

CONFERENCE REPORT: TRANSLATING THE EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL INTO LOCAL ACTION

Date: March 15, 2024

Location: Brussels, Belgium

Organizers: Government of Flanders

Hosted by: European Committee of the Regions, European Parliament

Website: <https://www.abbflanders.be/greendeal/declaration>

On March 15, 2024, the Conference of Mayors convened in Brussels, gathering more than 200 mayors and representatives of local and regional governments from across Europe, alongside 400 participants of EU institutions and other organizations. The conference aimed to explore strategies for translating the ambitious goals of the European Green Deal into tangible actions at the local level.

Keynote Session: The conference commenced with a keynote session held in the European Parliament, featuring notable speakers such as Gwendolyn Rutten, Vice-Minister-President of Flanders, and Maroš Šefčovič, Executive Vice-President of the European Commission.

Morning Panels: Three panel discussions ensued, focusing on critical aspects of local and regional climate action:

1. **Innovative Multilevel Governance:** This panel emphasized the indispensable role of local and regional governments in achieving climate targets and called for closer collaboration between national, regional, and local authorities. The importance of a permanent dialogue and tailored approaches to involve diverse stakeholders were highlighted.
2. **Empowering and Financing the Cities Transition:** Discussions in this panel underscored the necessity for capacity-building at the local and regional level and the diverse financial needs of municipalities. Participants stressed the urgency of accelerating the pace of implementation and ensuring resilience to climate impacts.
3. **The Energy Union:** This panel delved into engaging citizens and small businesses in the transition to renewable energy. Strategies to make climate and energy policies tangible were discussed, along with the imperative of closing the awareness gap among households and SMEs.

Declaration Signing: The morning of the conference concluded with mayors and local and regional leaders signing a declaration reaffirming their commitment to the European Green Deal. The declaration called for enhanced multilevel governance, harmonized monitoring systems, and more flexible financing instruments to support local and regional initiatives effectively. See attached the full declaration.

Afternoon Sessions: The conference continued in the European Committee of the Regions, hosting parallel sessions on various themes:

1. **Fit for 55 Translated into Local Solutions:** This session showcased concrete actions by municipalities and regions towards climate neutrality. Examples of integrated solutions and the role of EU policy instruments in supporting local and regional initiatives were presented.
2. **Planning for Healthy and Resilient Cities:** Discussions focused on urban planning policies' impact on health and well-being, emphasizing the need for transformative action. EU initiatives supporting local and regional implementation of the Green Deal and strategies for integrated planning were explored.

3. **Local Green Deals:** Participants outlined new approaches to political leadership for implementing the European Green Deal locally. Case studies demonstrated how cities are promoting resource efficiency, circularity, and job creation while engaging stakeholders and leveraging technology.

Conclusion: The Conference of Mayors provided a platform for robust discussions and knowledge exchange on translating the EU Green Deal into local actions. By empowering local and regional authorities, fostering innovative governance structures, and aligning financial mechanisms with local and regional needs, the EU should aim to accelerate the transition to a sustainable and resilient future for all communities across Europe.