

Towards a fairer, climate-neutral Europe for all



Covenant of Mayors - Europe Ceremony

7 October 2021

EVENT REPORT

450 representatives from cities and regions, connected online from everywhere in Europe and beyond, joined the Covenant of Mayors – Europe Ceremony on 7 October 2021.

“We are witnessing the more and more visible and dramatic signs of climate change, and it is time to act”.

These words from **David Sassoli, President of the European Parliament**, opened the 2021 Covenant of Mayors Ceremony, held online for the very first time, on 7 October.

David Sassoli declared that

“the European Parliament is determined to work towards a climate-neutral society by 2050 at the latest and is fully committed to transform the Union into a society that is healthier, sustainable, fair, just and prosperous for all”,

and that

“It is crucial that EU institutions, Members of the European Parliament, national governments and local politicians join forces, as we have been doing in the hardest moments of the pandemic, to make sure that the energy and climate transition will leave no one behind and improve the quality of life of all European citizens, creating new opportunities and improving social cohesion.”



Covenant of Mayors - Europe Ceremony - Official Satellite Events



ENGAGE

The Executive Vice President of the European Green Deal, Frans Timmermans, joined a panel with the Mayor of Grenoble Eric Piolle, Deputy Mayor of Stockholm Katarina Luhr, and Andras Huszar, Ambassador of the EU Climate Pact, to discuss how to engage with all actors at the local level for climate neutrality, and how the European Commission can support cities in this path.

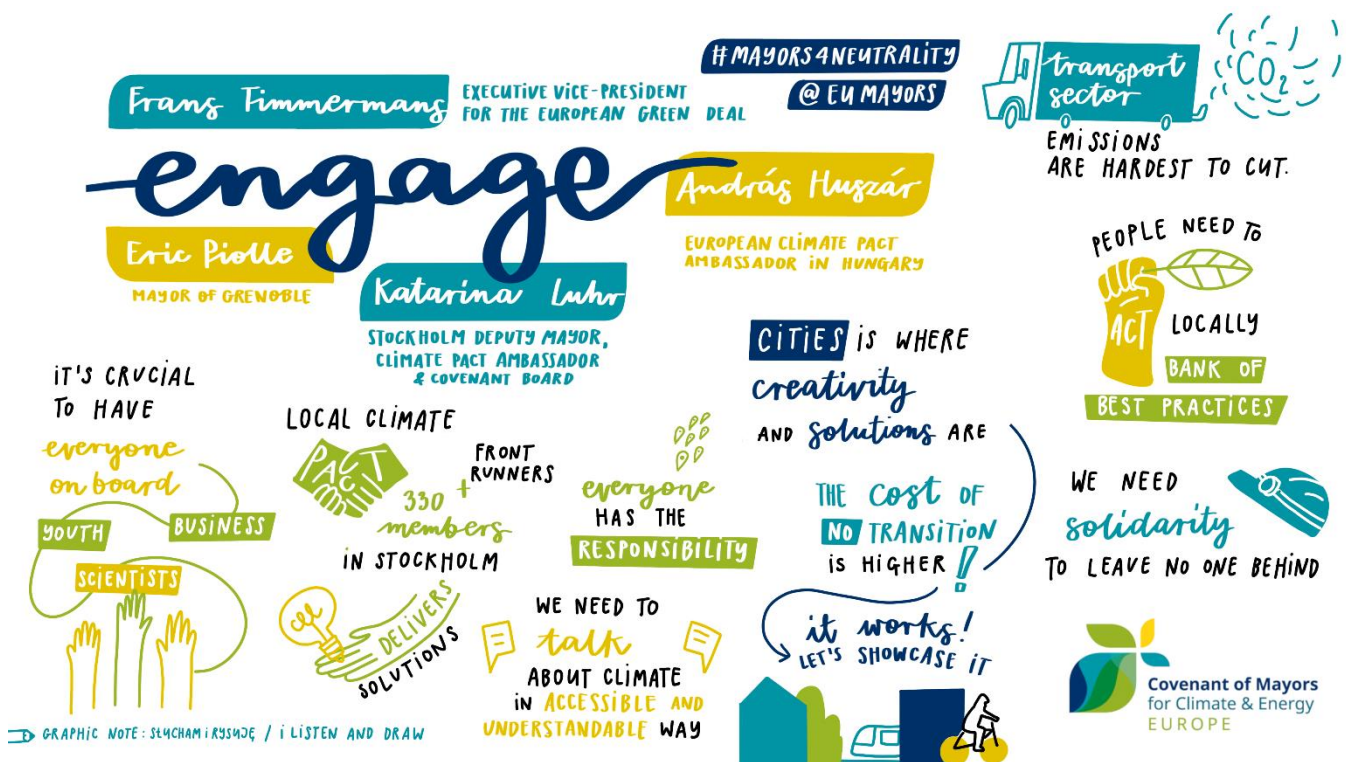
Mayor **Eric Piolle** shared the many ways in which the city is strengthening its local climate pact dynamics, which have been key to winning the title of European Green Capital in

2022, and stressed how the Covenant offers so many occasions to meet with actors in the territory and with other local leaders, share what works and mutually inspire each other. An example is the Scientific Council for the Transition, set up with 37 researchers from the city. And exactly because we need everyone to be part of the transition, Mayor Piolle launched a proposal for a European scheme of support directed at workers currently employed in a number of sectors that will be phased out in 10 or 20 years.

Katarina Luhr shared the example of the Stockholm Climate Pact and the “Electrification Pact” specifically focused on reducing emissions from transport and stay within the city’s climate budget, in cooperation with the private sector. This will make it possible to speed up the expansion of the city’s charging infrastructure, and by doing so stimulate the use of electric vehicles. The Deputy Mayor called on the European Commission to continue mobilising resources for technical assistance and capacity building in cities to tackle the emissions from transport, as well as other related climate issues.

Andras Huszár, cofounder of the Green Policy Center in Hungary, stressed how crucial it is to have long-term and clear targets to orient the market and the private sector to be an active part in the transition.

Responding to speakers, **Frans Timmermans** called to cities and Ambassadors of the EU Climate Pact to working together, in order to raise awareness and show citizens and local stakeholders how everyone can contribute to the climate transition. Cities are trailblazers, they can demonstrate to their citizens that climate neutrality is achievable, and what are the costs of doing nothing, which is immensely bigger than the cost of the transition. The Executive Vice President also announced the launch of a Policy Support Facility for European cities to move from planning to implementation of climate adaptation (see below more information regarding the networking session dedicated to the Facility).



COMMIT

Many Covenant signatories have already endorsed [the Covenant 2050 climate neutrality vision](#), and many others are working to reach this ambitious objective even before!



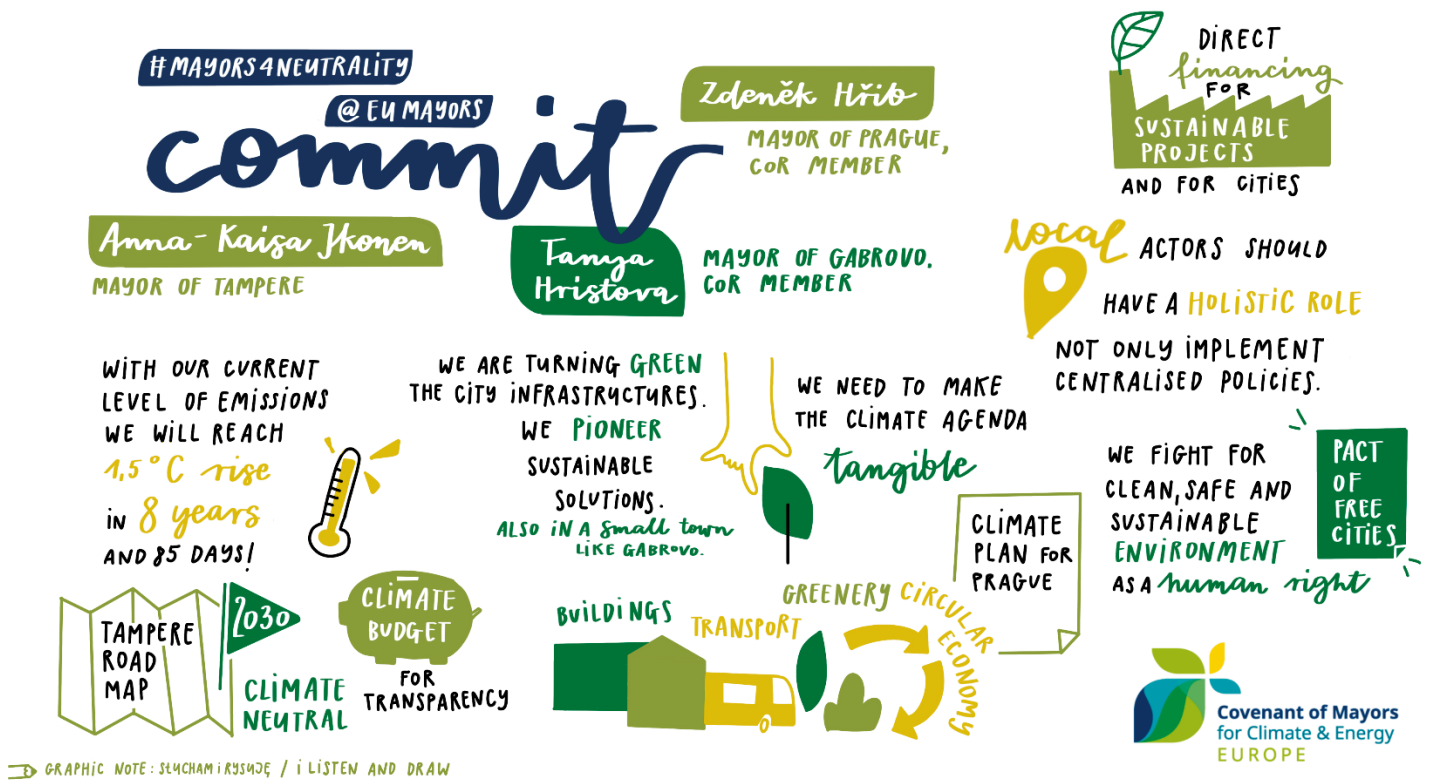
This was the topic of the second panel discussion, where **Anna Kaisa Ikonen, Mayor of Tampere, Zdenek Hrib, Mayor of Prague, and Tanya Hristova, Mayor of Gabrovo**, shared views on the importance of putting in place a roadmap with milestones, a clear path for the whole city to follow, but also how important it is to have a supporting legislative and financial framework from the other levels of government. Cities cannot do it alone.

Finland aims to be climate neutral by 2035, and to achieve this objective it is mobilising important investments to the energy and climate transition. According to **Mayor Ikonen** 'the need for change is massive and in order not to leave anybody behind we need to make sure that the transition is done in the most just and most inclusive way possible. Tampere is adopting a new and ever more ambitious climate plan next month, to make the city climate neutral in 2030.

In 2019, Prague adopted the Climate Pledge to reach carbon neutrality by 2050. The city is investing in becoming more self sufficient and produce local renewable energy, and established the Society for Sustainable Energy, a municipal organisation which will install photovoltaic panels on up to 20.000 buildings before 2030, starting with public buildings. When the ambition doesn't match national policies, however, it is essential that cities join forces beyond borders. This is why **Mayor Hrib**, together with the other mayors from the Visegrad4 capitals, decided to launch the Pact of Free Cities,

also promoting the link between human rights and climate change.

Gabrovo has been named European Green Leaf, and is committed to develop as green, smart, inclusive and innovative city. In the event **Mayor Hristova** highlighted that, even if Bulgaria has identified energy efficiency as a national priority, supporting programmes are still centralised and do not always reach local governments. Investments in the RRF and ESIF represent a chance for Gabrovo to invest in green projects and overcome the negative effects of the COVID crisis.



ACT

Minna Arve, Mayor of Turku, will be going to Glasgow for the COP26 Conference, and joined the ceremony to share with the rest of the covenant community the importance of this conference and what messages she will be bringing there. The vital roles of cities and local governments needs to be recognized, and their daily action to tackle climate change in their communities should be supported by clear mandates, stable regulatory frameworks and sufficient resources. Only this way cities will be able to turn their collective ambition into a reality.



Covenant of Mayors' "City in the Spotlight" Awards

During the event Paula Pinho, Director in the DG Energy of the European Commission, has announced the winners of this years' Covenant of Mayors City in the Spotlight Awards



Murcia, Spain, is our 2021 Covenant City in the Spotlight in the large-sized city category

Murcia set ambitious goals for 2020, and achieved them. The city is now looking at 2050 and climate-neutrality, with an action plan developed through a participatory approach with the population. It is addressing climate change and biodiversity issues together, with a series of adaptation actions, building a more resilient city that is also fit for the climate challenges of tomorrow. Murcia has mainstreamed climate resilience in its public health planning, with specific actions to assist vulnerable people during extreme climate events.



Padova, Italy, is our 2021 Covenant City in the Spotlight in the medium-sized city category

Padova has created “collaboration pacts” at the municipal level, signed with companies or universities, and it contributed to the installation of greenery and solar panels on rooftops, on buildings that are not owned by the municipality, and defines sustainable mobility plans for its inhabitants. Padova is also leading the way **on home renovations**, crucial to reduce emissions and inequalities at the same time, by ensuring that most vulnerable citizens can effectively lower their energy consumption, and therefore their energy bill.



Congratulations to Murcia and Padova, and also to all those signatories that have been applying to the Covenant of Mayors 2021 Covenant City in the Spotlight Awards. Thank you for your commitment to the initiative!

Conclusion



Apostolos Tzitzikosas, President of the European Committee of the Regions and Governor of Central Macedonia in Greece, closed the event calling on the European Commission to work closer than ever with cities and regions "It's time for a Europe that works with, for and in its cities, regions and villages". The President is also one of the [National Covenant of Mayors Ambassadors](#) who are promoting the initiative in their countries.

[Watch the recording of the plenary session here.](#)

Networking sessions

The side event **Localising the European Green Deal** brought some inspiring examples of how Signatories of the Covenant of Mayors are engaging with their communities (e.g. business sectors, children in schools, the community as a whole) to drive their transition towards climate-neutrality. The engagement of the community is a crucial step in the Covenant journey, even more following the launch of the Covenant 2050 whereby signatories commit to developing a "local climate pact" or a similar process. This is why the European Climate Pact Secretariat joined forces with the European Covenant of Mayors Office in organising this session to present the synergies between the two initiatives and present what how the two Secretariats will support cities and towns across Europe in their transition to climate neutrality.

[Watch the recording here.](#)

Getting Fit for 55! Through joint efforts, all 27 EU Member States committed to turn the EU the first climate neutral continent in the world by 2050. To get there we need to reduce emissions by at least 55% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels and do so in a fair, cost effective and competitive way. The Covenant of Mayors community has always been strongly committed to lead the change and tackle climate change by endorsing a shared vision for 2050 based on accelerating the decarbonisation of their territories, strengthening their capacity to adapt to unavoidable climate change impacts, and allowing citizens to access secure, sustainable and affordable energy. In this session, you will have the chance to get fit for 55% by learning everything about the "Fit for 55" package, exploring the links with the EU Mission on Climate Neutral and Smart Cities and hear from Covenant Signatories about their path towards climate neutrality by 2050.

[Watch the recording here.](#)

The **Long-term ambitions for 2050, why and how!** session highlighted the collaboration among all the levels of governance: local, regional, national and EU. The panellists expressed the importance of involving citizens in the actions for successful policies, and it goes hand in hand with taking the local characteristics in consideration. On a more general term, the governments should be innovative when developing in the policies for long-term planning.

[Watch the recording here.](#)

The new EU Policy Support Facility for municipal climate adaptation. As part of the EU's adaptation measures to help increase local resilience, a new Policy Support Facility (PSF) will support local and regional authorities to move from adaptation planning to action. Under the EU and Covenant of Mayors-Europe, this adaptation-focused support facility will provide technical assistance to help develop and implement robust adaptation strategies and plans on the ground. This session provides information about the facility, how to engage with the Covenant of Mayors and the EU, and discuss cities' suggestions and needs about how the facility can support local adaptation implementation needs.

[Watch the recording here.](#)



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