

Ursula von der Leyen
President
European Commission
Rue de la Loi/ Wetstraat 200
BE-1049 Brussels 1

11 February 2020

Dear President von der Leyen,

Taking meaningful, measurable and sustainable action on climate change is the defining struggle of our time and a policy challenge of unprecedented scale for European and global policy-makers alike. We wholeheartedly welcome the European Commission's proposal for a European Green Deal and we fully support the ambition for Europe to become the world's first climate-neutral continent by 2050.

The European Green Deal rightly recognizes that an effective response to the climate emergency can only happen through systemic change. Cities led by elected leaders now represent two-thirds of Europe's population, and are responsible for the bulk of its climate mitigation and adaptation efforts. The fight against climate change will be won or lost in cities.

As countless examples from recent years have shown, local governments often take the lead in climate action and realize ambitious action plans for a sustainable future. Cities are well equipped to enact policy change. Local authorities are usually faster to act and less constrained by the pressures from the fossil fuel industry than national governments.

Europe's major cities and metropolitan areas are key and willing players in the all-European climate fight and need to be empowered accordingly. We were encouraged by the European Green Deal Communication's professed intent to empower regional and local communities, as well as strengthening the urban dimension of cohesion policy with special regard to the European Urban Initiative.

While providing assistance to cities and regions that want to commit to ambitious pledges on climate and energy policies and share good practices on how to implement change locally remains critical, we need more significant support. Looking ahead to this year's crucial negotiations on the European Union's Multiannual Financial Framework, we urge the European Institutions to recognize cities' and urban areas' pivotal role in implementing strategic green policy objectives and to allocate directly accessible, city-tailored EU funds to secure those outcomes.

We advocate for new and ambitious measures and the expansion and re-design of already existing programs such as the Urban Innovative Actions and Horizon Europe that can give cities muscle to implement green policies. Our efforts can only succeed if the EU puts

regulatory and financial mechanisms in place that provide the necessary means for local authorities to act. In that case, our cities can move fast to prepare, submit and implement projects on the ground.

As former Committee of the Regions President Karl-Heinz Lambertz recently wrote: „local and regional governments must be more than just allies, but central players and partners in shaping the Green Deal.” We stand ready to do our share in Europe’s great transition to a decarbonized economy and ask for your support to be able to deliver.

Yours sincerely

Matúš Vallo, Mayor of Bratislava

Gergely Karácsony, Mayor of Budapest

Zdeněk Hřib, Mayor of Prague

Rafał Trzaskowski, Mayor of Warsaw

Michael Müller, Governing Mayor of Berlin

Michael Ludwig, Mayor and Governor of Vienna

Johan Remkes, Acting Mayor, The Hague

Kostas Bakoyannis, Mayor of Athens

Oļegs Burovs, Mayor of Riga

Remigijus Šimašius, Mayor of Vilnius

Mihhail Kõlvart, Mayor of Tallinn

Peter Feldmann, Mayor of Frankfurt

Jaroslav Polaček, Mayor of Košice

Giuseppe Sala, Mayor of Milan

Ada Colau, Mayor of Barcelona

Fernando Medina, Mayor of Lisbon

Nawel Rafik-Elmrini, Deputy Mayor of Strasbourg