



CLIMATE
CHANCE
2021

GLOBAL OBSERVATORY
**ON NON-STATE
CLIMATE ACTION**

Summary
to decision-
makers

LOCAL ACTION REPORT

GLOBAL SYNTHESIS REPORT ON LOCAL CLIMATE ACTION

ASSESSING CLIMATE ACTION LED
BY LOCAL AND SUBNATIONAL GOVERNMENTS





CLIMATE
CHANCE

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PRESENTATION

Reporting on the climate action of cities and regions in the context of the pandemic and the renewal of national contributions to the Paris Agreement.

Each year, the Climate Chance Observatory proposes a summary of the progress made in terms of climate action and published by cities and regions around the world. Although the absence of consolidated and comparable data remains a challenge, this does not mean that there is no action or mobilisation. The analysis of the remarkable evolution of emissions at the local level, the monitoring of the development of the main international initiatives led by networks of local authorities, and publications of academic and specialised literature, make it possible to draw global trends.

The formulation, implementation and monitoring-evaluation of local climate actions is a complex process that requires both the support of States and a proper consideration of the inhabitants' needs. This is why our monitoring is accompanied by analyses of multi-level governance and the localisation of Sustainable Development Goals.

Climate Chance

Since 2015, the Climate Chance Association has been participating in the mobilisation against climate change. It is the only international organisation that aims to bring together all the non-state actors recognized by the UN (the 9 groups of actors: local authorities, companies, NGOs, trade unions, scientific community, agricultural, youth, indigenous peoples and women organisations), to develop common priorities and proposals and to strengthen stakeholders dynamics through networking (thematic coalitions, summits, action portal).

The Climate Chance Association and its Observatory are supported by





Key Takeaways of the 2021 Synthesis Report on climate action led by local and subnational governments

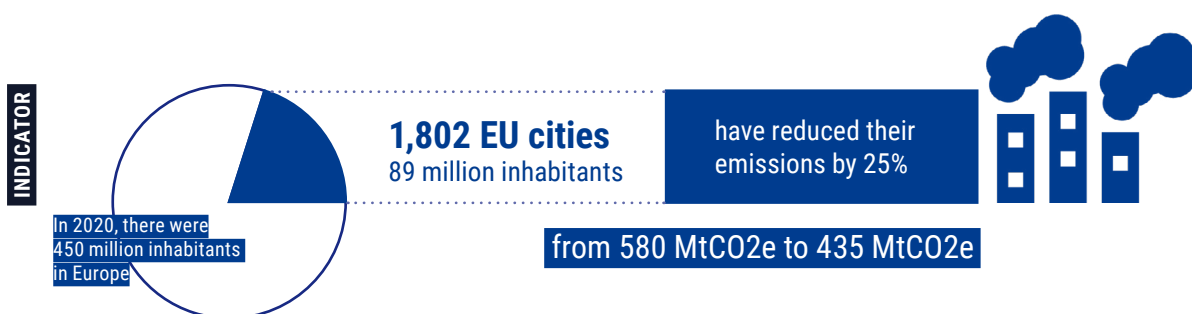


1 The reduction of GHG emissions by European cities is encouraging. However, in a context of mass adoption of carbon neutrality objectives, the monitoring of the impact of local climate policies remains scattered and poorly consolidated, even at the national level.

The action of European cities is particularly well documented. After 10 years of the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy in Europe, a voluntary initiative launched by the European Commission in 2008, a consolidation of data from 1,800 cities and 90 million inhabitants shows a 25% reduction in their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions between 2005 and 2017, surpassing the European States' 2020 targets of -20% (JRC, 2020). These cities, which accounted for 15% of EU-28 emissions in 2017, are also on track to exceed their own target of -30% in 2020. For example, Turin in Italy reduced its emissions by 44% between 1990 and 2017, due to its tertiary sector development but also to its mobility policies and decarbonisation of the district heating network. Generally, small cities use more internal levers (public procurement, energy demand management), while larger cities make more use of regulations and financial tools. All of them use awareness-raising policies, and show an active participation of citizens (Palermo V. et al., 2020).

Many cities around the world have only recently started calculating their GHG emission inventories, or are refining their methods and data. At the same time, data collected and reported across cities, and over different time periods does not cover the same parameters, and is difficult to consolidate. Thus, since 2015, nearly 150 cities have reported their emissions data to the CDP at least four times, but despite the growing usage of carbon accounting tools, the data does not allow many conclusions to be drawn: Porto, for example, reduced its emissions by 30% between 2004 and 2017, Chicago by 7% between 2010 and 2015, or Wellington by 26% between 2013 and 2017.

Finally, 86 regions, provinces and other sub-national governments, united in the "Under2MoU" initiative, show an average reduction in their territorial emissions of 7% from their respective base years to their last emissions inventories. They represent 600 million people and 10% of global emissions. Some of them are on track to meet their 2020 targets, such as Andalusia, which was aiming for a 26% reduction, Scotland for 75%, and South Australia for 50%.



2 The mobilisation of local governments and the structuring of their climate action is continuing. Although international initiatives show a certain dynamism in Latin America, Europe and North Africa, they do not account for the action of Asian cities and regions.

The relative stability in the number of cities committed to the Global Covenant of Mayors (~10,500 in 2021) hides a rapid increase in the membership and deliverables of the Regional Covenants of Mayors, initiated by the European Union in coordination with the Global Covenant and main local government networks. Signatory cities now represent almost 14% of the world's population, compared to 11% in 2019. The momentum is particularly strong in Latin America and the Caribbean, where more than 100 cities have joined the initiative since 2019, with a current total of over 519 signatories representing 31% of the region's population. In contrast, in Asia, signatory cities represent only 8% of the continent's population.

The implementation of mitigation and adaptation plans is progressing at a slower rate, but in some regions the Covenant of Mayors initiative is significantly structuring the climate action of cities—such as in the Maghreb and Mashreq¹, where

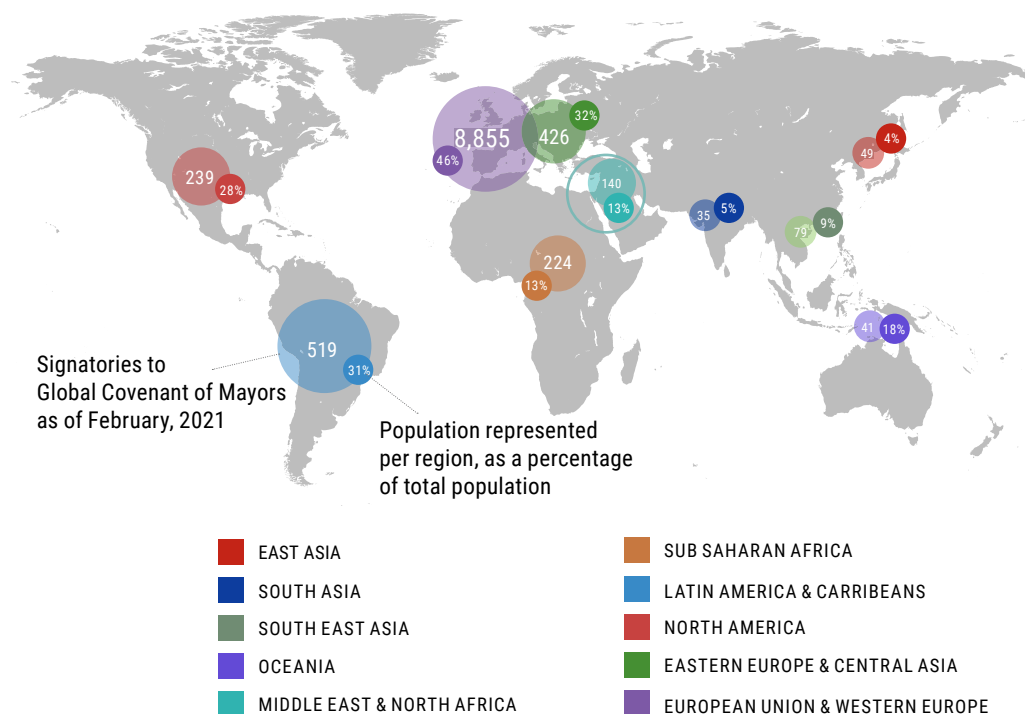
more than 100 cities are preparing to publish their climate plans which include mitigation and adaptation components. The countries of the region are also setting up a common database for the signatories of the convention, demonstrating a rapid structuring of the monitoring and evaluation of their actions. In Latin America, the adoption of action plans is also showing clear progress, with over 50 mitigation and adaptation plans published since 2019. In South-East Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, few cities beyond the funded pilot projects have been able to complete their mitigation/adaptation plans.

While by October 2020 more than 900 cities and regions around the world had made some form of commitment to carbon neutrality ([NewClimate Institute](#), 2020), careful monitoring of the refinement of measurement tools will be important to give credibility to these commitments.

FIGURE 1

SIGNATORIES TO GLOBAL COVENANT OF MAYORS AS OF FEBRUARY, 2021

Sources: GCoM portal, n.d.; data collected from regional covenants



3 Even in times of Covid-19, local governments remain places of innovation and experimentation for climate policies. At the city level, the densification of services is now seen as the remedy to the health and climate crises.

From planning to regulation, through direct investment and public procurement, the instruments available to cities and regions to steer their transition are increasingly varied, and mobilise the whole range of their skills. In the background, the management of the pandemic has accelerated reflection on the densification of urban services and their local governance.

The concept of the "15-Minute City", where all essential services are within reach of everyone by bike or on foot, was at the heart of the municipal campaign in Paris, but is also being emulated across the Atlantic (Portland, Minneapolis), and has even been adapted into the "1-minute city" in the Swedish metropolises of Stockholm and Göteborg. While the fears raised by the pandemic on food security have been allayed in Europe by the resilience of the agro-industrial system, the commitment of 31 cities in the Glasgow Declaration on Food and Climate reminds us that the climate challenge requires a reconnection of our urban centres with agricultural land, as Rufisque in the Dakar region is trying to do with its future Local Food Plan, or the Edinburgh Fish City project to encourage Scottish fishermen to locally sell seafood products derived from more sustainable practices.

What truly symbolises cities' responsiveness to the pandemic is the widespread deployment of bicycle lanes and, above all, the perpetuation of bicycles across the globe which have gone from being a low-cost social resilience measure to a genuine instrument for mitigating urban transport emissions in the long term, in a context where public transport use and finances are in dire straits.

By 2020, 617 cities around the world had pledged to 100% renewable energies, most of them in Europe and the United States, with populations between 100,000 and 500,000 ([REN21](#), 2021). By the end of 2019, 58 cities and regions, including 44 in Europe, reported being supplied with 100% renewable energy ([IRENA](#), 2020). Melbourne is one of them and is notable for its use of power purchase agreements (PPAs), which are emerging as a strategic tool for securing renewable energy supplies for cities while providing stable funding for local power generation projects.

Manchester's carbon budget, which staggers its emissions reduction trajectory until 2050, or Oslo's local climate budget, which votes on quantified sectoral mitigation objectives each year as part of its budgetary procedure, are all innovative approaches that testify to the professionalisation of local public climate action.

4 Few of the renewed national contributions to the Paris Agreement mention governance mechanisms that integrate local and sub-national governments, except in Latin America. Their sectoral approach to tackling local emissions reduction masks the potential of spatial planning and local governance.

Analyses of the first round of national contributions (NDCs) to the Paris Agreement in 2015 show that few countries have sufficiently involved local and sub-national actors in defining their climate strategies. Only 10% of countries report having integrated their national climate objectives into local and regional climate policies and budgets ([UNDP](#), 2019). The analyses also point out that countries do not recognise cities as systems in their strategies, but adopt sectoral approaches that do not take into account the mitigation potential associated with the spatial concentration of people, infrastructure and economic activity.

The observation of the second round of updated NDCs by some 40 countries and the EU-27 in 2020 leads to similar conclusions: a handful of them mention local governments, often as an example but not in connection with the governance of the national strategy. This is the case for large emitting countries such as Australia, Brazil, the UK or Russia. Rwanda, Vietnam and South Korea which mention local government consultation mechanisms, but the full integration of their potential and needs is the most evident in Latin America (Peru, Chile, Argentina, Cuba, Colombia, Mexico), in some cases as early as in the first round of NDCs. The Peruvian State has set up a "Multisectoral Working Group" to integrate the contributions of the different ministries but also of non-state actors in the country's new NDC in 2020, approved by the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, thirteen ministries, but also by the National Assembly of Regional Governments and the Association of Municipalities of Peru (AMPE).

Even if this does not yet have a direct impact on the NDCs, the Regional Covenants of Mayors have also given rise to interesting experiences. To ensure the financing and implementation of climate plans formulated by cities in the Maghreb and Mashreq, national coordination groups form consultation spaces in each country, bringing together ministers, associations and all other key actors. From these groups, climate action strategies have emerged and guide the action of cities in relation to the mitigation and adaptation strategies of each country.

5 Multi-level governance in G20 countries: our first case studies (Germany, Canada, France, Brazil) show that few cities are subject to climate obligations, whose action relies on the disparate support of federal and federated states. The lack of harmonisation of monitoring methods makes it difficult to integrate the potential of cities into national strategies.

These analyses do not seek to compare the effectiveness of a country's institutional arrangements or strategy, but rather to provide an understanding of what motivates local governments' climate action in different contexts. A first conclusion concerns the obligations imposed on local governments.

In Germany, Canada and Brazil, the federal state legislates little or nothing on the climate obligations and competences of municipalities, whose action depends much more on the level of ambition and disparate policies of intermediary governments, and on calls for projects or specific funds available, most often sectoral ones. Few of them are therefore required to adopt and monitor the implementation of a climate plan. For example, Canadian cities have carried out most of their climate plans as voluntary initiatives. Ontario imposes action plans for the Toronto area alone, while Quebec funds their formulation in more than 200 cities without it being an obligation. Only Nova Scotia imposes climate action on its municipalities. In Germany, no Länders have made the adoption of a climate plan mandatory. However, North Rhine-Westphalia, for example, provides strong support leading many municipalities to adopt binding targets and action plans. They benefit from guidelines, free tools and access to regional data.

The second conclusion concerns the way to organise the articulation of the different climate policies and especially their monitoring and evaluation. Local governments are more willing to be involved in the formulation phases and as vectors of national and sectoral policies. Few experiences show that their achievements are taken into account to re-evaluate and adjust national policies, prevented by poorly harmonised monitoring-evaluation methods and poorly centralised information.

In Brazil, since the federal government has reduced its efforts to combat climate change, each entity seeks to lead the subject. However, the lack of top-down regulation does not allow a clear and explicit articulation between the federated entities, and nor does the National Policy, or any other policy establish clear parameters in all sectors for achieving the goals, or distributing national goals to state and local levels. In France, almost all of the 760 entities subject to the obligation to have a climate plan are in the implementation process. To articulate these local, regional, national and sectoral climate plans, the law sets different levels of compliance. However, the monitoring of indicators commonly shared by cities and regions is not required and the different revision schedules make it difficult to link them. The regional climate-energy observatories partly compensate for this lack of harmonisation at the regional level, but they can also be a space for consultation and proposals for the municipalities, as shown by the example of "OREO" in Occitania.

6 Agenda 2030: after a few years in the adoption phase, local governments are embracing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to cushion the socio-economic shocks of climate policies.

According to the UN, the pandemic has reversed the progress made in poverty reduction, health care, education and access to energy. Nevertheless, there are several signs of increased localisation of the SDGs, with communities playing a key role in ensuring access to essential services during the lockdown measures and acting as privileged interlocutors for citizens and local-economic actors.

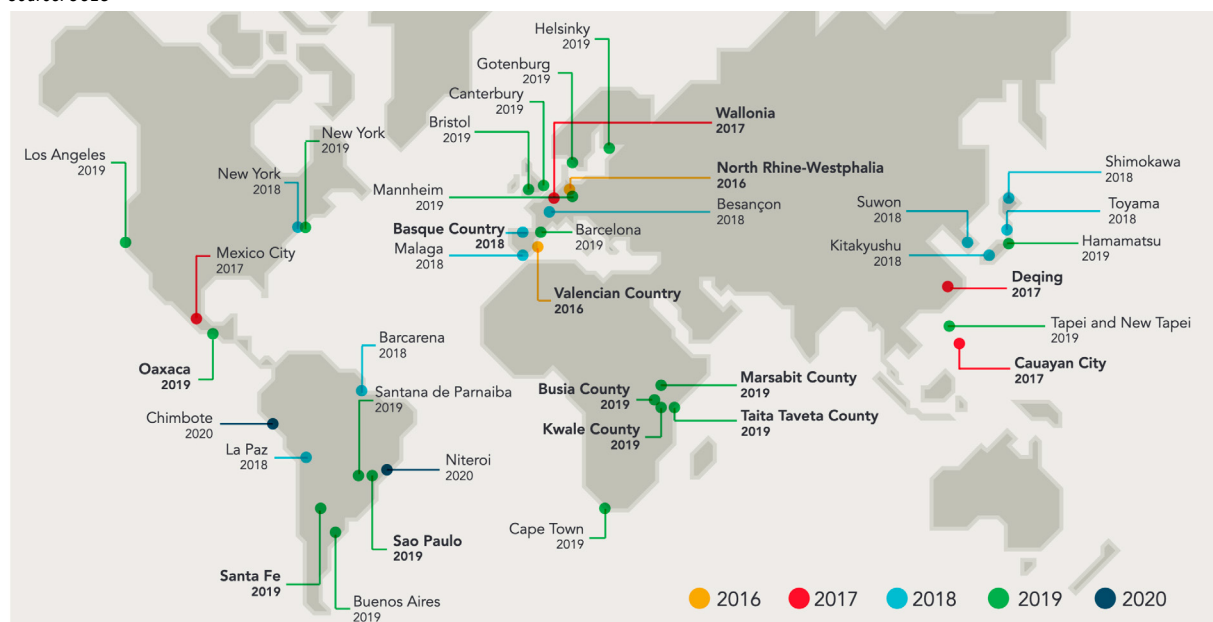
In Europe, of the 34 local government networks from 28 European countries surveyed, 82% are aware of the SDGs and regularly refer to them in their activities, up from 31% the previous year ([CEMR, PLATFORMA, 2020](#)). The SDGs provide an opportunity to break down silos between departments and jurisdictions, through the formulation of new strategic plans based on the SDGs, the adaptation of existing plans or the evaluation of implementing projects through the lens of the 2030 Agenda. On the other hand,

local governments are now associated to more than half (55%) of the Voluntary National Reviews presented by states in 2020 to demonstrate progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda (compared to 40% in 2019), a sign of increased vertical integration of governance levels in this area too.

For climate, this integration of the SDGs as close as possible to local governments makes it possible to strengthen the alignment of low-carbon transition policies with the population's expectations in terms of social justice. In Bristol, for example, the climate plan is integrated into the city's socio-economic development strategy, while Strasbourg analyses the contribution of its climate policies in relation to each of the 17 SDGs. Bogotá, one of the pioneer cities in the deployment of "Corona Cycleways", is committed to reducing gender inequalities in urban cycling.

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS THAT SUBMITTED A VOLUNTARY LOCAL REVIEW (VLR) TO THE UN ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SDGS IN THEIR TERRITORY BETWEEN 2016 AND 2020.

Source: UCLG



7 Despite the lack of funding, driven by the dynamic exchanges between scientists and decision-makers, adaptation to climate change is accelerating within regions and cities

A recent analysis of the climate policies adopted by 429 cities within the framework of the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy in Europe shows that, to date, 70% of them report adaptation actions. A majority of these actions are only at the formulation stage or in the process of being implemented. On the other hand, while almost all of these cities produce analyses of the climate risks they face, only half of them formulate adaptation objectives and less than 70% of them dedicate funding to adaptation. While the integration of local skills into national adaptation plans is progressing, access to financing and technologies that are still immature and costly remain the main obstacles noted by the cities.

By making it possible to go beyond local administrative boundaries, regions are proving to be the preferred scale for planning adaptation to climate change at ecosystem scales. Like RECO, created in 2019 in Occitania, or the Climate Risk Institute in Ontario, the model of regional adaptation agencies is spreading everywhere to strengthen the connections between science and policy. Of the 28 RegionsAdapt member-regions that reported on their adaptation practices, 90% of the regions say they have experienced a socio-economic impact due to climate change, related to public health or the increased economic costs of disasters. 80% have already developed or are developing risk vulnerability assessments, and 70% have already put an adaptation plan in place. Seven Brazilian regions, five Canadian provinces, five regions in West and Southern Africa, two Australian states, and California are among these regions, which together account for 233 million people worldwide.



www.climate-chance.org