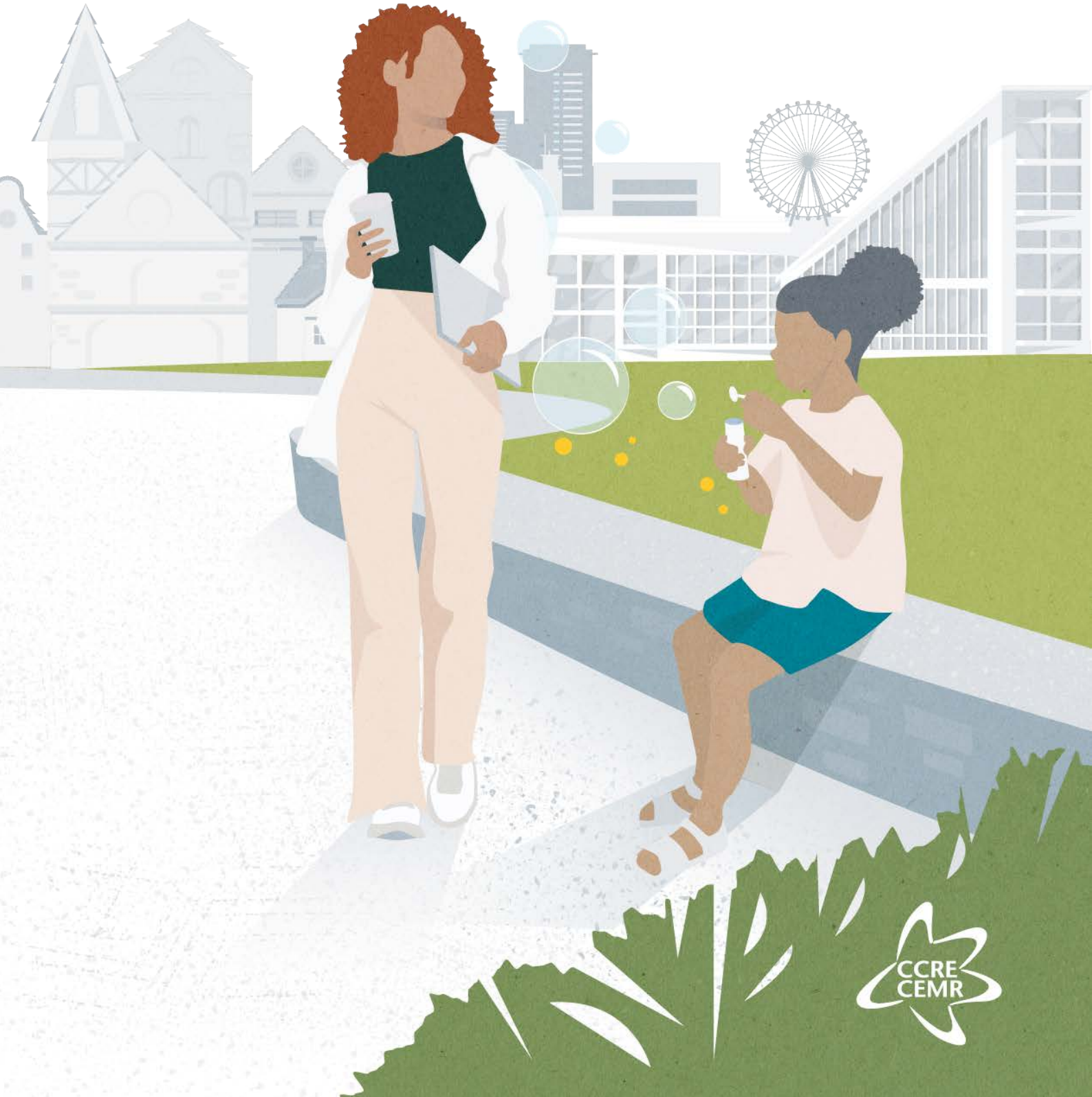
Local Green Transition

Prospects for an Inclusive and Competitive Deal



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Abbreviations

CEMR	Council of European Municipalities and Regions
EEA	European Environment Agency
EEAA	European Economic Area Agreement
EGD	European Green Deal
EPR	Extended Producer Responsibility
ETS	EU Emissions Trading System
EU	European Union
GHG	Greenhouse gases
LGA	Local Government Associations
LRG	Local and Regional Governments
REC	Renewable Energy Community
SCP	Social Climate Plans
SECAP	Sustainable Climate and Energy Action Plans
SPC	Single Points of Contact
SUMPS	Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans
TEN-T	Trans-European Transport Network
TEU	Treaty on European Union

Legislative info sheets

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Executive summary and recommendations

Policy context: the European Green Deal and net-zero policies

The European Green Deal (EGD) aims for climate neutrality by 2050, striving notably for the decoupling of economic growth from resource use. This will have a bearing on the energy, agriculture, and transport industries in particular and will therefore require extensive policy mobilisation. Although the EU is leading the way with this initiative, other countries are also pursuing ambitious environmental initiatives or national strategies, such as the UK's "Net Zero Strategy." In all cases, Local and Regional Governments (LRG) are essential to achieving these ambitious Green Deal and net-zero goals.

The role of regions and municipalities as enabling partners in advancing the sustainability agenda

LRGs are vital for the success and realisation of green policies across Europe. In addition to urban areas accounting for 74% of the European population and contributing 80% of the EU's GDP, cities and regions exercise key competences in the areas of climate, energy, environment, circular economy and mobility. While approximately 70% of climate change mitigation policies will be implemented at the subnational level, nearly 90% of climate adaptation measures will be managed locally or regionally. Consequently, LRG investments in future sustainability have been significant, accounting for 69% of climate-related public investment in 32 OECD and EU countries, surpassing central government contributions.

Clear commitment to turn green policies into local opportunities

The findings of the 2024 CEMR survey reveal that 51% of LRGs and 58% of CEMR members view the impacts of sustainable legislation positively, enumerating benefits such as increased investment in renewable energies, job creation, lower heating bills through improved energy efficiency and enhancements in biodiversity and air quality.

Local and regional governments as guarantors of fairness: addressing territorial and socio-economic impacts

As the government level closest to citizens, municipalities and regions are the first to experience the impacts of green policies. CEMR's survey results clearly point to a perceived "one-size-fits-all" approach to policy design that overlooks the diverse capacities and needs of different-sized municipalities and regions, giving rise to a territorial burden sharing that is uneven. Inequality and social fairness concerns were also reflected in responses given by LRG representatives. It is therefore unsurprising that 69% of LRGs and 65% of local government associations (LGA) affirmed that green legislation can influence citizens' voting behaviour. This perceived unfair burden sharing risks undermining the economic and environmental opportunities of the green transition.

Practical implementation challenges

Local and regional governments are in the front line of climate-related events and are all too aware of the need to achieve effective climate change mitigation and adaptation. However, they often face several significant challenges:

- **Access to finance:** inadequate financial resources and complex funding mechanisms are major barriers.
- **Limited local capacities:** insufficient staff and technical expertise hinder effective policy implementation.
- **Regulatory complexity:** navigating intricate regulations causes significant difficulties.

Despite their commitment, LRGs often feel unprepared, with only one third confident in their readiness to translate Green Deal and net-zero policies into territorial realities. Rural areas primarily struggle with financial constraints, whereas urban areas have to contend with staff shortages. Inadequate communication and consultation with national and EU decision makers further exacerbate these challenges.

Headline recommendations

European and national governments have set ambitious goals along their path to implementing the green transition, and LRGs are central players in achieving these objectives. In view of the European Commission's and national governments' new mandates, CEMR has identified the following critically important cross-cutting priorities:

I. **Address local and regional needs during the Green Deal implementation to benefit Europe's citizens and democracy.**

II. **Reframe the dialogue and partnership with LRG to co-create ambitious green policies.**

III. **Effectively contribute to fostering Europe's competitiveness through increased, simplified and more direct sustainable funding for the local and regional levels**

IV. **Champion equity in the green transition, particularly in the most vulnerable areas.**

V. **Make the green transition a priority for cooperation across the EU and even beyond its borders.**

For more detailed information on sectoral policies implemented by regions and municipalities in the fields of environment, waste, mobility and energy, please refer to section 1.3 of the report.

Report and methodology structure

This report is divided into two main parts:

1 | **Analysis of the perception of the green transition:** impact, challenges and future priorities.

2 | **Legislative info sheets** on the key regulations under the European Green Deal.

The methodology for this report included the aforementioned survey, conducted in the first quarter of 2024, which garnered over 300 responses from LRGs and another 35 from CEMR member LGAs, providing the basis for the main figures and statistics. This data was supplemented by analyses from CEMR's technical working groups as well as desk research by the Secretariat.

Foreword

Work with us!

Empower local and regional governments to champion the green transition

One of the most pressing challenges we face today is significantly reducing our climate impact both globally and locally, while simultaneously securing energy supplies and ensuring prosperity. Keeping global warming below 1.5 degrees is a condition – not a "nice to have" – if we are to ensure a liveable future for our children and grandchildren. Municipalities and regions are key players in this process. As local elected representatives, we fully support the ambition to implement the European Green Deal and other transition policies.

We, Europe's over 100,000 local and regional governments, federated via the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), are on the front lines, facing an increasing number of floods, droughts, wildfires and heatwaves. Our citizens hold us accountable and expect us to take responsibility, providing appropriate crisis responses and delivering basic public services.

Implementing the Green Deal and net-zero policies are strategic imperatives that will help us in confronting these challenges, while also promoting growth opportunities and improving living conditions across our continent. To achieve this, we must work together at all levels of government, building up supportive European and national frameworks that foster real change in our territories.

Municipalities and regions lay the groundwork for a more competitive Europe by planning, permitting and providing grid connections for new solar and wind parks, developing local cooling and heating solutions for buildings and finding nature-based solutions for climate change, water scarcity and floods.

The transition will only succeed if it respects Europe's territorial diversity and socio-economic realities. Ignoring these factors will inevitably lead to political shifts and changes in voting behaviour, especially in the context of EU and national elections, where polarisation is already increasingly present. To navigate this complex landscape, local leadership and targeted actions are essential. These efforts are crucial not only for supporting citizens but also for fostering the necessary structural and behavioural changes that underpin a successful transition.

Europe's municipalities and regions are ready to work in partnership to drive the changes we wish to see. To empower European municipalities and regions to lead the green transition effectively, our survey responses highlight the crucial importance of improving access to funding, enhancing technical expertise and streamlining regulations for efficient policy implementation.

As local elected officials, we also call for more inclusive communication and consultation between local authorities and national or EU-level policymakers to ensure that policies are adaptable to regional differences and specific needs. By acknowledging and addressing local and regional nuance, we can foster a more cohesive and effective approach to achieve our shared goals. Ensuring fairness and engaging citizens in the green transition are essential to maintaining political support and achieving long-term sustainability goals.

CEMR President,

Gunn Marit Helgesen

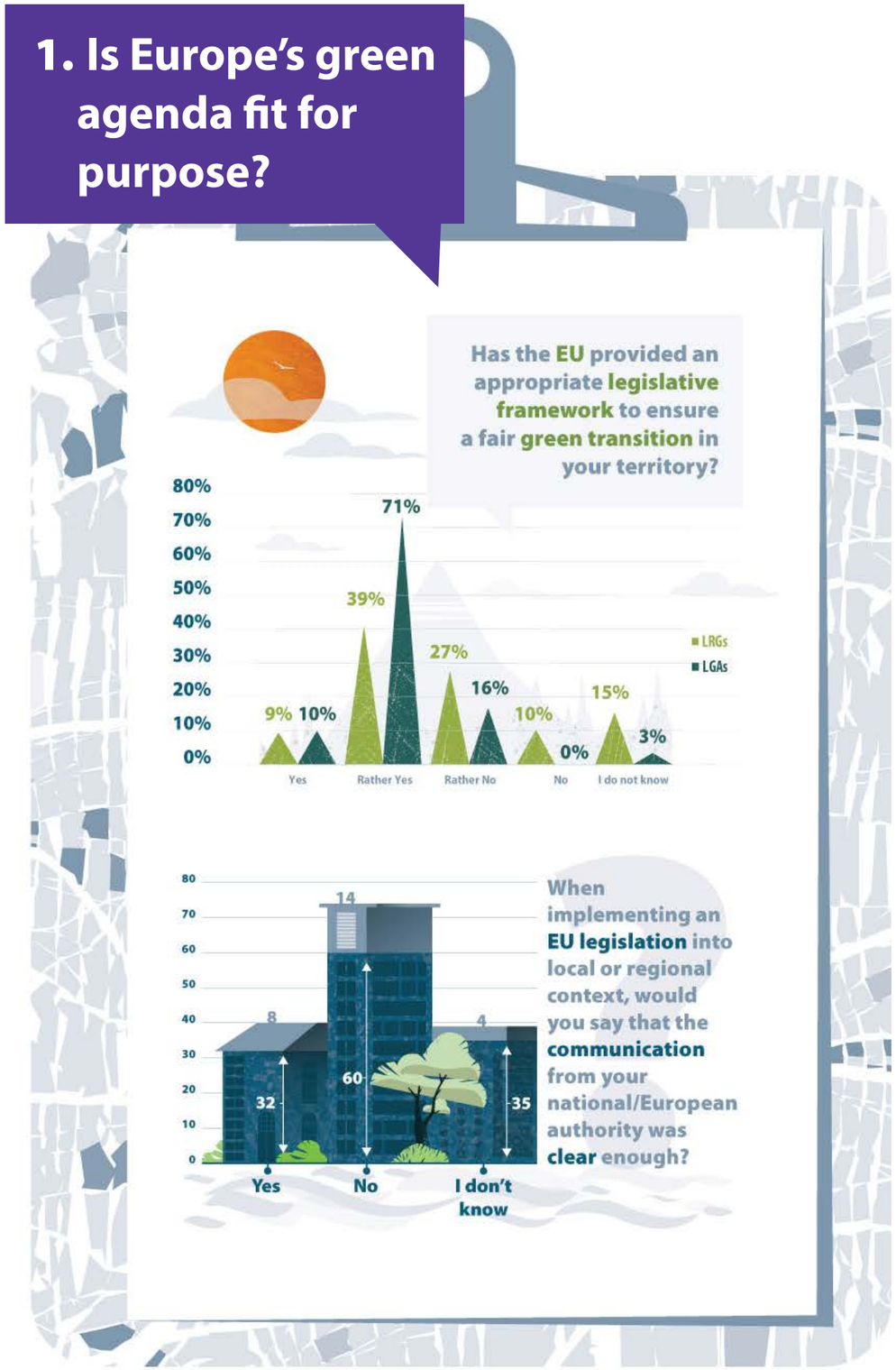
Together, we can make it right –
let's start today!

Chapter 1

Analysis of the perception of the green agenda: **impact, challenges and future priorities**

This chapter provides an overview of the political perception of the initial implementation of green policies at local and regional levels throughout Europe. Section one identifies the role of LRGs in these transformational policies and examines their territorial impacts, while Section two focuses on the practical challenges involved. Finally, Section three presents policy recommendations aimed at national governments and the new European Commission mandate after the June 2024 EU elections.

1. Is Europe's green agenda fit for purpose?



In a nutshell

The European Green Deal aims to achieve climate neutrality by 2050, while looking to disconnect economic growth from resource use. It calls for broad policy mobilisation, cutting across industries such as energy, agriculture, and transport. The EU is paving the way with the EGD, with other countries aligning alongside through agreements or national strategies, for example the UK's "Net Zero Strategy". Local and regional governments have also been striving to meet green deal and net-zero goals.

Given their economic role in providing public services and their wide-ranging competences, Europe's regions and municipalities are indisputably in the vanguard of the implementation of a large share of net-zero policies. **Over half of CEMR members** view the overall impacts of these policies as positive, citing investment, job creation and improved living conditions. The policies with the greatest impact in the territories are energy, environmental and waste-related.

CEMR's survey clearly highlights the undeniable territorial and socio-economic variances in impacts of sustainability policy design. Respondents reported an uneven burden sharing among territories during the transition, correlating to a difference in urban-rural realities and lifestyles, which resulted in households in these areas being impacted in different ways.

This fairness assessment also translates into changed voting behavioural patterns, to the extent that around **two-thirds of LRGs and their national associations** reported this trend.

The EU's European Green Deal (EGD) aims to bring about the first climate-neutral continent by 2050 and to decouple economic growth from resource use. This ambitious plan will induce many changes and cover numerous sectors. Above all, it seeks to fundamentally transform industry, energy supply, agriculture, transport and society. Achieving decarbonisation is a challenge that has become increasingly complex over time and requires the mobilisation of all levels of policy implementation. In the EU, the undertaking of the green transition has been primarily guided by the EGD. Other European countries are pursuing similar objectives by adopting frameworks such as the European Economic Area Agreement (EEAA) or national strategies like the "Net Zero Strategy" in the United Kingdom. LRGs across Europe have tapped into such initiatives in their efforts to meet EGD and analogous net-zero targets. For the sake of brevity, the terms 'European Green Deal" and "net-zero targets" will be used interchangeably throughout this report.

Examining the role of local and regional governments in Europe's green transition

Local and regional governments play a crucial role in implementing public policy, delivering services, shaping places, solving problems and convening communities. Achieving the green transition and net-zero goals set by national governments, the EU and other policymakers will require decarbonisation in every household, community and local economy. Given that 74% of Europeans live in urban areas that contribute 80% of the EU's GDP and that cities and regions hold key competences in climate, energy, environment, circular economy and mobility.[1] Local and regional governments are pivotal actors, at the forefront of delivering the transition to net zero at ground zero.

Yet, important challenges line the path of Europe's transition to carbon neutrality that will require substantial levels of public investment, around EUR 520 billion a year from 2021 to 2030, as estimated by the European Environment Agency.[2] Local and regional governments account for 55% of public investment and are responsible for implementing 70% of climate mitigation measures. They can mobilise community action and leverage various tools to better reduce emissions and adapt to climate change. Clearly, if this Europe-wide endeavour is to succeed, enacting effective partnerships across all levels of government is essential to mobilising subnational governments' full contribution to Europe's decarbonisation efforts.

Given the key role to be fulfilled by LRGs in the transition to net zero, assessing their level of knowledge of the legislative and regulatory framework is a critical first step. CEMR's survey therefore examined the degree to which LRGs and national associations were informed about the EGD and net-zero strategies. The responses reveal that LRG awareness of the EGD and net-zero policies is significantly high, with up to 92% reporting familiarity with the decarbonisation-related legislation affecting their territories aimed at decarbonisation (see Figure 1). Local and regional governments are aware of the specific targets set by the deal, such as the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030, and were already actively engaged.

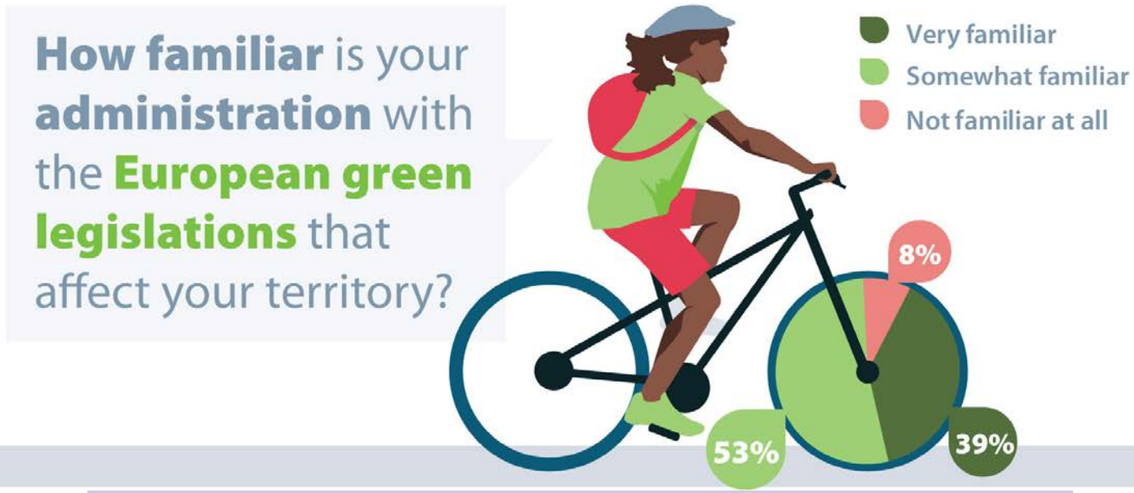


Figure 1: *Local and Regional Familiarity with Green Legislation*

[1] CEMR (2023): Powering the Future: Driving Europe's Climate and Energy Policies through Regions and Municipalities. Available at: https://ccre-cemr.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/NECP_Report_CEMR_2023.pdf

[2] Investments in the sustainability transition: leveraging green industrial policy against emerging constraints. 2023. Available at: https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/investments-into-the-sustainability-transition

For most LRGs and their associations, there is a clear understanding of the need to undertake measures to drive the green transition, accompanied by high aspirations regarding their role in implementing these policies.

Impact of sustainability policies as a strategic tool for improving living standards and the local economy

> *Implementing renewable energy projects and making sustainable infrastructure investments creates new job opportunities and supports growth in the green economy. In particular, energy efficiency measures and projects based on renewable energy sources improve the living conditions of citizens by reducing energy costs.*
>
> **Türkiye Belediyeler Birliği (Türkiye)**

A prevailing sense of commitment to the goals of the Green Deal and a recognition of its importance in tackling environmental and socio-economic challenges does indeed exist. Respondents acknowledged the positive impacts of environmental legislation, including increased investment in renewable energy, job creation in the green economy and improvements in air quality and energy efficiency.

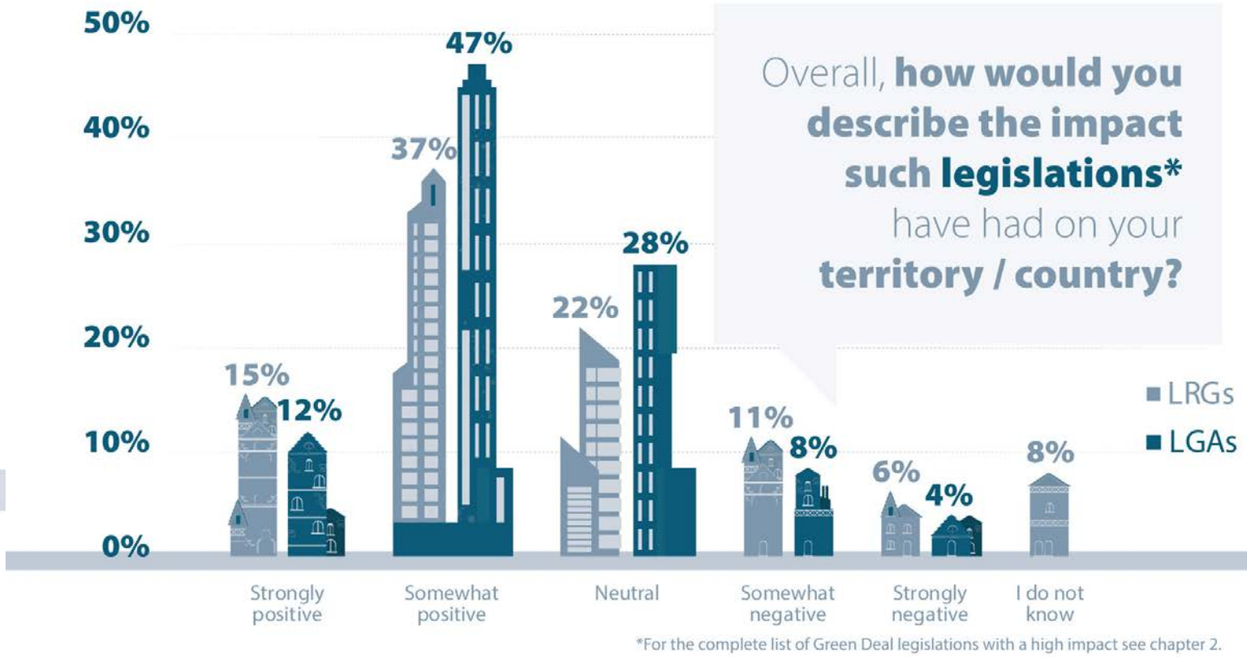


Figure 2: *Cross-Sectoral Territorial Impact of Green Legislation*

Figure 3: *Sectoral Territorial Impact of Green Legislation*

Most respondents viewed these impacts as "strongly" or "somewhat positive," with 51% of LRGs and 58% of CEMR members expressing this sentiment (see Figure 2). However, there is a notable difference in how negative impacts are perceived, with 17% of LRGs reporting foreseeing a "somewhat" or "strongly negative" impact, compared to only 12% of national associations.

Both LRGs and CEMR members concurred that energy, environmental protection and waste management have had the most significant impact on their territories (see Figure 3). This can be explained by the energy crisis and higher prices stemming from the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine and by the large number of regulations that have a direct bearing on those policies (see Chapter 2).

The Green Deal's gender dimension

The European Green Deal and other net-zero policies present an opportunity for municipalities and regions to address gender equality and include gender-responsive strategies in their policies.[3] The effects of climate change disproportionately impact women, particularly those from vulnerable communities. A focus on intersectionality is helpful in considering the varied experiences of individuals based on gender, race and socioeconomic factors.

To promote the adoption of gender-responsive policies and ensure inclusivity and equity:

Implement Gender Impact Assessments (GIAs), which evaluate how net-zero policies affect different genders. These assessments provide valuable insights and help in designing interventions that promote gender equality while achieving environmental goals.

Increase the presence of women in leadership roles at all levels of governance. Women, in all their diversity, help bring unique perspectives and solutions to driving innovative and equitable climate action at local and regional levels.

Assessing the fairness of the European Green Deal and net-zero initiatives

Achieving the green transition in Europe calls for significant efforts to coordinate climate change mitigation goals across different European countries. A suitable regulatory framework, one that adapts to territorial differences, is crucial. While the main objectives are set at the EU level, essential policies, particularly those relating to energy and transport, largely remain under national jurisdiction.

CEMR's survey reveals a notable difference between the perceptions of LGAs and LRGs with respect to the EU's legislative framework for a fair green transition. Over 80% of LGAs assessed the EU's framework for achieving the green transition in their territories positively. In contrast, only 48% of LRG respondents shared this favourable view (see Figure 4).

[3] Gender-responsive evaluation for a sustainable future for all: GREENA step-by-step toolkit for a green and gender-equal Europe

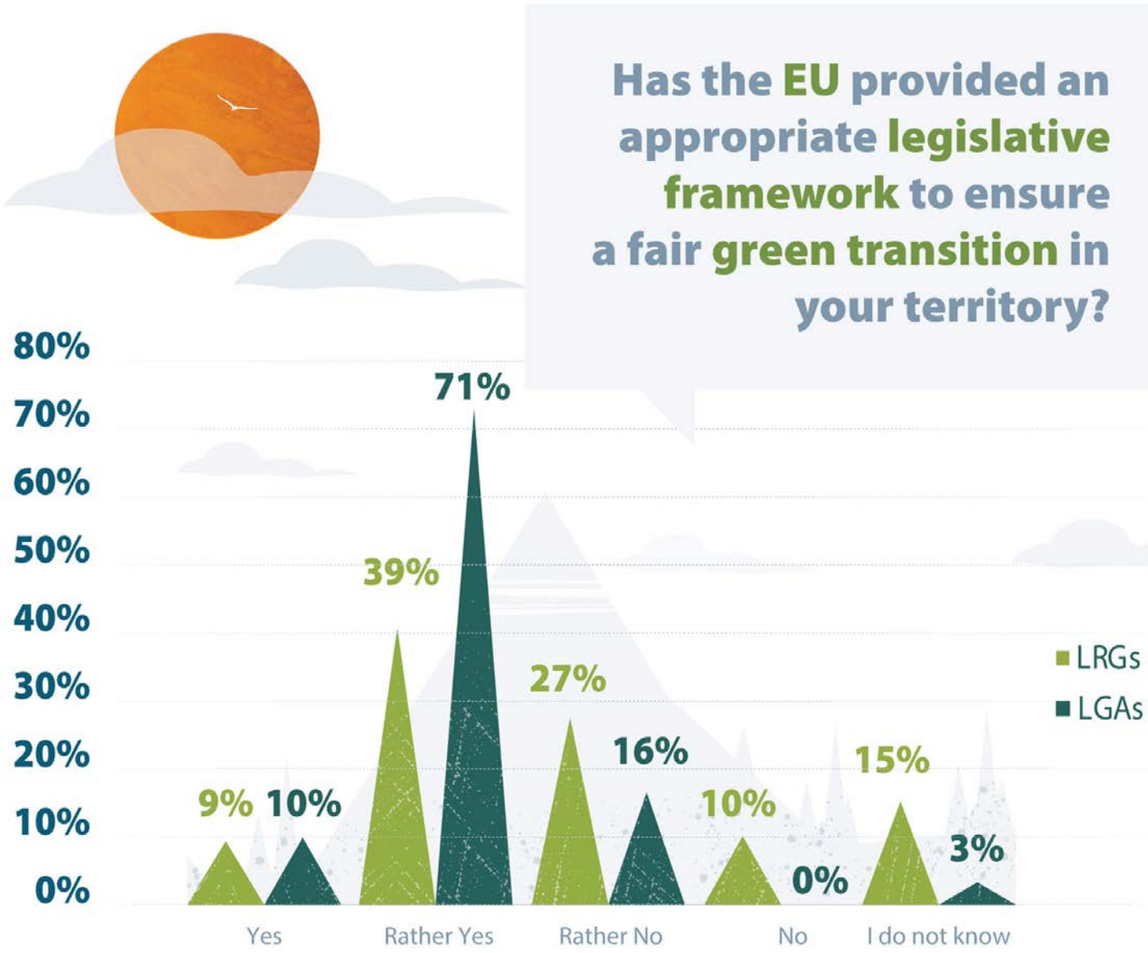


Figure 4: *EU Legislative Framework for Fair Sustainability Transition in Territories: Appropriateness Rating*

Uneven territorial burden sharing during the transition

It has become increasingly obvious that the transition to carbon neutrality is affecting local communities and regions unevenly. These redistributional and socio-economic impacts are driving questions about the fairness of the implementation of Green Deal and Net Zero. Furthermore, these impacts are also driving negative perceptions about the fairness of the implementing net zero and impacting on the willingness of citizens to accept the need for change.

One size does not fit all! Socio-economic considerations and regional variations are primary concerns in the resulting level of ambition

Regional differences and policy considerations

Respondents highlighted the importance of considering regional differences when implementing EGD policies. The diverse conditions and contexts inherent to different countries and regions within the EU make policies that are adaptable and sensitive to these variations a necessity. This underscores the need for a tailored approach in policy-making that can adjust for specific regional challenges and opportunities.

> *Regional differences should be taken into account more widely. What is suitable in Europe as a whole is not the same in Finland.*
>
> **Kärsämäki (Finland)**

> *Socio-economic equity "Small and rural towns' specificities are not taken into account when designing these and other policies."*
>
> **Sopuerta (Spain)**

Socio-economic equity concerns underestimated

Several respondents underlined concerns regarding social equity under the EGD, noting the potential for disproportionate effects on low-and-middle income households. Specific examples included higher costs associated with fuel price increases and the burden hitting poorer residents in sparsely populated areas unequally. These social equity concerns underscore the need for policies that do not inadvertently exacerbate existing inequalities.

> *Some measures are socially intolerable, e.g. older fossil fuel vehicles are used by poorer residents of sparsely populated areas, but electromobility subsidies are used more by wealthier residents of large cities; the waste water treatment directive is economically unsustainable for small settlements; the 3% yearly building renewal rate hits an ageing population hard, etc.*

Středočeský kraj/ Central Bohemian Region (Czechia)

In addition, many respondents expressed apprehension about the economic implications of environmental legislation, noting increased costs that do not necessarily translate into significant improvements or benefits. In particular, the economic sustainability of certain directives, such as wastewater treatment requirements for small settlements or the high costs associated with renovation requirements for public buildings, was questioned. These examples illustrate the perceived disconnect between costs incurred and the tangible benefits to be achieved, raising doubts about the overall feasibility of some measures.

The green transition's influence on voting behaviour at all government levels

> *The Green Deal is decided locally. It has a direct impact on people's lives and therefore also on their voting behaviour.*

Deutscher Städtetag (Germany)

Local and regional governments play a pivotal role in prompting positive behavioural changes among citizens, a prerequisite for the successful implementation of Green Deal and net-zero policies. The transition to sustainable economies has shifted from being a technocratic issue into one of national political concern. We have now reached the more challenging phase of actively engaging citizens in the need for profound lifestyle changes, one in which decarbonisation will affect households unequally.

CEMR's survey results point to a growing segment of voters who distrust politicians and political institutions, viewing green policies as costly and disruptive. This backlash can in turn influence voter behaviour in elections, creating political resistance to green deal and net-zero initiatives.

Figure 5: *Impact of Green Legislation on Voting Behaviour in Local, Regional, and National Elections: LRGs Perspective*

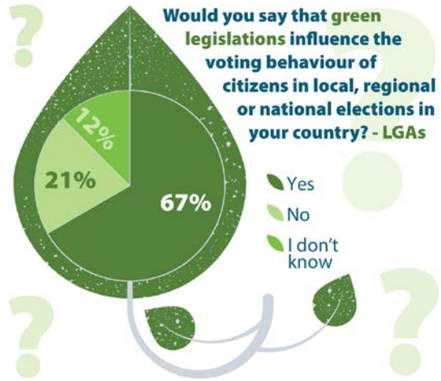


Figure 6: *Impact of Green Legislation on Voting Behaviour in Local, Regional, and National Elections: LGAs Perspective*

In response to the survey, 68% of LRGs and 67% of LGAs reported that green legislation can indeed sway citizens' voting behaviour in local, regional, or national elections (see Figures 5 and 6). These insights from LRGs and LRAs provide valuable informed perspectives on citizens' views and reactions to the green transformation.

Respondents to CEMR's survey highlighted the direct impact of green legislation on people's lives and consequently on their voting behaviour, such as changes to agricultural policies brought about by new agricultural legislation. LRGs emphasised how green legislation could fuel political polarisation, with some political parties capitalising on opposition to net-zero initiatives and legislation as a way to galvanise votes.

The challenge for LRGs is to convince their citizens of the benefits of the green transition despite its adverse impact on certain economic and social sectors.

> *As Local Councillor, I am in daily contact with my fellow citizens. Net-zero policies can offer real opportunities, such as our project"*
> *Cutting energy use while keeping homes warm". We must ensure inclusive green policies that address uneven impacts, preventing regions and communities from being left behind. Ambitious climate policies should bring together environmental benefits, social equity and economic opportunities for all.*

Marianne Overton
Local Councillor for Bassingham and Welbourn on Lincolnshire County Council
Vice Chair of the Local Government Association (UK)

2. What are the main challenges of implementation at the local and regional level?

In a nutshell

Municipalities and regions are the first to experience the acceleration of climate-related events, highlighting the urgency for effective climate change mitigation. Local and regional governments are therefore strategic stakeholders in implementing these measures, but they face significant challenges. Major impediments to implementation include:

1. Access to finance: adequate financial resources and complex funding mechanisms represent major obstacles.
2. Limited local capacities: insufficient staff and technical expertise hinder effective policy implementation.
3. Regulatory complexity: navigating and complying with intricate regulations can present significant difficulties.

Despite their commitment, LRGs often feel ill-equipped, with only one-third expressing confidence in their preparedness. Rural and urban authorities come up against distinct challenges, with rural areas primarily citing inadequate financial resources, while urban areas are hampered by critical staff shortages. Furthermore, inadequate communication and consultation with national and EU decision-makers compound these struggles. The diversity of obstacles confronting local and regional governments in pursuing effective green policies implementation is multi-faceted. Nevertheless, more efficient governance processes and improved dialogue mechanisms are key factors to enhancing the implementation of Green Deal and net-zero policies.

Green transition policies seek to tackle urgent climate and environmental crises. Long before national or European regulations were in place, municipalities and regions were addressing these global challenges from the bottom up, as exemplified by initiatives such as the Covenant of Mayors. This attests to LRGs' willingness and commitment to embark on the quest in pursuit of greater sustainability. However, even with the recent introduction of policies such as the Green Deal, unless sufficient resources are provided, those tasked with meeting the established targets risk being overburdened.

Hence, these policies present both opportunities and challenges. On the one hand, municipalities and regions are recognised as key actors and given concrete obligations, such as local cooling and heating planning and binding energy efficiency and nature restoration targets. Yet, difficulties in coordinating the administrative, financial, technical and multilevel governance persist. Overcoming these weaknesses will open the door to future improvements, ensuring equitable progress that leaves no territory or individual behind.

The Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy – Europe – an initiative that champions multilevel governance

This initiative represents the largest movement of cities voluntarily pledging to act locally in favour of the climate and energy. Funded by the European Commission, the initiative has amassed more than 11 000 signatories, with 8 000 Sustainable Climate and Energy Action Plans (SECAPs) already implemented at local level.

Since its launch in 2008, the Covenant of Mayors has clearly shown local governments' commitment to climate and energy action, as well as their leadership at a time when national governments were just beginning to address climate change. Through SECAPs, cities across Europe have rendered their political commitment into concrete actions.

One tool at the signatory cities' disposal is the direct connection between local elected representatives and European Commissioners, made possible through the Covenant of Mayors Europe's Political Board. Another is the existence of national and regional coordinators (national ministries, national energy agencies, regions, provinces or grouping of local authorities) and Supporters (local and regional agencies, LGAs) who assist in tailoring initiatives to specific contexts, sometimes opening up technical and financial support opportunities to the Covenant's signatories in the process.

Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy EUROPE

Physical climate risks and local readiness to implement green legislation

LRGs are undeniably affected by the consequences of climate change, yet municipalities and regions are not on track to implement legislation that deals with the risks. In its "European State of the Climate 2023" report,[4] the Copernicus Climate Change Service revealed that, globally, 2023 was already 1.48°C warmer than pre-industrial levels, and that "Europe [was] the fastest warming continent, with temperatures rising around twice the global average rate."[5]

At the local and regional levels, the consequences of these developments have been keenly felt. Subnational governments remain at the forefront of crisis response, responsible for ensuring the uninterrupted delivery of public services and the functioning of vital infrastructure. Figure 7 based on CEMR's survey shows that the top three risks stemming from climate change are:

1. Extreme weather events (30%)
2. Heatwaves (23%)
3. Water scarcity (22%)

[4] https://climate.copernicus.eu/widespread-floods-severe-heatwaves-esotc-2023-puts-europes-climate-focus

[5] Op cit.

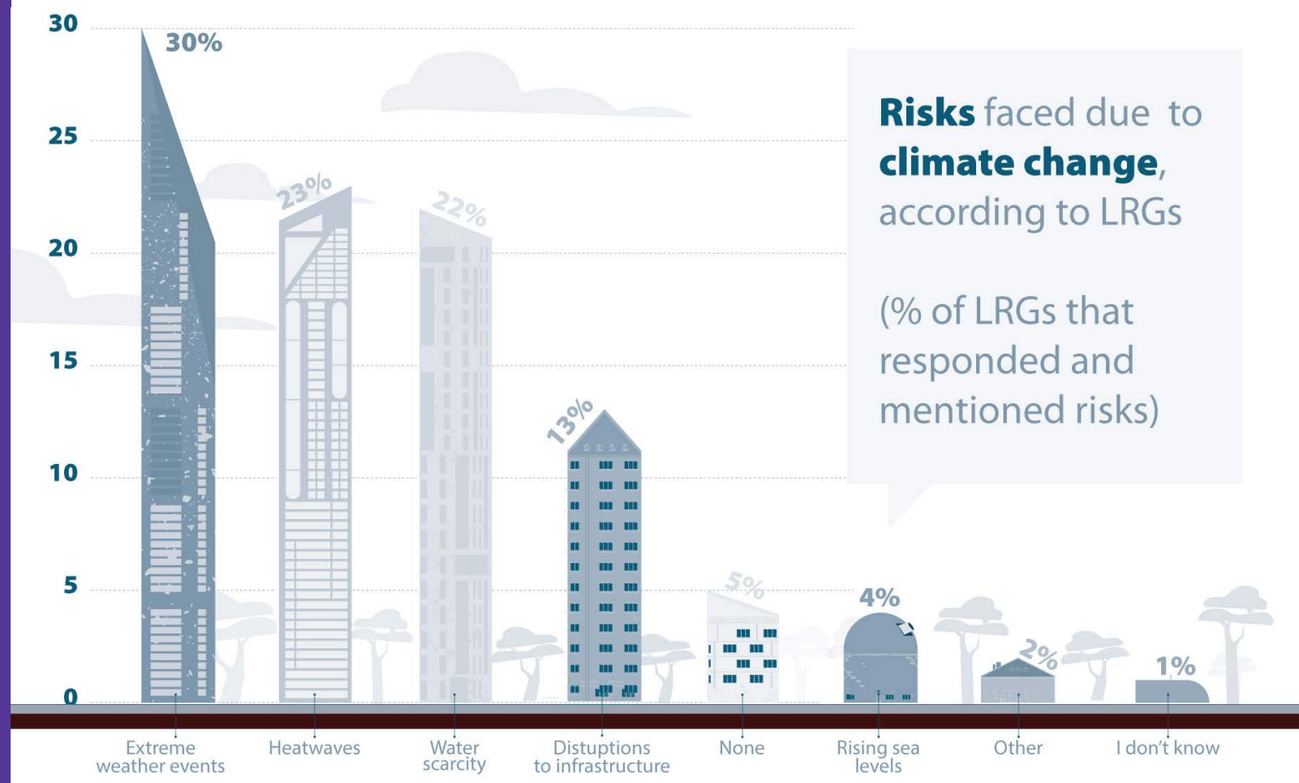


Figure 7: *Risks Faced Due to Climate Change According to LRGs*

The cost of inaction can increasingly be expressed in concrete numbers. For example, the floods and landslides that took place in Slovenia in August 2023 affected around 85% of the country's municipalities, provoking damages estimated at EUR 9.9 billion, which corresponds to 16% of Slovenia's GDP (2023).[6]

Most sustainability policies are implemented at subnational levels. CEMR found that only 68%[7] of climate and energy-related policies are attributed a sole or shared competence at local or regional level even though up to 90%[8] of climate change adaptation policies are estimated to be implemented at the subnational level. It is therefore crucial that the local and regional levels be adequately equipped to respond as needed to global challenges.

This concern notwithstanding, only 11% of LRGs described their readiness as "very prepared" or "prepared," while more than half of them felt "very unprepared" or "unprepared." The remaining 38% maintained a neutral outlook (see Figure 8).

Main implementation challenges: access to finance, limited local capacities and regulatory complexity

[6] https://www.gov.si/en/news/2023-10-04-minister-jevsek-total-flood-damage-assessment-covers-direct-damage-and-recovery/

[7] https://ccre-cemr.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/NECP_Report_CEMR_2023.pdf

[8] Committee of Regions (2024): Regions and cities shaping the European Green Deal 2.0. Available at: https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/64f17ca7-1d63-11ef-a251-01aa75ed71a1/language-en

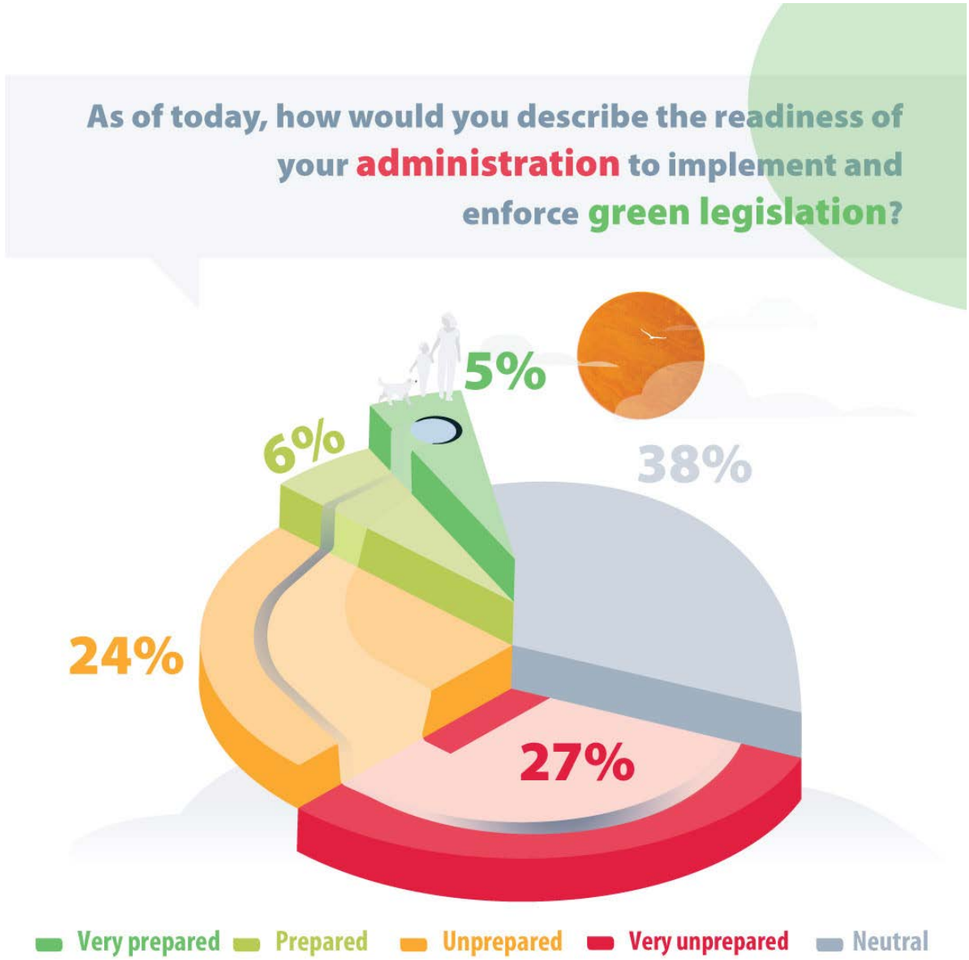


Figure 8: *Assessment of Readiness Level to Implement Green Legislation*

Implementing ambitious green legislation on the scale of the European Green Deal requires a significant unprecedented mobilisation of financial, human and technical capacities across all of Europe's territories. CEMR members, regions and cities highlight several major challenges in this respect:

- **Access to finance:** inadequate financial resources and the complexity of accessing funds.
- **Shortage of staff:** insufficient human resources to fulfil new obligations.
- **Lack of expertise:** a general deficit in technical knowledge and skills needed.

These challenges correlate to the transfer of new tasks and obligations to LRGs and are made more complex by the determination to implement sustainable policies. Examples of this include the Energy Efficiency Directive's requirement that 3% of floors in public buildings be renovated each year, that local cooling and heating plans for municipalities with 45,000 inhabitants be developed and that the energy efficiency first principle be integrated into public procurement (see Chapter 2: legislation info sheets).

In general, respondents requesting "more information" reflects a lack of coherence and need for additional guidance when implementing green policies (see Figure 9).

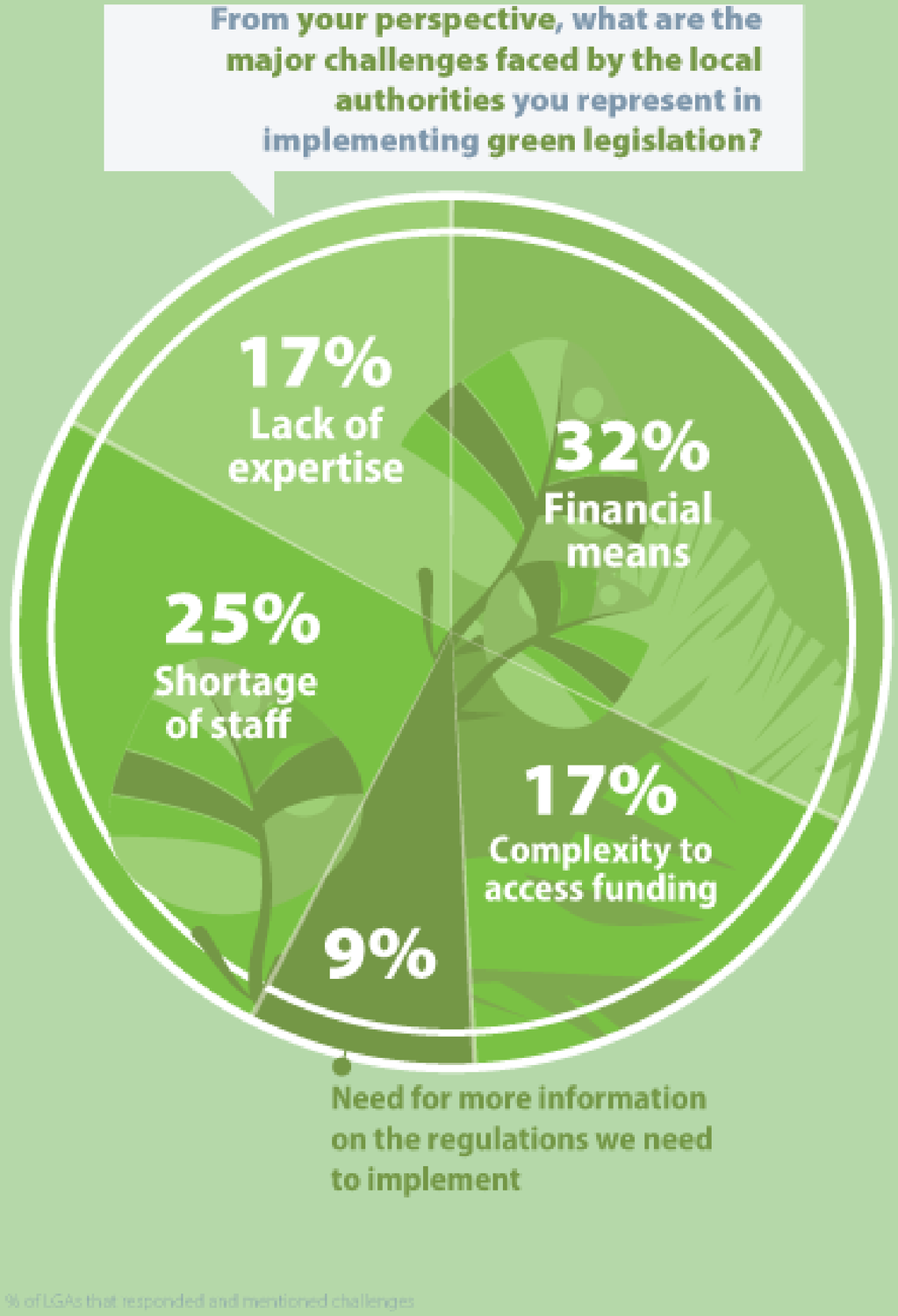


Figure 9: *Implementation Challenges Faced by Local and Regional Governments in Adopting Green Legislation*

Do implementation challenges differ between rural and urban territories?

Responses to CEMR's survey were collected from 164 rural LRGs and 195 urban LRGs, based on their self-classification. The survey brought to light implementation challenges distinct to each:

Rural Authorities: The primary challenge identified was the availability of financial means (27%), followed by the complexity of accessing these funds (16%).

Urban Authorities: The biggest obstacle reported was a shortage of staff (28%), followed by the availability of financial means (22%).

Interestingly, rural and urban territories alike underscored that the combined issues of financial access complexity, regulatory information needs, staff shortages and lack of expertise accounted for over half of their implementation challenges.

Lack of clear communication and dialogue with LRGs

A specific challenge which merits a closer look is the interaction of regions and cities with decision makers, whether at national or European levels. Many jurisdictions in CEMR member countries already benefit from multi-level governance provisions that prescribe the consultation and consideration of LRGs during the decision-making process. Furthermore, the EU guarantees the principles of participative democracy (Art. 11 TEU)[9] and subsidiarity (Art. 5 TEU) as constitutional values.

> *Most EU legislation doesn't affect the local level directly but through the national or regional level. Better communication and accessibility to funds from the EU to local level can both be very useful because local authorities might be keener to implement green policies than their national or regional governments, and it is the level where most direct change will be implemented.*

Etterbeek
Medium-sized city, Belgium

[9] Treaty on European Union (TEU)

Given the advent of a high number of green transition policies with territorial impacts, CEMR's survey opportunely provides clear insights into LRG involvement in decision making and implementation at a time when European regulation is being transposed into national law and/or when national measures are being executed by subnational governments.

Regarding **the overall communication** in the local or regional implementation of EU legislation, nearly half of the respondents stated that national and/or European authorities did "not" communicate clearly enough (see Figure 10).

Regarding **targeted consultations**, 71% of responding LRGs reported not having had the opportunity to express their views. This undoubtedly accounts for the even smaller share of 4% of regions and municipalities that felt "considered" during the process of transposing green legislation.

Consultation of CEMR members was slightly higher (30% of respondents); but once again, only a fraction (12%) felt adequately "considered".

The lack of involvement of municipalities and regions and their respective associations presents a challenge that needs to be addressed in several ways:

- Ensure greater clarity by defining the roles and tasks of each tier of government;
- Establish mechanisms for local authorities to express their views on legislative proposals;
- Incorporate input from local authorities to bridge the gap between EU proposals and local realities.

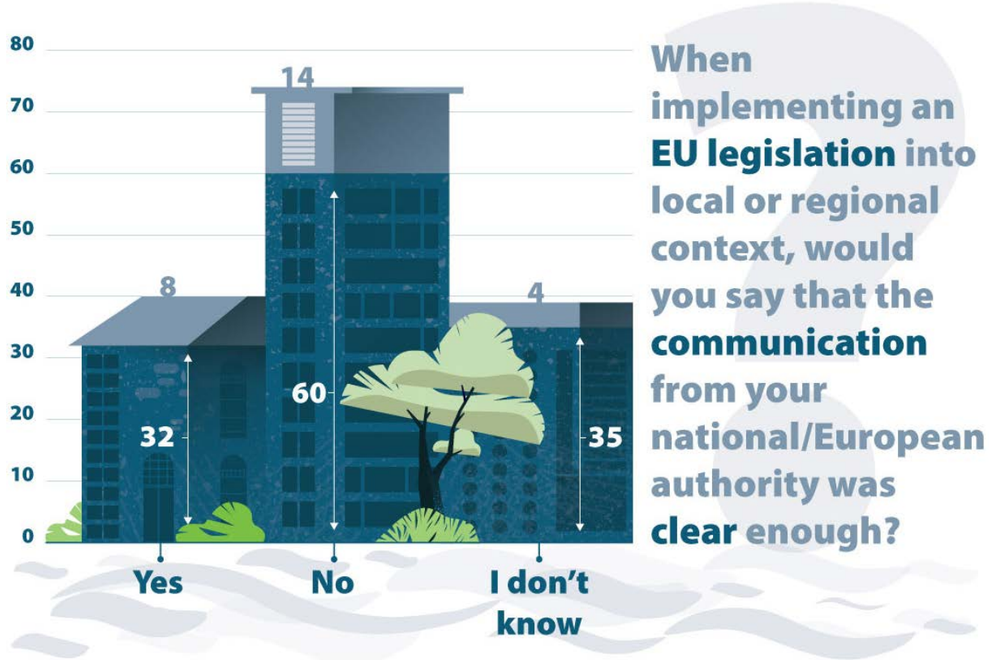


Figure 10: *Clarity of Communication from National or European Authorities when Implementing EU Legislation at the Local or Regional Levels*

Clearer communication from European and national regulators through ***permanent and suitable dialogue and consultation mechanisms*** could significantly help overcome challenges in implementing green policies as well as ensure that territorial-tailored specificities are already integrated in the policy design.

Municipalities and regions are the first to witness the acceleration of floods, droughts and heatwaves that affect our local businesses, public health and daily lives, underscoring the undeniable reality of climate change. Local and regional governments hold crucial competences for implementing effective climate change mitigation. National, European and international ambitions can empower us to overcome physical climate challenges and improve access to funding, ensure regulatory coherence and support capacity building. To achieve this, we need better policy-making that ensures legal coherence and includes local and regional governments in permanent multi-level governance and dialogues.

Belinda Gottardi

CEMR Spokesperson on Climate & Energy

3. Future priorities:
What is the long-term vision and how to foster implementation in all municipalities and regions?

In a nutshell

The upcoming implementation of the numerous pieces of legislation adopted in recent years will significantly impact the subnational level, with 71% of LRGs anticipating major effects. Understanding local and regional priorities is therefore essential to advancing the EGD's implementation effectively. This chapter highlights key changes to foster the green transition at local level over the next decade.

I. Address local and regional needs during the Green Deal implementation to benefit Europe's citizens and democracy.

II. Reframe the dialogue and partnership with LRG to co-create ambitious green policies .

III. Effectively contribute to fostering Europe's competitiveness through increased, simplified and more direct sustainable funding for the local and regional levels.

IV. Champion equity in the green transition, particularly in the most vulnerable areas.

V. Make the green transition a priority for cooperation across the EU and even beyond its borders

The sectoral recommendations also seek to enhance local and regional action in the field of environment, energy, waste and mobility

The challenges identified in the first two chapters are expected to grow with the forthcoming implementation of the multiple pieces of legislation adopted in recent years. The 14 legislative acts being examined in the next section will all have a tremendous impact on municipalities and regions. Figure 11 below shows that 71% of LRGs believe that areas falling under their competence will be greatly or partially affected.

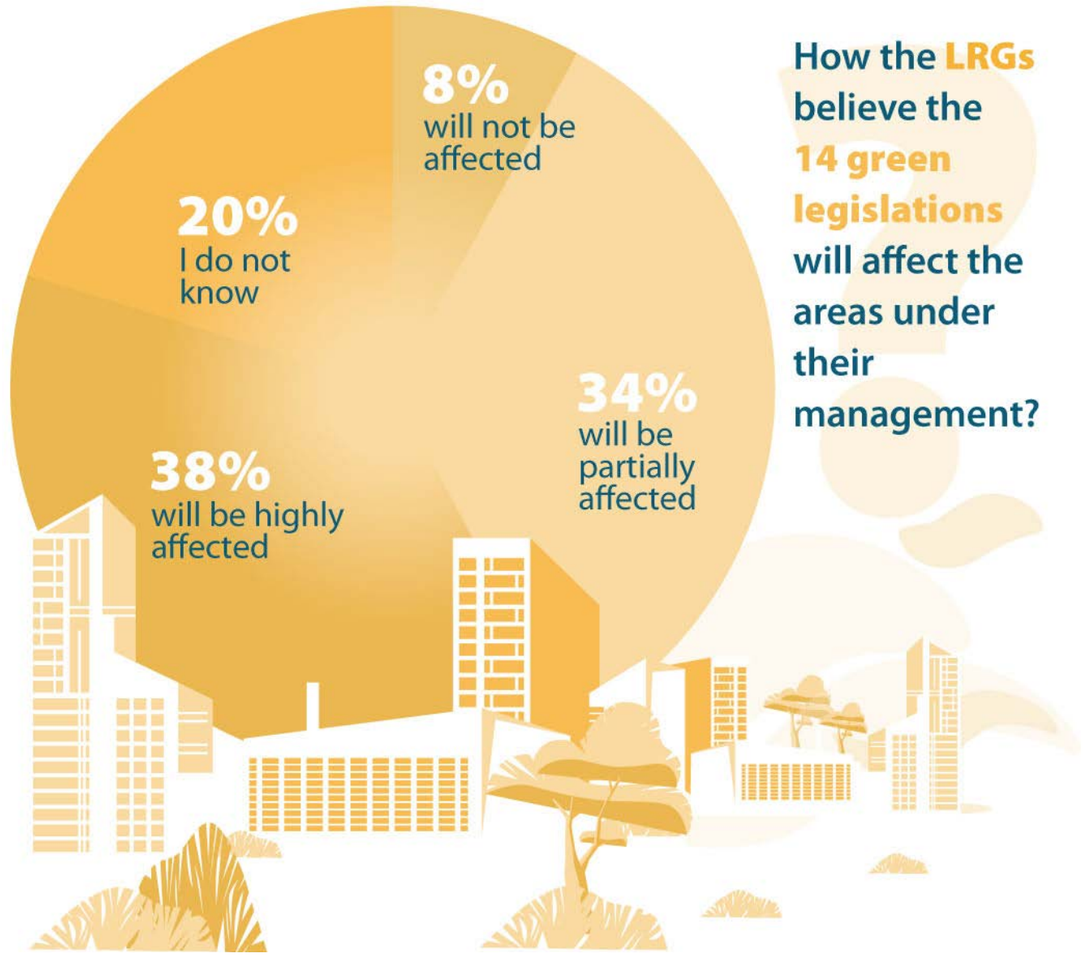


Figure 11: *Perceived Impact of 14 Green Legislations on Areas Managed by LRGs*

As we look to the future of the EGD, it is imperative that we understand the priorities of local and regional stakeholders to best ensure a smooth implementation. The following section underlines the key changes that CEMR members wish to see in the next phase of green policies, from cross-cutting recommendations (part 1) to key sectoral messages (part 2).

Cross-cutting recommendations to ensure the successful implementation of the Green Deal

1 Address local and regional needs during the Green Deal implementation to benefit Europe's citizens and democracy

Local and regional governments are on the front lines of responding to climate events like heatwaves, droughts, floods and rising sea level. However, they face significant challenges, such as limited capacity and complex regulation, in implementing green legislation. Citizens expect effective action and the success of the green transition depends on these governments' ability to across all territories.

To achieve the ambitious green agenda goals, comprehensive support is crucial to successfully carry out the green transition across all territories.

We thus call for:

- A better evaluation of the impact of European legislation at territorial level with timely, accurate and up-to-date territorial impact assessments at the different stages of negotiations. A holistic approach is also necessary to ensure regulations work together effectively at territorial level.
- A comprehensive evaluation of the needs and impact of the investments in infrastructures necessary to implement sectoral legislation to enable the bundling and rationalisation of costs.
- Flexible guidance and capacity-building instruments tailored to the diverse needs of local and regional stakeholders, e.g. developing new skills and adapting the labour market to emerging challenges.
- A reduction of the administrative burden, e.g. by rationalising reporting requirements.

2 Reframe the dialogue and partnership with LRG to co-create ambitious green policies

At least 70% of the European Green Deal legislation must be implemented at local and regional level. Through projects, citizen initiatives and policies for climate change mitigation and adaptation, municipalities and regions, together with their citizens, are advancing towards achieving climate neutrality by 2050. Although some consultation mechanisms, the Multilevel Energy and Climate Dialogues[10] for example, occasionally include local and regional views, it should not be inferred that local and regional needs have been accurately reflected in any resulting legislation.

Yet, recognising the indispensable role of local municipalities and regions is crucial for the effectiveness of EGD initiatives. A more inclusive approach would not only leverage the know-how of local authorities but also foster a sense of ownership and greater accountability in service of achieving sustainability objectives in cooperation with other relevant stakeholders.

We thus call for:

- Flexible and place-based policies, to be defined using a bottom-up approach to ensure that measures put in place at territorial level effectively respond to territorial as well as people's needs. Such policies, inspired by the partnership principle of cohesion policy, will engage citizens and inspire behavioural changes across all generations.
- Strong and enduring multi-level governance partnership frameworks to enhance dialogue and collaboration between various government levels, shaping green policies that fit territorial needs, thus ensuring their effective implementation. This can be achieved by establishing structural dialogues and consultations aligned with the next steps to advance the Green Deal and net-zero policies.
- Multi-stakeholder cooperation, including public-private partnerships, to develop long-term sustainable policies tailored to the socio-economic context. These partnerships can be instrumental in pooling strengths to achieve common objectives, for example by way of: research and development projects (notably Smart Cities), innovative financing schemes or implementation of the Polluter Pays Principle (establishment of Extended Producer Responsibility schemes).

3 Effectively contribute to fostering Europe's competitiveness through increased, simplified and more direct sustainable funding for the local and regional levels

It is estimated that an additional 520 billion euros yearly in investments are needed to meet the EGD objectives up until 2030. Even though European and national funding instruments for the green transition – both from public and private sources – exist to a certain extent, they often are not easily accessible to local and regional authorities because of stringent eligibility criteria, scaling issues and complex administrative processes.

Increased private and public investments are crucial for mastering the clean transition, leveraging the strengths of both sectors to drive innovation and efficiency. Simplifying access to sustainable funding and fostering public-private partnerships can significantly contribute to Europe's competitiveness by ensuring that municipalities and regions have the necessary resources to implement effective climate actions.

[10] Art. 11 of the Governance Regulation of the Energy Union and Climate Action

While preparing the ground for the next long-term post-2027 EU budget, it is vital to ensure that local and regional leaders receive strong financial support to undertake ambitious projects, kickstarting significant environmental improvements and contributing to our continent's competitiveness.

We thus call for:

- An alignment of the strategic priorities and the budget of the next multiannual financial framework with EGD implementation requirements, thereby increasing the volume of direct funding to municipalities and regions.
- Enhance support for innovative climate change mitigation and adaptation projects led by local and regional governments. Public investments can leverage guarantees and long-term stability, addressing market failures and creating a secure context that attracts and accelerates private investment.
- Simplified financial regulations and improved access to funding instruments by lowering co-financing ratios and reducing minimum investment thresholds. Technical assistance specifically intended for local and regional governments (e.g. the ELENA or JASPERS programmes) need to be strengthened and adjusted to better address the diverse needs, sizes, and capacities of territories.
- Continuation of a strong cohesion policy, an indispensable instrument for the shared management of EU budgets. Support for net-zero policies should be increased to help finance local policies that tackle the transition's core underpinnings such as housing renovations and infrastructure, e.g. grid connections for renewable energies, as well as climate adaptation projects and a skilled workforce for emerging green jobs.

4 Champion equity in the green transition, particularly in the most vulnerable areas

The green transition risks increasing the vulnerability of certain territories, particularly given its impact on labour markets and skills requirements. Local and regional governments are uniquely placed with the expertise necessary to identify and implement suitable projects that respond to the needs of socio-economically vulnerable groups and areas within their territories. They should therefore be actively involved at every stage of designing fair transition plans.

We thus call for:

- European funding that targets socio-economic aspects of the sustainability transition, such as the Social Climate Fund, which must be strictly additional to (and not replace) existing expenditure planned by national governments.
- This funding should also go towards capital investments triggering structural changes, such as housing renovations and improved public transportation, rather than solely behavioural changes. By prioritizing these investments, we can ensure that the green transition is equitable and benefits the most vulnerable areas, fostering inclusive and sustainable development.

5 Make the green transition a priority for cooperation across the EU and even beyond its borders

While the Green Deal is primarily an EU initiative, its principles and practices are globally relevant and have been applied beyond the Union's borders. Many local and regional governments have been leading on this issue in countries across Europe, including non-EU members like Norway or the UK, with ambitious policies to achieve a green transition.

The impact of climate change simply does not stop at a country border. It is therefore crucial to foster stronger cooperation and share knowledge and inspirations from successful experiences, even outside the EU. This cross-border collaboration can provide valuable insights and innovative solutions, enriching Europe's green transition efforts.

We thus call for:

- Stronger EU structural projects, including with neighbouring countries. One such example is the Trans-European Transport Network, which has been recently revised11 to strive for better connectivity with urban nodes in Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova.
- Support and encouragement for cross-border initiatives involving renewable energy, water and waste management that benefit all the countries involved. Joint investments in wind farms, solar parks, hydroelectric projects, recycling facilities, water treatment plans and the like can enhance resource efficiency and contribute to the overall reduction of environmental impacts across borders.

[11] Refer to legislation info sheet on TEN-T regulation in the next chapter

Sectoral recommendations

A successful green transition calls for the incentives and actions described below, broken down by sector, at the national and European levels.

Environment

In the field of environment policy, the Green Deal's goal is to build resilient communities capable of thriving in the face of climate change and to develop comprehensive climate adaptation strategies that address the specific needs of local and regional communities.

- Invest in **water resilience infrastructure** to combat droughts, floods and other climate-induced water risks. This should be accompanied by the promotion of sustainable water management and water reuse practices as well as multi-level governance and comprehensive stakeholder involvement to ensure effective implementation of the existing water framework legislation.
- Integrate **nature-based solutions** into urban planning and development. The use of green infrastructure such as wetlands, green roofs and urban forests to mitigate climate impacts and enhance biodiversity should also be encouraged.
- Involve urban planners in the design and implementation of policies that promote **sustainable land use practices**, particularly those that employ a flexible and risk-based approach and also consider the implication of environmental protection provisions on land use and spatial planning.

Energy

Municipalities and regions face three challenges in this area: meeting the 2030 target of 69% renewable electricity by adding new solar and wind parks, upgrading grid and energy storage for decentralised renewable energy and addressing the building sector's energy consumption, which alone accounts for 40% of Europe's total.

- To enhance the social acceptance and the effectiveness of the energy transition, policymakers should prioritize the territorial impacts of renewable energy deployment, ensuring **equitable benefit sharing** between predominantly rural generation and urban consumption areas. It is also essential to keep LRGs and their associations involved throughout the process of spatial planning for renewable energy sites and to support capacity-building for streamlined permitting.
- Provide support for **grid expansion, energy storage and digital infrastructure** to optimise more decentralised and flexible energy supply and demand, a crucial condition for facilitating increased renewable energy integration.
- Harness the **considerable energy efficiency potential** of the cooling and heating sector by promoting local cooling and heating planning with integrated and scalable solutions, e.g. district and neighbourhood-based systems instead of individual solutions, to ensure vulnerable households do not get left behind. Elected representatives must mitigate high upfront capital costs through innovative financial instruments that internalise energy cost savings for loan repayments.

Waste

As regards waste management, the Green Deal aims to transition Europe towards a circular economy, where waste is minimised and resources are reused and recycled efficiently. This transition requires comprehensive and coordinated efforts at national, regional and local levels.

- **Bridge the waste directives implementation** since many Member States are currently not on track to achieve the set EU-level objectives. This calls for targeted support and guidance to ensure compliance (particularly regarding different waste stream collection systems) and effective waste management practices across all regions.
- Develop economic instruments to support the transition to a circular economy, including the **implementation of strong Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)** schemes. These schemes should clearly delineate the roles and responsibilities of municipalities, ensuring that producers contribute fairly to the costs of waste management and recycling processes.
- **Promote waste prevention and resource efficiency** by encouraging innovative solutions for reducing waste at the source. This includes supporting research and developing new materials and products designed for longevity, reuse, and recycling.

Mobility

The Green Deal's vision for mobility focuses on creating sustainable interconnected transport systems that enhance urban and rural connectivity while reducing environmental impacts. One of the current socio-economic challenges facing Europe is ensuring that citizens from both urban and rural areas benefit from improved mobility solutions and infrastructure.

- **TEN-T (Trans-European Transport Network) and urban nodes:** With the new requirements obliging more than 400 urban nodes to develop SUMPS (Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans) by 2027, it is crucial to develop, support and finance effective and tailored strategies coordinating sustainable transport policies at different governance levels, promoting seamless urban-rural connectivity. Moreover, urban nodes must be fully incorporated into the TEN-T corridor framework governance to ensure alignment and coherence with EU objectives.
- **A successful twin transition (green and digital) at local and regional level** should align transport policies with economic, spatial and environmental objectives. To best do this, EU programmes for investments, capacity building and skills should be strengthened. Moreover, ensuring access to comprehensive data will enable stakeholders to make informed decisions and track progress more effectively, but this should not result in unnecessary administrative burdens for municipalities and regions.
- In alignment with the development of urban nodes, a **structured set of supporting measures for rural mobility** should be established. These measures, which could cover policy development, mobilisation and deployment grants and capacity building, should be supported through funding from both the EU and Member States. Ideally, they should give birth to sustainable and inclusive rural mobility solutions that meet the specific needs of rural communities, fostering their integration into the broader transport

"Today, it is urgent to recognise that adaptation to climate change is pivotal for municipalities and regions of all sizes. Investing in sustainable infrastructure and using our resources more efficiently is not just an option, but an imperative for securing a thriving future for all."

Ronan Dantec
CEMR Spokesperson for Environment, French Senator and local councillor, Nantes (France)

Chapter 2

Snapshot of **14 pieces of EU legislation** and their **implications for municipalities and regions**

This chapter explores the legislative framework crucial to the European Green Deal, focusing on environment, waste, mobility, energy and fair transition regulations. It highlights the specific obligations required of municipalities and regions and includes details on the concrete legal norms and articles to be implemented at local level. It also indicates the timeline for transposing these directives into national law, along with key data illustrating the scope and impact of these regulations. Implementation challenges are discussed, alongside best practices that showcase effective local strategies.

Ultimately, the chapter underscores the reality that, in fulfilling the Green Deal's ambitions, municipalities and regions are the flagbearer of governance on all fronts, fighting for a sustainable and equitable future across Europe

*An asterisk following the code number indicates a provisional code due to ongoing legislative processes.

Environment

Nature Restoration (Regulation 2024/1991)

81%

of the habitats in the **European Union** are in poor status - **EC**

State of play

Entered into force (18 August 2024)

General scope and objectives

- Achieve a binding collective target of restoring at least 20% of EU's inland and sea areas by 2030.
- For specific ecosystems in poor condition, target to be raised to 30% by 2030, 60% by 2040 and 90% by 2050.
- Gradually increase Member States' implementation measures to restore degraded habitats under their jurisdiction.

Implications for LRGs

- **Restoration of urban ecosystems:** Member States must ensure that the total national area of green spaces in urban areas and urban tree canopy cover does not decrease by 2030, using 2024 as the baseline year (with an exemption for those places where green spaces already cover more than 45% of the urban centre and the share of urban tree canopy cover is more than 10%). After 2030, there must be an increasing trend of urban green space and urban canopy until a satisfactory level is reached (Art. 8).
- **Restoration of forest ecosystems:** LRGs will contribute to the Member States' commitment to achieving the common EU objective of planting three billion additional trees by 2030 (Art. 13).
- **National Restoration Plans:** A National Restoration Plan is to be submitted by each Member State to the European Commission and revised once every 10 years (Arts. 14 and 15). It will define and map urban ecosystem areas, with the possibility of aggregating the urban ecosystem areas of adjacent municipalities and suburbs into one single urban ecosystem area. By 2030 at the latest, Member States shall set the acceptable levels of green space and tree canopy, as set forth in Article 6.
- **Monitoring and reporting:** LRGs are responsible for reporting on the area of urban tree canopy cover in cities, suburbs, and towns (Art. 17).

Implementation challenges

- No mechanism for mandatory consultation of LRGs for the preparation of National Restoration Plans or the mapping of urban ecosystem areas
- Need to clarify use of the exemption provided under Art. 8 and the methodology for calculating urban green spaces
- Possible conflict between existing national or regional legislation (e.g. regarding green roofs)
- Public contestation stemming from conflicts related to land use and socio-economic interests

Good practice

Urban Green Ghent, BE

Ghent's "Urban Green Ghent" illustrates a comprehensive approach to restoring natural spaces in the urban area of a city. Through such actions as replacing 15% of the city's pavement with green spaces, opening up its watercourses and promoting façade gardens, the City Council of Ghent has been actively working to make the city more climate-resilient in the face of growing climate change risks such as recurrent floods and heatwaves. Ghent provides an interesting example of how municipalities can adapt to the risks of climate change in urban contexts.

Soil Monitoring (Directive 2023/0232*)

State of play

Under negotiation (as from September 2024)

General scope and objectives

Establish a monitoring tool and framework with a view to achieving healthy soils by 2050.

Implications for LRGs

- **Establishment of soil districts:** Member states must divide their national territory into soil districts to be managed by a competent authority. Although this must be done with regard to climate and soil homogeneity, they are also required to take into consideration regional and local administrative divisions (Art. 4).
- **Identification of contaminated sites:** The nationally determined competent district authority must coordinate with LRGs for the identification of possible areas with unhealthy soils (Art. 9).
- **Land take in urban areas:** Land take activities taking place in urban areas must comply with the principles established in the proposal (Art. 11).
- **Management and reparation of contaminated sites:** LRGs must enforce risk-reduction measures when a current or planned use of the soil poses any risk forhuman health (Art. 15).

Implementation challenges

- Harmonising definitions and methodology for soil assessment
- Managing additional administrative burden and costs from reporting soil measurements when there is little flexibility to use existing data and monitoring system
- Ensuring enough flexibility to respect member states' spatial planning decisions, including on housing and energy transition measures

Good practice

Benchmarks project – multiple countries

Operating under the EU Mission for a Soil Deal in Europe's framework, the BENCHMARKS project collaborates with more than 20 academic and implementing partners to develop and evaluate a multi-scale, multi-user monitoring framework for soil health. This framework integrates the best scientific knowledge and technologies to create a harmonised, transparent and cost-effective method for assessing soil health.

Case studies are instrumental to this project's work as they provide a variety of contexts to further refine soil health indicators through testing, ensuring they are relevant to different land uses such as agriculture, forestry and urban areas. Project outcomes have included a harmonised framework for measuring soil health, a review of indicators tested in various landscapes and an integrated soil health tool linking indicators to soil functions and ecosystem services. These efforts aim to support soil health incentivisation schemes and promote sustainable soil management practices across Europe.

Urban Wastewater Treatment Revision (Directive 2022/0345*)

State of play

Under negotiation (as from September 2024)

General scope and objectives

- Reduce the environmental and health risks associated with urban wastewater.
- Reduce the emissions associated with treatment processes.
- Extend the Polluter Pays Principle.

Implications for LRGs

- **Extension of requirements for smaller agglomerations and for rainfall water:** agglomerations of more than 1 000 inhabitants will be covered under the Directive's expanded scope by the end of 2035. The deadline can be extended for 10 years (14 in BG, HR, and RO) if, by the date of entry into force, less than 25% of the agglomerations concerned are provided with collecting systems, or if collecting systems are lacking for less than 25% of these agglomerations' wastewater load.
- **Local plans to address rainwater runoff:** Agglomerations of 100 000 inhabitants or more must create integrated urban wastewater management plans to combat pollution from rainwater by 2030 (Art. 5).
- **Extended Producer Responsibility:** LRGs must identify the main polluters in their area for inclusion in the covering of costs related to wastewater treatment (Arts. 9 and 10)
- **Energy neutrality of treatment plants**: By 2045, 100% of the energy used by treatment plants must come from renewable sources. Energy calculations can factor in both on-site and off-site renewable energy production (Arts. 10 and 11).
- **Monitoring:** LRGs in territories of more than 10 000 inhabitants must monitor GHG emissions produced by treatment plants (Art. 21).

Implementation challenges

- Cost-benefit difficulties in ensuring that individual systems deliver, at a minimum, the same level of secondary and tertiary treatment
- Divergent climatic conditions for the consecution of nitrogen-related targets
- Budgetary and technical constraints

Good practice

Ahksu Wastewater Treatment Plant, TR

The example of the Ahksu Wastewater Treatment Plant exemplifies how wastewater treatment plants can be powered using on-site generated energy. By installing a biogas unit in the treatment plant, Denizli Metropolitan Municipality was able to generate enough electricity to cover 55% of the infrastructure's power needs for its proper functioning. Thus, the Ahksu treatment plant demonstrates how it is technically possible to reduce dependence on fossil fuels in wastewater treatment activities by making the required investment.

Ambient Air Quality – Recast (Directive 2022/0347*)

Every year **300 000** Europeans die prematurely due to air pollution – EEA Between 2008 and 2021, emissions of ozone precursors in the EU decreased by **30 %.** - EEA

State of play

Under negotiation (as from September 2024)

General scope and objectives

- Achieve the target of Zero Air Pollution by 2050, with an update of the different air quality targets based on the most recent scientific findings.
- Include new pollutants to be regulated and more binding air quality targets
- Improve and standardise reporting and air quality modelling procedures

Implications for LRGs

- **Designation as competent authorities:** Member States will appoint the competent authority to oversee the assessment of air quality, the accuracy of measurements and the establishment of air quality plans (Art. 5).
- **Selection of sampling points:** Competent authorities must follow the criteria established in Annex IV for the selection of fixed measurement points in cases of predicted pollution exceedances (Art. 9). At least one measurement supersite per 10 million inhabitants must be established (Art. 10).
- **Introduction of air quality plans and short-term plans**: Air quality plans must be updated or introduced in territories where the levels of specified gases have not been reduced to the NUTS 1 level. The plan must be established within two years of the infraction, i.e. when any alert indicator from Annex 1, Section 4 is surpassed.
- **New measures to reduce air pollution:** Air quality plans must describe the measures proposed to lessen the impact of specific pollution sources in urban areas (Art 19 and Annex VIII B.2 a-f).
- **Environmental justice:** Citizens and NGOs will have greater legal standing to challenge air quality plans, potentially leading to an increase in court cases in this area (Chapter VII).

Implementation challenges

- Need for coordination between territories (local and intermediate authorities) from the same NUTS
- Compilation of data

Good practice

Green Lungs for our Cities, AL

The "Green lungs for our cities" project is an example of how to work to improve air quality in urban contexts. Through the elaboration and implementation of an alternative local monitoring methodology, the municipality of Tirana, together with other stakeholders, has developed an evidence-based policy framework influencing the field of urban environmental protection at the local level in line with EU accession requirements. This action emphasises the importance of working with local partners in non-EU contexts for success in implementing environmental policy and moving ahead with the accession process.

Waste Framework – Targeted revision: Textile and food waste (Directive 2022/0232*)

State of play

Under negotiation (as from September 2024)

General scope and objectives

- Achieve a 10% reduction in food waste in the manufacturing industry and a 30% reduction in restaurants and households (per capita) by 2030.
- Improve textile waste management by prioritising waste prevention, re-use and recycling, implementing the Polluter Pays Principle and introducing the mandatory Extended Producer Responsibility for textiles.

Implications for LRGs

- Separate collection of food waste is pivotal to achieving 30% reduction in food waste in households.
- Member States are obliged to implement separate collection of textiles by January 2025.
- Establishing standardised Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) systems for textiles across all EU member states will require the involvement of local and regional representatives. Municipalities shall take part in creating a legal framework to define the roles and responsibilities of each party in a clear and fair manner.

Implementation challenges

- Municipalities will bear the costs of the treatment of textile waste not covered by the EPR, namely the period between the entrance into force of the mandatory collection of textiles in January 2025 and the establishment of the EPR schemes.
- Intensive administrative and reporting requirements.

Good practice

Re-Fashion Paris – FR

Paris' approach to textile waste offers an example of how to manage and reduce it. In collaboration with Re-Fashion and local waste management operators, the municipality has developed a plan called "Programme Local de Prévention des Déchets Ménagers et Assimilés" (PLPDMA) that focuses on five priority waste streams to be reduced, including textiles. Re-fashion proposes €0.10 per inhabitant to municipalities for communication campaigns and in exchange for the municipality's authorising the organisation to set up one collection point per 2 000 inhabitants in public areas. The local textile waste operators are responsible for managing the equipment and waste.

Packaging and Packaging Waste (Regulation 2022/0396*)

State of play

Under negotiation (as from September 2024)

General scope and objectives

- Reduce the production of packaging waste by 5% by 2030, 10% by 2035 and 15% by 2040.
- Promote cost-effective circular economy principles across the industry.
- Increase the use of recycled materials in packaging.

Implications for LRGs

- **Sustainability requirements:** Collection and treatment systems must be adapted to allow the inclusion of compostable packaging in the organic waste stream (Art. 8).
- **Implementation of Extended Producer Responsibility:** LRGs can sign agreements with producers for the collection and treatment of packaging waste (Art. 43).
- **Collection systems:** LRGs must ensure that collection systems effectively ensure the separate treatment of packaging waste from end-users by material in accordance with the proposal (Art. 48)
- **Collection objectives:** By 2029, 90% of single-use plastic and metal beverage containers (up to three litres) will have to be collected separately (via deposit and return systems or other solutions that ensure the collection target is met).
- **Green Public Procurement:** Public contracts awarded by LRGs that include packaged products shall apply the Green Public Procurement criteria to be developed by the European Commission in a future Delegated Act (Art. 63).

Implementation challenges

- Implementing effectual biodegradable and compostable waste management is tricky given the wide diversity of existing materials and the need to ensure consumers receive clear information. The resulting confusion leads to increased littering and hampers waste collection, reuse and recycling.
- Impediments to sharing the cost burden: identifying the packaging producer can be difficult and hinder the application of the polluter pays principle
- Green Public Procurement currently lacks a clear and harmonised definition, as well as concrete information about the environmental impact of products or services. Additionally, even if public authorities manage to build their skills and technical capacities enough to integrate environmental criteria in tender specifications and evaluations, the availability, quality and cost efficiency of such services and products remain significant obstacles.

Good practice

Pack it better – BE

"Pack it Better" is a project spearheaded by major stakeholders such as Fost Plus, Valipac and several industry associations cooperating with Belgian municipalities to streamline the collection and recycling of household packaging. The project aims to encourage private actors to design packaging that meets eco-conception requirements at both domestic and industrial levels. The project's primary goal is to foster sustainable packaging practices among businesses. Key actions have included creating an informative website to share updates on sustainable packaging developments, organising webinars and seminars focused on circular packaging and establishing a platform where companies can present their questions to experts. This initiative promotes eco-friendly packaging solutions and facilitates knowledge sharing and collaboration among companies, contributing to a more sustainable packaging industry in Belgium.

Mobility

Trans-European Network - Transport (Regulation 2024/1679)

State of play

Entered into force (18 July 2024)

General scope and objectives

- Alleviate transport congestion in the EU and reduce GHG emissions deriving from the transport sector.
- Increase the resilience of the TEN-T to climate change and natural hazards.
- Foster efficient transport through multimodality and interoperability

Implications for LRGs

- **Involvement of LRGs in the implementation**: LRGs must necessarily be involved in the planning and execution of the different actions linked to the implementation of the provisions (Art. 12).
- **Urban nodes:**
  - > **Inclusion of urban infrastructure in the TEN-T:** Urban transport infrastructure can be included in the TEN-T, as defined in Art.3 and if it is included in the Annexes (Art. 39).
  - > **Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans:** LRGs from urban nodes must adopt SUMPs by the end of 2027 and include information on sustainability measures and first/last mile connections to the TEN-T (Arts. 40 and 41).
  - > **Opt-in/Opt-out**: An urban node can be included or excluded from the TEN-T upon request of the member state and LRGs concerned (Art. 56).
  - > **Consultation for projects of common interests**: For projects considered as such, LRGs must be consulted by the national authorities (Art. 57).

Implementation challenges

- Need for coordination between national and regional/ local urban authorities to develop and update SUMPs
- Funding resources for the costly investments in mobility infrastructure
- Extensive data collection and reporting requirement

Good practice

Support for Polish SUMPs – PL

This initiative, launched by the Polish Ministry of Infrastructure and the European Commission in collaboration with other stakeholders, provides support to Polish Functional Urban Areas to implement their Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMPs) and increase their knowledge of how to carry out transport projects funded by the EU. This capacity-building initiative exemplifies to other urban nodes how SUMPs can be developed and how technical difficulties arising from this process can be overcome.

Alternative Fuels Infrastructure (Regulation 2023/1804)

Cars' CO2 emissions accounted for **60.6%** of the EU's total transport emissions in 2019. Road transportation as a whole amounted to **71.7% of CO2** emissions in the EU in 2019 – **EC**

State of play

Entered into force (22/09/2023)

General scope and objectives

- This Directive established a framework of common measures for the deployment of an alternative fuels infrastructure in the EU to minimise dependence on oil and to mitigate transport's environmental impact.
- To ensure that energy supply corresponds to future needs, a commensurate number of publicly accessible recharging stations are to be deployed, capable of delivering a fixed minimum total power output determined by the number of vehicles registered in a territory: specifically, for each light-duty battery electric vehicle registered, the public recharging station must be able to provide a total power output of at least 1.3 kW ; and for each light-duty plug-in hybrid vehicle registered, this figure must be at least 0.80 kW.
- National policy frameworks must develop targets for implementation, taking into account the interests of regional and local authorities in particular with respect to recharging and refuelling infrastructure for public transport (Art 14).

Implications for LRGs

- **Acceleration of the rollout of charging points**: LRGs must ensure that the planning and permitting procedures governing the rollout of recharging points for different energy sources can be expedited by providing targeted public support and resolving any technical issues that instil doubts in relation to investments (Arts. 3 to 12).
- Reporting obligations: LRGs must cooperate with national authorities to fulfil reporting obligations (Arts. 18 and 19).

Implementation challenges

- Lack of capacity to prepare electric grids
- Infrastructure shortages in more rural areas
- Need for coordination between areas (energy supplier, construction, environmental, spatial planning)
- Tight deadlines (deployment targets will become enforceable in 2025, 2027, 2030 and 2035.

Good practice

Omgevingsloket Online – NL

Omgevingsloket Online is an online service counter for environmental permits in the Netherlands that also processes requests to create and operate recharging points. Once permission has been granted for a specific recharging point, the municipality concerned is notified. Acting as a single online point, the platform illustrates how the permitting procedure for the rollout of recharging points in municipalities can be simplified and accelerated.

Renewable Energy Directive (Directive 2023/2413)

State of play

Entered into force (31/10/2023)

General scope and objectives

- Achieve a 42.5% share of renewable sources in the EU energy mix by 2030.

Implications for LRGs

- **Generation of renewable energy in buildings:** Promotes on-site renewable energy production in buildings. Allows public or mixed public-private buildings to be used for renewable energy production by third parties (Art. 15a).
- **Identification of areas for renewable energy deployment:** Requires LRGs to assist in mapping areas for renewable energy (Art. 15b).
- **Renewables acceleration areas**: Designation of suitable areas for accelerated deployment of renewable sources (Art. 15c).
- **Public participation:** LRGs tasked with promoting public acceptance of renewable energy projects (Art. 15d).
- **Permit-granting (Art. 16):**
  - > **Contact points:** Member States may designate contact points to support permit applicants.
  - > **Electronic permit-grants and public information:** By November 2025, all permit-granting procedures must be electronic and LRGs must make all decisions publicly available.
  - > **Staff training:** Member States shall assist LRGs in reskilling staff.
  - > **Accelerated deadlines**: Permits in acceleration areas must be granted within 12 months, with tacit approval occurring if authorities fail to reply by set deadline. Outside of acceleration areas, procedures must not exceed two years.
  - > **Preferential consideration:** Renewable energy projects are to be considered an overriding public interest during permit-granting.

Implementation challenges

- Public acceptance and participation: Ensuring local support through benefits like revenue sharing.
- Addressing imbalances between municipalities and project developers, especially regarding voluntary compensation payments.
- Resource constraints and new deadlines: Tight deadlines for area screenings and environmental impact assessments further stress municipal resources.
- Need for procedural clarity at all levels of government in line with procedural law.
- Lack of space in urban areas.

Good practice

Harnessing Wind Energy for a Balanced Budget and Community Prosperity (Germany)

The small village of Fohren-Linden in Rhineland-Palatinate (Germany) has effectively addressed the challenges of renewable energy implementation, transforming itself into a debt-free and thriving community. With a population of 350, Fohren-Linden generates significant revenue from four community-owned wind turbines. These turbines have enabled the village to maintain a balanced budget, reduce property taxes and invest in local infrastructure without incurring debt. Key project achievements include a new playground, upgraded bus stops and a renovated community kitchen. The annual wind energy revenue of around €90 000 attracts new residents by funding extra value amenities and affordable housing plots. The village's experience highlights the importance of local ownership and investment in renewable energy for sustainable economic development and enhanced quality of life.

Energy Efficiency Directive (Directive 2023/1791)

State of play

Entered into force (published 20/09/2023)

General scope and objectives

- Achieve a binding collective reduction in energy consumption of at least 11.7% compared to 2020.

Implications for LRGs

- Energy efficiency targets: LRGs must comply with an annual 1.9% consumption reduction for public bodies starting in September 2025. Municipalities with populations under 50 000 are excluded until 2026, and those under 5 000 until 2029. This requires local authorities to map public energy consumption and building stock (Art. 5).
- Renovation targets: LRGs must progressively renovate buildings larger than 250 m^2 at an annual rate of 3% of the total floor area until all buildings become Near Zero-Energy Buildings or Zero-Energy Buildings. Exceptions include protected, historical, military, worship, and religious buildings (Art. 6).
- Public procurement: The Directive mandates that public contracts and concessions, meeting specific value thresholds, must prioritise energy-efficient products, services and buildings (Art. 7).
- Local cooling and heating plans: Municipalities with populations over 45 000 must prepare these plans (Art. 25).

Implementation challenges

- High upfront capital costs to meet renovation targets represent a financial challenge for in times of tight budgets.
- Divergent energy efficiency certification processes and standards.
- Indirect requirements for mapping public energy consumption.

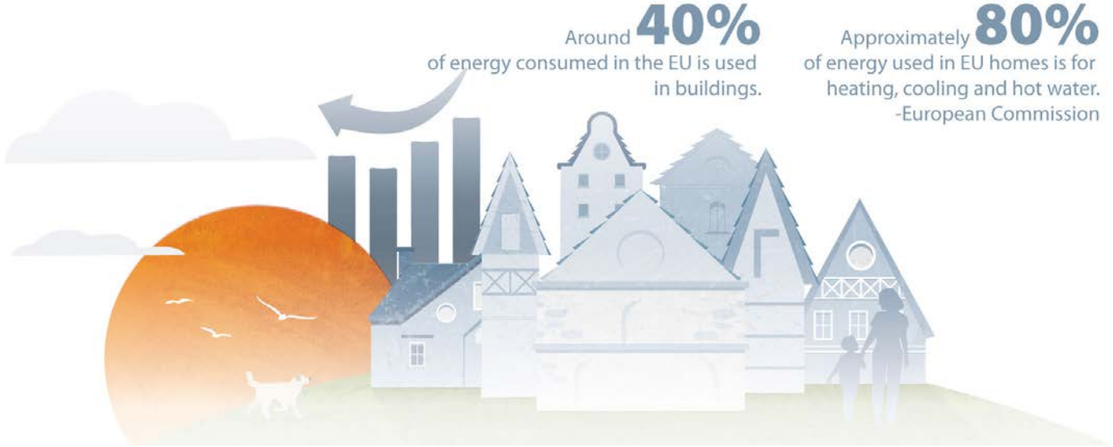
Good practice

Nenzing's Path to Energy Autonomy: e5 for Towns and Municipalities (Austria)

Nenzing is an Austrian town of 6500 inhabitants, founding member of the e5 programme, and a pioneer in energy efficiency since 1998. A key project is the district heating power plant, producing 4.1 million kWh annually from regional biomass and substituting 670,000 liters of heating oil per year. Covering 3.2 km, this network supplies 120 new residential units, six older apartment blocks, 80 houses, a swimming pool, and numerous municipal buildings with heat from regional biomass. The €6.2 million investment focuses on using biomass considered waste from forestry and wood industries.

Additionally, e5 supports renovating municipal buildings, switching to LED street lighting, and integrating photovoltaic systems. Nenzing aims to replace all oil heating with renewables by 2030, reduce per capita electricity consumption through user training, and become a CO2-neutral community by engaging citizens in climate protection efforts.

Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (Directive 2024/1225)



State of play

Entered into force (28/05/2024)

General scope and objectives

- Decarbonise the building stock by 2050.

Implications for LRGs

- **Involvement in national renovation plans:** LRGs must be consulted by national authorities as part of the drafting process of drafting of the required national renovation plan (Art. 3).
- **Minimum energy performance standards:** Member States must ensure non-residential buildings meet energy performance standards, reducing energy use by 16% by 2030 and 26% by 2033, based on 2020 data. Residential buildings must decrease their primary energy use by 16% by 2030 and 20-22% by 2035, focusing on the worst-performing 43%. (Art. 9).
- **Solar energy installations:** LRGs must deploy solar energy installations on public roofs when technically and financially feasible (Art. 10).
- **Infrastructure for mobility and simplification of procedures:** Authorities must deploy recharging points and pre-cabling in park spaces within their buildings, reserving space for bikes (Art. 14).
- **One-stop shops:** LRGs must be consulted for the establishment of technical assistance facilities, of which at least one is required per 80 000 inhabitants or per region (Art. 18).

Implementation challenges

- Costly investments required to meet renovation targets and shortage of qualified labour.
- Short timeframes to renovate public buildings.
- Interplay of regulatory complexity with the Energy Efficiency Directive (see above), e.g. different reference year for calculating energy performance.

Good practice

Integrated Renovation and Social Inclusiveness in Utena's Aukštakalnis Quarter (Lithuania)

The Aukštakalnis quarter in Utena embarked on a comprehensive project to renovate 41 apartment buildings and 1 public building. This initiative sought to reduce annual energy consumption by 50%, ultimately producing yearly energy savings of around 6000 MWh, which translated into self-sufficiency regarding the loan repayment.

The financing is tied to the buildings, ensuring continuity regardless of ownership changes. The €15.3 million project, supported through state funds, municipal budgets, EU funds and private investments, also upgraded street lighting and green areas, fostering social inclusiveness.

In Lithuania, 66% of the population live in multi-apartment buildings, mostly built before 1993. For the 30 000 buildings needing updates, Lithuanian legislation allows for renovations with a simple majority approval from apartment owners. Municipalities facilitate this by offering incentives and appointing renovation administrators.

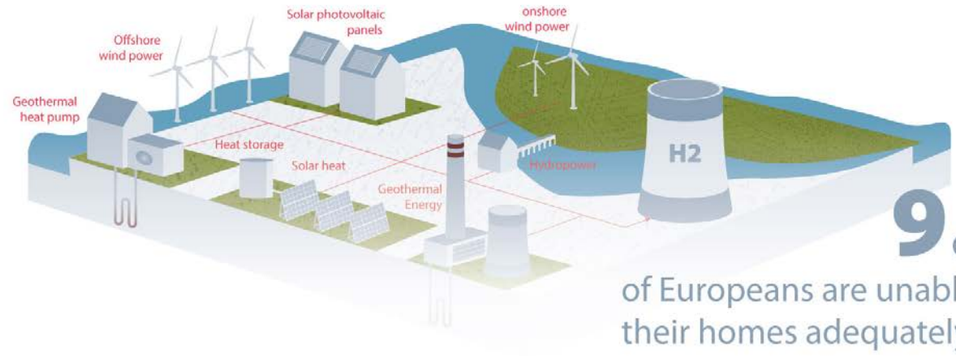
State support includes:

> 30% compensation for energy efficiency renovations.

> Interest rate compensation for loans over 3%.

> 100% coverage of technical assistance costs.

Electricity Market Reform (Regulation 2024/1747 & Directive 2024/1711)



State of play

Entered into force (16/07/2024)

General scope and objectives

- The proposal aims to stabilise energy prices and shield consumers from market volatility.

Implications for LRGs

Internal Market for Electricity Regulation (EU) 2024/1747

- **Efficient network investments:** Incentives for flexible resources and connection agreements (Art. 18).
- **Power purchase agreements:** National authorities may promote these to meet decarbonisation targets (Art. 19a).
- **Direct price support schemes**: Support for new generation investments, using two-way contracts for difference, for renewables and nuclear energy (Art. 19d).

Common Rules for the Internal Market for Electricity Directive (EU) 2024/1711

- **Energy sharing:** Projects must ensure shared electricity is accessible to vulnerable customers and limited to 6 MW in capacity (Art. 15a).
- **Supplier risk management**: Suppliers must implement hedging strategies (Art. 18a).
- **Supplier of last resort:** Designated for households and emphasis on offers being market-based (Art. 27a).
- **Protection from disconnections**: Measures to ensure vulnerable customers are protected (Art. 28a).
- **Affordable energy during crises:** EU may declare price crises, allowing for targeted public interventions (Art. 66a).

Implementation challenges

- Need for grid investments and digitalisation coupled with energy storage build-up to balance production and consumption volatility.
- Clear criteria needed to identify energy poverty and to support vulnerable citizens in a targeted way.
- Financial compensation mechanism for "suppliers of last resort", notably municipal utilities.

Good practice

Sharing is Caring: Reducing Costs and Supporting Local Families with Renewable Energy (Portugal)

The Santa Casa da Misericórdia in Miranda do Douro has significantly reduced costs and supported local families through a Renewable Energy Community (REC) initiative. Partnering with Cleanwatts, 239 PV panels were installed, providing enough capacity to power their facilities and supply energy to the community. Cleanwatts fully financed, installed and managed the project, eliminating all upfront costs and complexities for the charity.

Financial benefits:

> Saved €18 000 in the first year by avoiding market electricity prices.

> Local families benefit from around 30% reduced energy costs.

Social and environmental benefits:

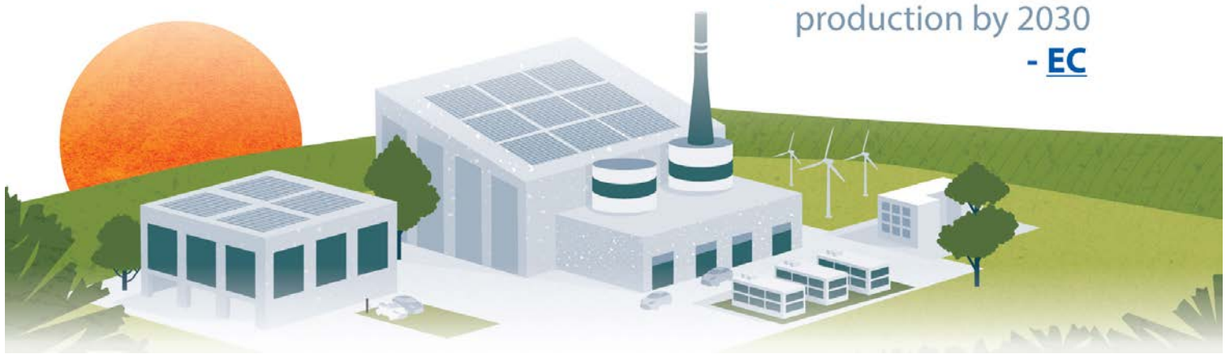
> Over 100 families received affordable clean energy.

> Achieved 44% carbon neutrality, reducing CO2 emissions by 19 tons annually.

Grid balancing and efficiency:

> Supported by a virtual power plant, the energy community manages grid balancing and enhances flexibility, ensuring optimal energy distribution, production and consumption.

Net Zero Industry Act (Regulation 2024/1735)



State of play

Entered into force (29/06/2024)

General scope and objectives

- The Regulation seeks to enhance the EU's manufacturing capacity for net-zero technologies to meet climate goals, targeting 40% of the EU's annual net-zero technology manufacturing capacity by 2030.

Implications for LRGs

- **Single Points of Contact (SPC):** Member States may designate SPCs to coordinate permit processes for net-zero projects, potentially at regional or local levels. They must provide accessible online information on permitting, financing and support services (Art. 6, Art. 7).
- **Accelerated permitting:** Permit processes for projects <1 GW should not exceed 12 months (9 months for strategic projects); for >1GW, not exceed 18 months (12 months for strategic projects) (Art. 9, Art. 16).
- **Spatial planning:** LRGs must include net-zero projects in their spatial plans, prioritise built surfaces, provide spatial planning data to Member States and identify CO2 storage site areas (Art. 11, Art. 20).
- **Net-zero acceleration valleys:** Designated areas for workforce reskilling, infrastructure and investment to support net-zero technology clusters (Art. 17)
- **Public procurement:** Contracts involving net-zero technologies must meet sustainability and resilience criteria (Art. 25).
- **Auctions to deploy renewables:** Authorities must include qualitative criteria when designing auctions that exceed the minimum project size (Art. 26)

Implementation challenges

- Complex public procurement criteria.
- Shorter permitting processes may hinder citizen involvement and social acceptance.
- Establishing SPCs could lead to a duplication of administrative efforts.

Good practice

Driving Sustainability: Devon County Council and Altilium's Revolutionary EV Battery Recycling (UK)

Devon County Council, through the Green Innovation Fund, supported Altilium to scale up their EcoCathode™ process for recycling electric vehicle (EV) batteries. This innovative method, verified by the University of Plymouth, recovers over 95% of critical metals like lithium, supporting a circular economy and reducing environmental impact. Altilium is the UK's sole company upcycling these metals into high-nickel cathode active materials for new batteries. This process cuts carbon emissions by 60% and costs by 20% compared to using virgin materials. Their planned recycling plant will process waste from 150 000 EVs annually, meeting nearly 20% of the UK's 2030 demand. This initiative highlights Devon County Council's commitment to sustainable growth and environmental stewardship, emphasising the crucial role of local authorities in driving innovative environmental solutions.

Social Climate Fund Regulation (Regulation 2023/955)

Energy price increases in 2022 disproportionally affected the most vulnerable, low-income households, who spent an estimated **12%** of their total budget on energy in 2022, up from **7.8%** in 2020 - **EC**

State of play

Entered into force (05/06/2023)

General scope and objectives

The regulation aims to ensure a socially fair transition by addressing the social impacts stemming from the inclusion of building and road transport emissions in the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS). The Social Climate Fund finances measures to support vulnerable citizens and micro-enterprises, focusing on energy efficiency, decarbonising buildings and promoting zero- and low-emission mobility in keeping with the Social Climate Plans.

Implications for LRGs

- **Social Climate Plans (SCP):** National authorities are to consult LRGs before submitting any plans, detailing their financial and political contributions (Art. 4, Art. 5).
- **Plan content:** SCPs must assess ETS impacts on vulnerable groups, accounting for territorial conditions and accessibility to transport and services, and define LRG involvement in impact assessment (Art. 6).
- **LRG-related funding**: Fund supports LRG projects like affordable public transport, energy-efficient housing, and renewable energy initiatives (Art. 8).
- **Shared management**: managing authorities of the cohesion policy may be entrusted with the Plan's implementation (Art. 11)

Implementation challenges

- Ensuring efficient involvement of LRGs in the drafting of the national plans.
- Guaranteeing the additionality of the expenditures and investments under the Social Climate Fund and Plans.

Good practice

Ring a Link: Connecting Irish Rural Communities for a Greener Future (Ireland)

Ring a Link is a collaborative initiative in Ireland aimed at providing quality rural transportation services to connect communities, reduce isolation and promote sustainable travel. Partnered with the Irish National Transport Authority and County Councils of Carlow, Tipperary, Wicklow and Kilkenny, the programme offers 17 fixed and 21 demand-responsive bus routes, including evening, weekend and school lines. Services are funded by customer fares, public financial support and the Free Travel Scheme. Affordable fares (€3 for adults, €2 for under 16y, free for children under 5) combat social exclusion, with Free Travel Pass holders traveling for free. This initiative significantly cuts down on individual car trips, promoting environmental sustainability and enhancing community well-being.

Conclusions

Fostering a green transition in a competitive Europe

LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As the European Green Deal and the broader green transition agenda make the leap from conceptualisation to implementation, it is critical to recognise the paramount role of local and regional governments in achieving the ambitious net-zero goals. Territorial governments are not just implementers of European and national legislations at subnational level; they are key partners in the drive towards a sustainable and fair future.

As CEMR's findings highlight, the extensive efforts currently being driven by LRGs in implementing green transition policies provide significant opportunities to foster a more competitive and sustainable Europe. Regions and municipalities are ideally placed to enhance energy efficiency, create new job opportunities and build resilient communities.

Yet, the survey results also uncovered a wide range of challenges, all capable of hindering the implementation process. The success of the green transition may hinge on addressing these potential obstacles, with the five key recommendations drawn from the findings of CEMR's survey serving as a guide:

- Address local and regional needs during the Green Deal implementation to benefit Europe's citizens and democracy.
- Reframe the dialogue and partnership with LRG to co-create ambitious green policies.
- Effectively contribute to fostering Europe's competitiveness through increased, simplified and more direct sustainable funding for the local and regional levels
- Champion equity in the green transition, particularly in the most vulnerable areas.
- Make the green transition a priority for cooperation across the EU and even beyond its borders.

Conclusions

Moving forward: increased efforts and collaboration to implement net-zero policies in Europe

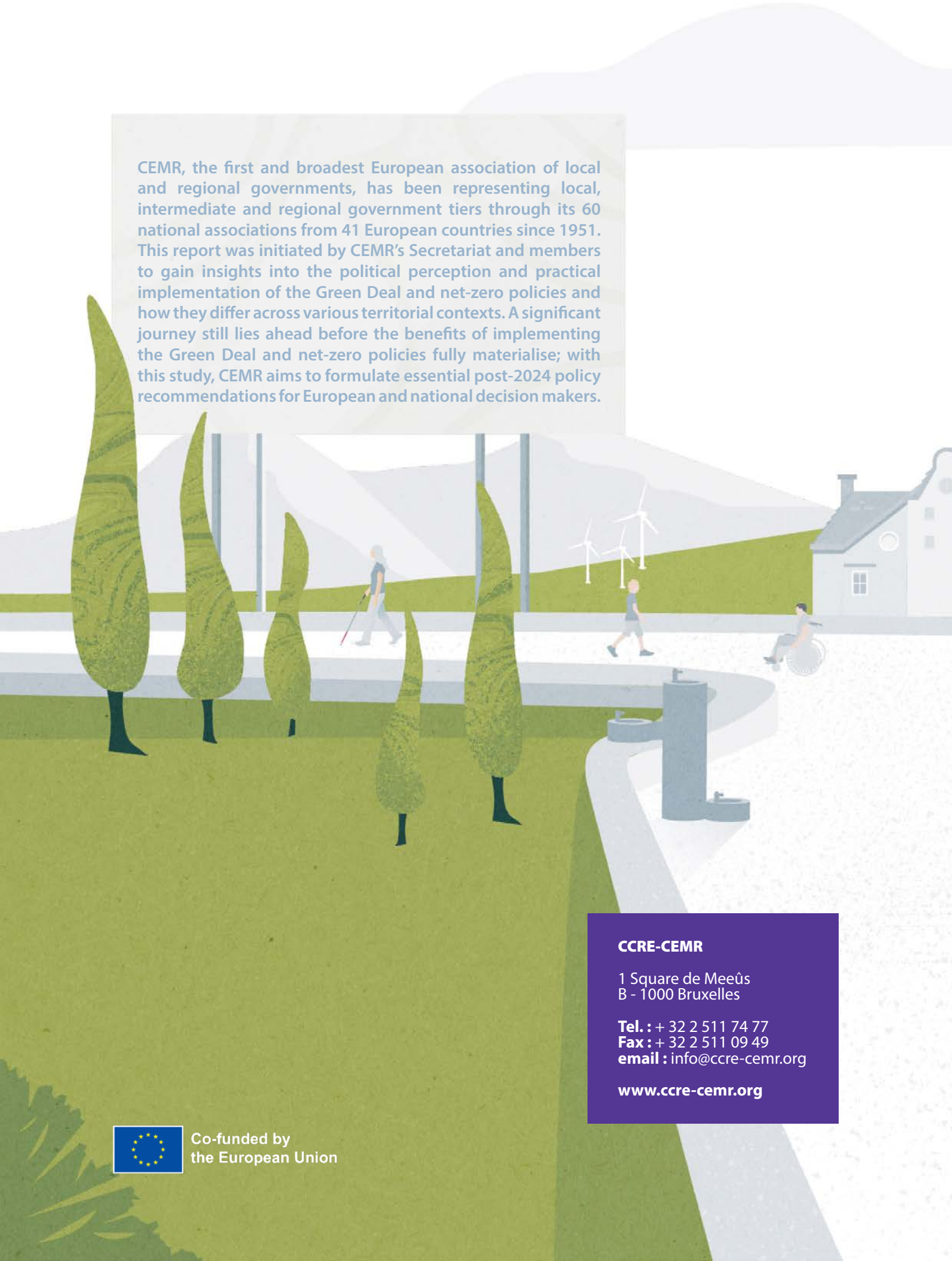
Following an intensive first phase of building the legislative framework to buttress Europe's net-zero objectives, the road ahead demands even greater efforts and collaboration. Local and regional governments are essential to driving the green transition successfully forward to the next – even more challenging – implementation phase. They lead in fostering resilience, prosperity, and equity in their communities and are at the forefront of addressing pushback against green transition initiatives.

As we steadily advance down this path, it is crucial to track the implementation of the Green Deal and the green transition across Europe. For any monitoring mechanism to be suitably robust, it should provide continual evaluations of outcomes, assessments of remaining challenges and adaptive management processes to ensure that the objectives are being met efficiently and equitably.

The monitoring process must be collaborative, involving local and regional representatives at every stage in recognition of their unique democratic mandates. By engaging in multi-level dialogues on monitoring and evaluation, we can ensure that policies remain relevant and responsive to needs on the ground. This collaboration will also enhance transparency, accountability and public trust in the green transition process.

On the eve of new EU and national mandates, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions and its national associations remain steadfast in their support for subsidiarity and sustainability. We look forward to working with the new Members of the European Parliament and the new Commissioners to exchange ideas and to co-create an enabling environment that will turn the full potential of green transition policies into reality in the coming decades.

CEMR, the first and broadest European association of local and regional governments, has been representing local, intermediate and regional government tiers through its 60 national associations from 41 European countries since 1951. This report was initiated by CEMR's Secretariat and members to gain insights into the political perception and practical implementation of the Green Deal and net-zero policies and how they differ across various territorial contexts. A significant journey still lies ahead before the benefits of implementing the Green Deal and net-zero policies fully materialise; with this study, CEMR aims to formulate essential post-2024 policy recommendations for European and national decision makers.



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