works bottom-up as well as top-down. We cannot remain purely implementation partners, but need to be part of

the process of defining our regulatory, fiscal and financial frameworks at all levels.

The EU Green Deal will only succeed in creating a stronger, more aligned, sustainable, and inclusive Europe, if it ensures both horizontal and vertical integration across all levels of government. Ultimately, only the citizens of Europe's cities and regions can make this happen, and we are their closest allies in this process.

Our solutions should be actively supported and scaled up at the European and global level. We offer best practices and projects underpinning all the principles committed in this Mannheim Message.

In the spirit of collaboration, we offer our support and partnership with the European Union's decision-makers and institutions on further advancing Green Deals on all levels - for a strong Europe built of resilient, inclusive and sustainable local societies, cities and regions.

The Mannheim Message

For more information, contact the ICLEI European Secretariat at mannheim2020@iclei.org.

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