# Toward a New Climate Network

## Transatlantic Solutions for a Low Carbon Economy

**Transatlantic Climate Policy Group**

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# Local Bridges
## The Transatlantic Perspective of European Climate and Energy Policy

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**" Local bridges need local people—leaders and citizens—to "bridge the gap." Yet without enabling framework conditions that empower local climate action in all sectors ... and that set high standards, drive action through effective policy, and provide capacity for action through funding and information, local governments cannot move forward in a comprehensive, coherent manner"**

The Climate and Energy package proposed by the European Community (EC) in 2008 is a far-reaching policy strategy aimed at delivering on the European Union (EU) commitment to fight climate change and promote sustainable energy (European Commission, 2008). The package and legislation, adopted in 2009, set ambitious targets to be reached by 2020: cut greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to 20% below 1990 levels, increase the share of renewable energy (RE) to 20%, and improve energy efficiency (EE) by 20%. The GHG target will rise to 30% if an international agreement is reached committing other developed countries and the more advanced developing nations to comparable emission reductions. To achieve these targets, the 27 EU member states need to engage with many different actors, including communities. With more than 100,000 local governments and a population of just under 500 million (EUROSTAT, 2008), Europe has tremendous potential for change: from transforming the approach to how energy is produced, transmitted, and used, to changing the way in which energy is perceived as a valuable resource. Driven by the climate change challenge as well as the need for a sufficient energy supply and stable energy prices, local governments in Europe, but also in the U.S., are starting to consider the potential for alternatives. There are many cases of success in Germany, Sweden, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States, to mention but a few countries, with solid political strategies, improved processes, and tested technologies. However, to achieve widespread engagement, local bridges need to be

built or improved—domestically, cross-border, and across the Atlantic—to inform, motivate, and cross-pollinate for optimal results. Building on the recent experiences of European cities and communities, how can a sound transatlantic partnership strengthen local climate and energy policy?

## Evaluation

### Developments in Europe: Targets and instruments

The challenge of achieving the transition to a sustainable energy future, protecting the global climate, and improving people's quality of life has become a central concern in Europe. The new EU 2020 targets are commitments and driving forces for change, requiring sound action in urban areas, where the impact of climate change is felt most and where it will continue to manifest as additional motivation for local action.

As European cities and towns contribute the bulk of GHGs, they are the focus of several European directorates, among them DG TREN, the Directorate General for Transport and Energy. Building on experiences of several local government associations (Climate Alliance, Energie-Cités, ICLEI) which work closely with communities across Europe on climate and energy activities, and learning from previous European policy programs (CONCERTO, www.concertoplus.eu; Intelligent Energy Europe (IEE), http://ec.europa.eu/energy/intelligent), it became clear that cities must play a key role in the energy transition process. For this reason, DG TREN and the mentioned city networks in 2008 launched the Covenant of Mayors (www.eumayors.eu). The Convenant's aim is to encourage cities and communities to formally commit to GHG reductions that go beyond the 20% target of the EU. Also, for further support of this objective a new European funding mechanism for local governments was established: the European Local Energy Assistance (ELENA) program. ELENA is operated by the European Investment Bank (EIB) and provides 15 million to finance costs associated with the development of municipal investment projects or initiatives contributing to the overall EU energy targets (ManagEnergy, 2009).

### Local climate action examples

The local level provides an ideal starting point to implement policies and actions that address both climate protection and sustainable energy. The transition to sustainable energy—combining energy savings and energy efficiency with the use of renewable energy sources—provides interesting benefits for local governments. Some of these include achieving GHG reductions, improved air quality, more sustainable urban development through improved planning approaches, local economic growth and job creation, as well as enhanced community resilience in a changing environment.

***Shaping change: Local policy tools for GHG reductions***

Local governments, as the level of government closest to citizens, have extensive powers to direct, shape, and guide change in their communities, and can therefore directly effect change among local businesses and in the community as a whole. The tools at their disposal for this task include an Energy Status Report, which determines the energy needs and sources and identifies local potentials of renewable energies. Another effective tool is the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory, which assesses where major emissions come from. To support the latter, the International Local Government Greenhouse Gas Emissions Analysis Protocol (www.iclei.org/ghgprotocol) guides local governments by outlining relevant boundaries and scopes. Once these assessments have been obtained, the next step is to identify targets for GHG reduction, renewable energy, and energy efficiency. The targets are then linked to a timeframe by when results should be achieved. For example, Stockholm (Sweden) has set the ambitious target of becoming a fossil fuel free city by 2050 and aims to achieve CO2 emissions of 3 metric tons per capita annually. Also, Ancona (Italy) aims to use 100% renewable energies for its corporate energy requirements by 2010 (www.climate-catalogue.org).

***Using the mandate: Educate, implement, and regulate locally***

While the roles of local governments differ from country to country, most include public services such as education, police protection, and healthcare, in addition to the management of local administration. Here, much more can be done to get staff and citizens involved. The city of Vienna, for example, integrated climate concerns into its green public procurement policies through the program Ökokauf Wien (Eco Buy Vienna, www.oekokaufwien.at). Launched 10 years ago, the program led to the restructuring of purchasing and procurement processes in the city administration. Ecological criteria were then applied to nearly all services and products, including food, construction, paper, and vehicle fleets. Between 2004 and 2007 alone, the program can be credited with having achieved a CO2 reduction of 103,000 metric tons. Financial savings made by installing water savings devices in schools and kindergartens are 1.5 million per year (ICLEI, 2009a). This illustrates that the financial benefits are vast, ideally allowing money saved to be reinvested into other sustainable energy measures.

Using its mandate to address local issues, local government can develop, implement and monitor policies and regulations that address citizens, local businesses, and industry. These can be effectively applied to the local building, transport, energy, waste, and water sectors. One example of policy-driven change from a climate protection perspective is Freiburg im Breisgau (Germany), which switched to the cogeneration for electricity and heating. With large and small combined power and heating plants that run on fuels such as wood chips or methane captured from landfills, the city has achieved an emissions reduction of 50% (ICLEI, 2009b).

***Community leadership: Engaging citizens to act***

However, community leadership and motivational and informational initiatives are also needed. Providing advice and ideas usually triggers change, in particularly with regard to energy use. Running educational pilot projects for demonstration purposes can help reinforce the message. For example, Malmö (Sweden), well on its way to becoming a solar city, applies an approach that directly addresses and involves citizens. Its broad-based efforts cover traffic, energy, and city planning as well as consumption, education, and lifestyle. When thinking about how to get citizens to change their lifestyle, the municipality searched for ways to effectively communicate the messages it wanted to get across. As part of the IEE-supported project SECURE (Sustainable Energy Communities in Urban Areas in Europe) (www.secureproject.org), Malmö developed "The Climate Smart Campaign" to educate inhabitants on energy use and its impact on climate change. The campaign included innovative approaches such as commercials which suggested ways to save energy in a humorous way.

## Challenges

The mainstreaming of local climate and sustainable energy action—meaning that it becomes the daily norm—is the next step. For this, all communities are called on to engage in a coherent and sustained manner. In fact, it constitutes the global challenge of the next decade. There are many exemplary communities across Europe that are active in climate and energy and that develop their own individualized approaches. However, these being the exception of the rule, there is vast potential for action considering that there are more than 100,000 local governments in the EU-27 and many more in other European countries. Considering the urgent need for action, the available knowledge, and the benefits to be gained, one question comes to mind: Why are communities not changing en masse?

**Promoting confidence: Sharing information to ease decision-making**

It seems that there is still a lack of confidence in new approaches—be it technologies, systems, or processes—and a lack of knowledge about why there is a need to change and how this can be achieved. However, local climate action is certainly not a new concept. Many of its approaches,

measures, and technologies are tested and proven. But what is new is the idea of mainstreaming local climate action. By and large, local governments do not recognize this as a mandatory task. Leaders generally prioritize according to local issues and the available budget, a procedure which often leaves little flexibility for the inclusion of additional objectives such as reducing emissions. Therefore, what is needed is the awareness that saving energy generates multiple advantages. Saving energy not only contributes to climate protection but also cuts costs. In turn, this allows available funds to be allocated to other needs, such as investments in renewable energy facilities that generate new jobs and have economic value. The local generation of renewable energy and its efficient use (www.local-renewables.org) need to be considered when developing innovative concepts such as smart grids (www.smartgrids.eu), all the while testing and demonstrating their

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feasibility and improving them as needed. Along with growing awareness of the economic, social, and security benefits resulting from climate protection measures, we can expect a greater demand for accountability for actions from a life-cycle perspective. This is why there is a strong need to share information on available policy options for facilitating decision-making and promoting confidence in existing technologies and approaches.

**Funding support: Enable framework conditions to effectively position local governments**

Funding includes many ad hoc activities, such as renewable energy or energy efficiency projects funded by external agencies. These projects are useful as a starting point, but tend to stop once the funding stops. Therefore, a long-term approach is needed in which climate protection and the transition to sustainable energy are firmly anchored in the local agenda, thereby ensuring the continuation of efforts even if there is a change in local political leadership. Funding—whether through low cost loans or grants—as provided by the EC, EIB, and some national governments, is essential to enable local governments to act. Municipal budgets and staff capacity, both in terms of numbers of staff and expertise, are often limited. This is why the European and national governments must enable framework conditions that will position local governments to act effectively over the long term, thus allowing them to deal with the impacts of climate change.

One good example of enabling framework conditions are electricity feed-in laws, which can be used at different levels from national to local. In Germany, for example, the German Renewable Energy Act (Erneuerbare-Energien-Gesetz, EEG) is the central instrument for promoting power production from renewable energy sources (RES-E). Its value lies in guaranteed priority connection to the grid, fixed and cost oriented remuneration (differentiated by technology, plant capacity, and other characteristics), and a comparably long contract period of 20 years for most technologies. Feed-in laws thereby provide investors with a high level of security in terms of planning and recouping associated costs (van Staden & Musco, 2009).

Framework conditions must also address the building and transport sector. Improved policies that promote energy efficiency and a switch to clean energy sources must include high building standards that mandate the use of much more efficient technologies and materials over a specific timeframe. With such policies underway or in place, designers and manufacturers will know that change is inevitable and will design and manufacture accordingly. Modal shifts in transportation are also needed. Widening public transportation options, including their interconnection with non-motorized forms of mobility, will get more citizens to change to sustainable mobility solutions. At present, the development of such frameworks is still too slow, especially considering the severe climate challenge we face and the untapped potential for action.

## Recommendations

### Global movement and opportunities for transatlantic cooperation

The world is expecting global leaders gathering in Copenhagen in December 2009 to agree on a strong post-2012 climate agreement to follow the Kyoto Protocol. Local governments are calling for an inclusive agreement and an enabling framework that will also empower them to act and respond to the local impacts of climate change. These two demands are not mutually exclusive and are addressed in the Local Government Climate Roadmap (www.iclei.org/climate-roadmap), an ICLEI project, in partnership with the largest international local government associations and their networks. The Roadmap presents the strong case of local governments around the globe, calling for recognition of their important role and for inclusion in a post-2012 agreement. Exemplary cases, from Europe and the U.S. in particular, can help make a strong case in this regard. Cooperation and exchange across borders between local governments of all types and sizes has helped and is needed to shape the development of the Roadmap and action beyond the decision to be taken in December. The European version of the Roadmap is addressed through the project LG Action (www.lg-action.eu), which invites local governments to feed items and viewpoints into the European and international energy and climate debate. Their American counterparts can contribute their input through the global process while also making use of the City Climate Catalogue (www.climate-catalogue.org), a key tool in this process. The Catalogue compiles community climate change mitigation targets and achievements from around the globe, with a large number of entries expected from the U.S. and Europe. The results will be used to provide national governments and the United Nations with a strong basis for negotiations at the COP15 conference, showing that communities in many countries are committed to addressing climate change.

### The need to reconsider: What does quality of life mean for modern societies?

Observing peer-to-peer exchanges and cooperation between local governments in different countries has shown that, despite different framework conditions, the essential role of local governments can be almost universally applied to addressing local climate action. At the heart of this lies the need to change the way in which energy is perceived and to reconsider what quality of life means in modern societies. Achieving this remains the biggest challenge of all. As seen from the CCP Campaign in Europe and the U.S., there is tremendous potential for learning from each other's experiences and motivating one another. The exchange of good practices and ideas inspires people and remains a crucial element to support the work of local leaders and staff.

## Conclusion

With or without an international climate agreement, cities and towns comprise the levels of government most directly impacted by climate change. Now is therefore a good time to strengthen the links between communities and to provide exchange opportunities that allow us to move forward with global climate protection and to build capacity for local climate action. Local bridges need local people—leaders and citizens—to "bridge the gap." Yet without enabling framework conditions that empower local climate action in all sectors (buildings and energy, transport, waste, water) and that set high standards, drive action through effective policy, and provide capacity for action through funding and information, local governments cannot move forward in a comprehensive, coherent manner. Enabling framework conditions are thus a prerequisite for change, as is the sharing of best policies and the identification of their potential for replication. To establish these prerequisites, many more in-depth exchanges are needed, including in the transatlantic dialogue, in order to empower the local governments.

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**Biography**

Maryke van Staden is the Project Coordinator of the Climate and Air Team at the European Secretariat of ICLEI—Local Governments for Sustainability. In this position van Staden manages the European Cities for Climate Protection (CCP) Campaign, which addresses greenhouse gas emissions reduction, improving air quality, and adapting to climate change at community level. She is also Chair of the Adaptation Working Group in the European CCP Campaign. Prior to working for ICLEI, van Staden worked for five years with the International Solar Energy Society (ISES) and for 10 years with the South African government addressing policy issues. She holds a B.A. Honores in International Politics from the University of Pretoria, South Africa.

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