

What role will cities play in the upcoming NECP updating process?

Mayors call for genuine multilevel dialogues that put cities and Member States on an equal footing

Takeaways from the political launch of the LIFE NECPlatform project

There is no doubt that local authorities are key to achieving national and European energy and climate goals. But when it comes to national decision-making, local authorities have been largely overlooked and neglected. Representatives of the European Commission, national energy agencies and local elected officials present in Brussels in 2022 at the political launch of the NECPlatform project all agreed, once again, on one point: Member States have not sufficiently engaged with the local level in the process of drafting their National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs) due in 2020, reinforcing what was already stated in the European Commission's assessment of the plans. This leaves considerable room for improvement in the updated version of these plans, the first draft of which is due in June 2023 and the final draft in June 2024.

Johannes Schilling, Deputy head of the Energy Policy Unit at the European Commission's Directorate General for Energy, confirmed that the upcoming guidelines for Member States regarding the update of their NECPs will insist on the full implementation of Article 11 of the Regulation on the Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action, which mandates Member States to set up a proper multilevel climate and energy dialogue. This tool should engage all governance levels and other stakeholders in the process of updating the plans.

Ms. Hristova (mayor of the Bulgarian city of Gabrovo), Mr. Klisović (President of the City Assembly of the City of Zagreb), Mr. Rio (Mayor of the Portuguese city of Braga), Ms. Heyse (Deputy-Mayor of Ghent Responsible for Climate, Environment, Energy and Housing) and Mr. Trzaskowski (Mayor of Warsaw) stressed that:



Multi-level governance is an essential component to ensure that updated NECPs are solid and sound, since cities know best from experience which policies and measures do or do not work on the ground. This knowledge and expertise should be heard and capitalised on.



Local governments should be involved early on, in the preparatory phase of drafting NECPs and policies in general, as opposed to only being consulted afterwards, when the process is almost finalized. This would ensure that the plans are in line with what actually happens on the ground, as well as allow for a better monitoring of the plans' implementation.



Local governments call for a real discussion with all relevant stakeholders, including not only lower administrative levels but also e.g. business associations, the financial sector, NGOs, citizens, etc. Representation in these exchanges is essential for real mutual understanding and consideration. Consultation processes regarding documents that have already been validated are thus inadequate.



Often, mechanisms for consultation or discussion do exist in the Member States, but are underused. It is necessary to structure and consolidate these discussions.

All participants in the event underlined the importance of the NECPlatform project, which will offer support to the six Member States participating in the project in setting up effective multilevel discussions while they update their NECPs between now and June 2024 – dialogues which could be replicated by the other Member States thereafter.

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The Flemish Local Energy and Climate Pact (LEKP) is a very good start for strengthening multi-level governance. However, we should go even further: cities and smaller local authorities need more resources and should be more involved in the law-making process. Policies should be built at the very local level by asking local governments “what do you need to improve the energy transition?”

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Tine HEYSE, Deputy-Mayor of Ghent Responsible for Climate, Environment, Energy, and Housing

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The message that shall be sent to national and EU levels is that nothing will be realized without the cities and the regions. If you do not involve us and find the means to finance us, we are not going to meet any priorities and targets. In the institutional triangle, the insights from cities and regions are priceless.

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Rafał TRZASKOWSKI, Mayor of Warsaw, Chair of the ENVE Commission of the European Committee of the Regions, Member of the Board of the Covenant of Mayors-Europe



The NECPlatform Project: A hands-on solution to improve multilevel governance and stakeholders' engagement in the NECPs drafting process

The LIFE-NECPlatform project aims at supporting six EU Member States (Bulgaria, Croatia, France, Italy, Portugal and Romania) in their transition to climate neutrality by setting up and managing permanent multi-level Climate and Energy Dialogue (CED) Platforms, in line with Article 11 of the Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action Regulation, which calls for better integration of local and regional authorities, civil society, businesses & other stakeholders in the development and monitoring of national and climate policies, including the integrated NECPs.

With the cooperation of the ministries and other relevant stakeholders of these 6 countries, the national partners of the project will set up 6 multilevel discussions fora, operational between March 2023 and September 2024. These platforms will be particularly active in the process of update of the NECPs which need to be submitted to the European Commission by June 2024 (first draft due by June 2023).



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