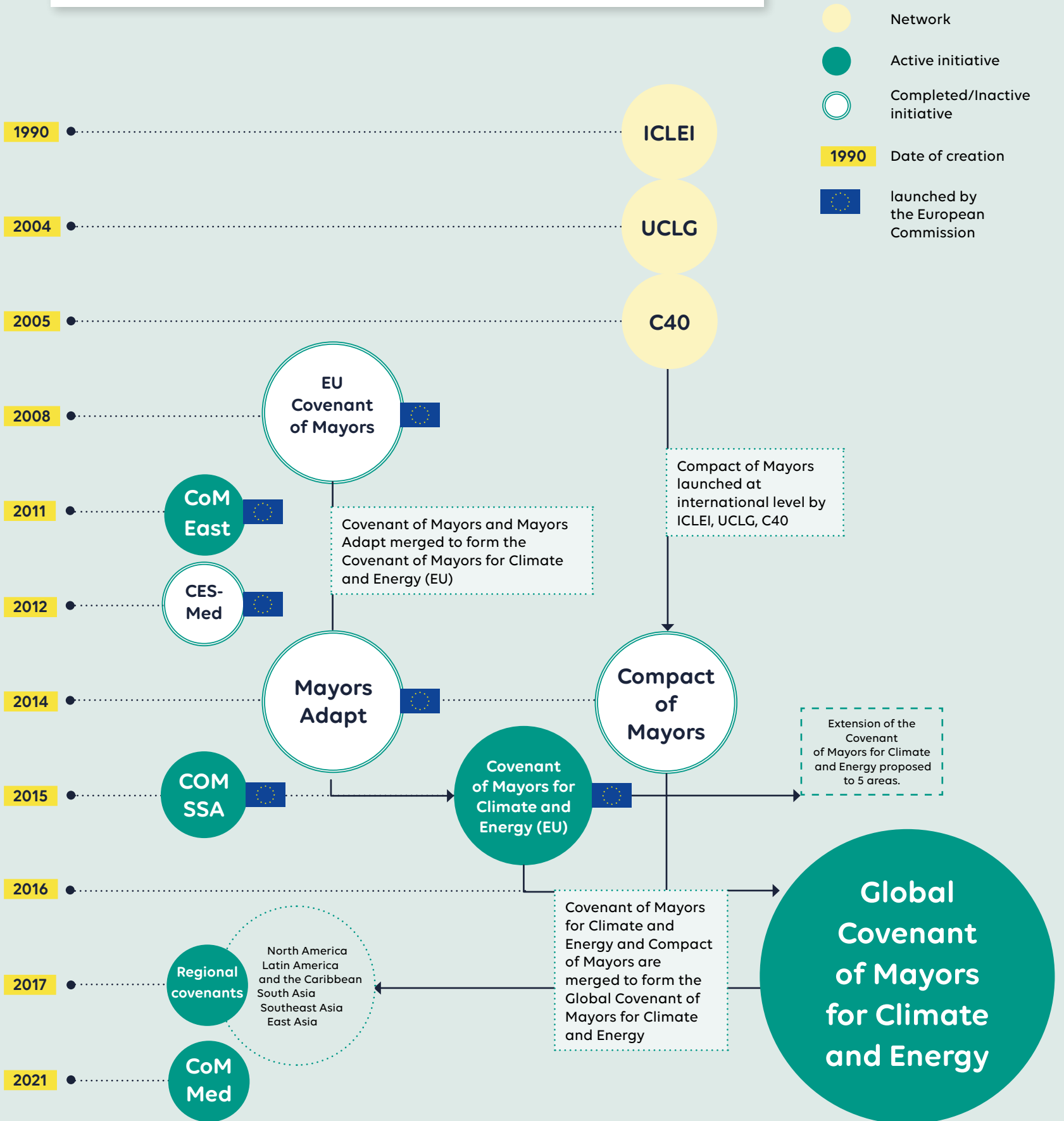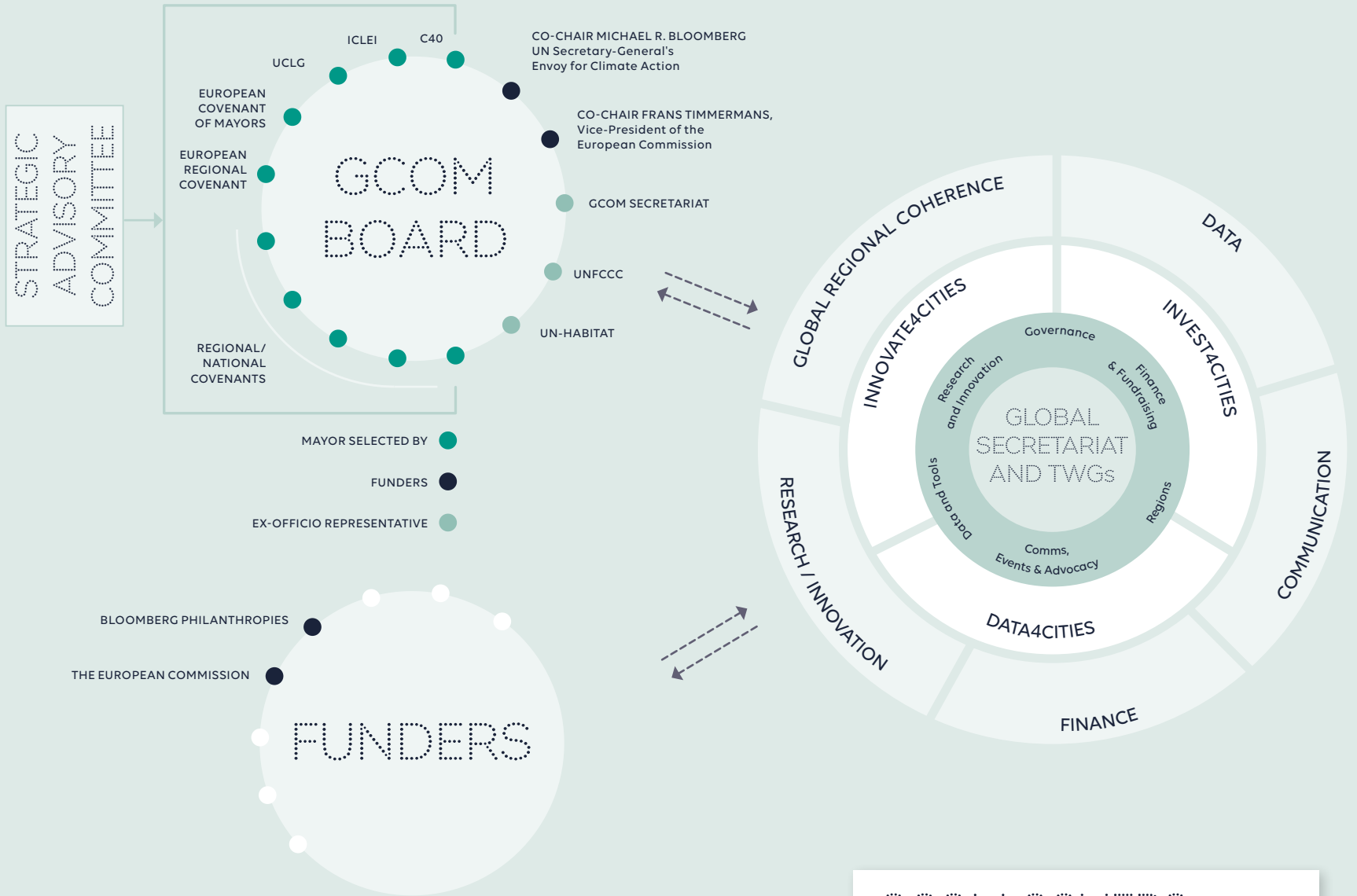# FROM PIONEER NETWORKS TO AN ALL-ENCOMPASSING INITIATIVE: THE STORY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS' COOPERATION FOR CLIMATE

Legend:

- ● Network
- ● Active initiative
- ○ Completed/Inactive initiative
- **1990** Date of creation
- 🇪🇺 launched by the European Commission

Timeline:

- **1990** — ICLEI
- **2004** — UCLG
- **2005** — C40
- **2008** — EU Covenant of Mayors 🇪🇺
- **2011** — CoM East 🇪🇺
- **2012** — CES-Med 🇪🇺
- **2014** — Mayors Adapt 🇪🇺
- **2015** — COM SSA 🇪🇺
- **2016**
- **2017** — Regional covenants (North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, South Asia, Southeast Asia, East Asia)
- **2021** — CoM Med

Compact of Mayors launched at international level by ICLEI, UCLG, C40

Covenant of Mayors and Mayors Adapt merged to form the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy (EU)

Compact of Mayors

Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy (EU) 🇪🇺

Extension of the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy proposed to 5 areas.

Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy and Compact of Mayors are merged to form the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy

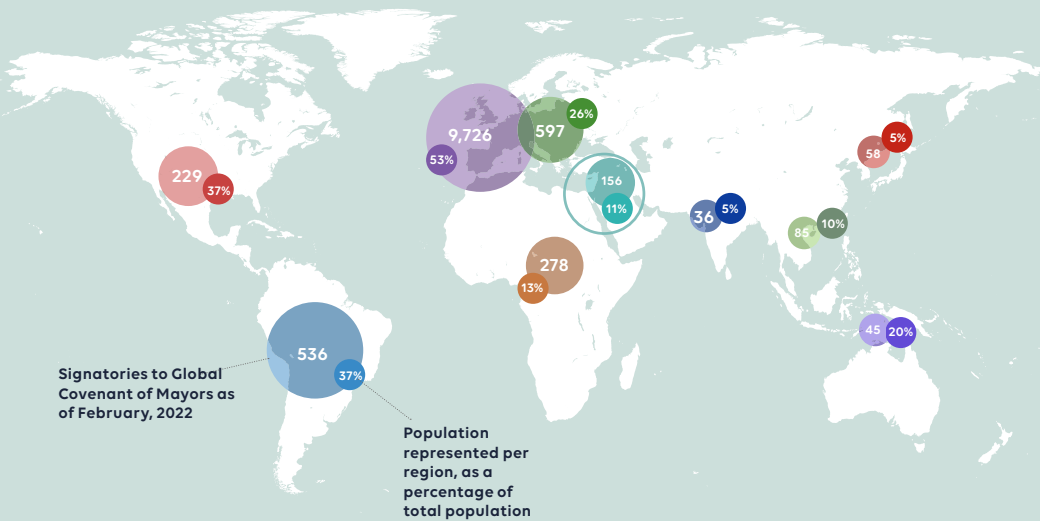**Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy**

Covenant of Mayors, n.d. & authors' compilation

THE GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE GCOM: PLACING MAYORS AT THE CORE WITH THE BACKING OF THE SECRETARIAT AND THE MAJOR FUNDERS

Source: GCoM, n.d.

STRATEGIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE

GCOM BOARD

- ICLEI
- C40
- UCLG
- EUROPEAN COVENANT OF MAYORS
- EUROPEAN REGIONAL COVENANT
- REGIONAL/ NATIONAL COVENANTS
- CO-CHAIR MICHAEL R. BLOOMBERG UN Secretary-General's Envoy for Climate Action
- CO-CHAIR FRANS TIMMERMANS, Vice-President of the European Commission
- GCOM SECRETARIAT
- UNFCCC
- UN-HABITAT

- ● MAYOR SELECTED BY
- ● FUNDERS
- ● EX-OFFICIO REPRESENTATIVE

FUNDERS

- BLOOMBERG PHILANTHROPIES
- THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

GLOBAL REGIONAL COHERENCE · DATA · INNOVATE4CITIES · INVEST4CITIES · COMMUNICATION · RESEARCH / INNOVATION · DATA4CITIES · FINANCE

GLOBAL SECRETARIAT AND TWGs

Governance · Research and Innovation · Finance & Fundraising · Regions · Comms, Events & Advocacy · Data and Tools

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GCOM COVERS NEARLY 13% OF THE WORLD POPULATION, WITH THE STRONGEST PARTICIPATION FROM EUROPE AND THE AMERICAS

SIGNATORIES TO GLOBAL COVENANT OF MAYORS AS OF FEBRUARY, 2022

Source: Signatories and represented population: GCoM, 2022, population projections: INED, 2022.

Signatories to Global Covenant of Mayors as of February, 2022

Population represented per region, as a percentage of total population

- 229 — 37%
- 9,726 — 53%
- 597 — 26%
- 156 — 11%
- 58 — 5%
- 36 — 5%
- 86 — 10%
- 278 — 13%
- 536 — 37%
- 45 — 20%

- ● SOUTH ASIA
- ● EAST ASIA
- ● SOUTHEAST ASIA
- ● OCEANIA
- ● MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA
- ● SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA
- ● LATIN AMERICA & CARIBBEANS
- ● NORTH AMERICA
- ● EASTERN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA
- ● EUROPEAN UNION & WESTERN EUROPE

The International Governance of Networks and Cooperation Initiatives

The global landscape of local actors in climate is marked by a constellation of networks and initiatives, supported by partner organisations and platforms. In complementarity with the indicators, this section will initially look at the different scales at which these networks and initiatives operate, and the increasingly complex links between them. Through the example of the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy and its governance, the largest initiative that involves most of the networks at various levels, this section will also provide an idea of how the collaboration of local actors can take on a global form.

Climate Action, Catalyst for Transnational Cooperation Between Local and Regional Governments

Transnational cooperation is an oft resorted to "orchestration" instrument to deal with issues that cut across various policy areas and involve actors across state and non-state, and geographic levels, climate change being a prime example (Hale, Roger, 2014). In addition to their capacity for individual initiatives at the local level, networks of local and regional governments (LRGs) have a central role in the transnational governance of climate change in three ways:

- by supporting learning and exchange processes between local governments and other sub-national organisations
- by bringing together local resources and knowledge to provide complete solutions
- by strengthening the role of cities on international agendas by engaging political and private actors. (Castán Broto, 2017)

Since the 1980s, the expansion of these national, regional, and international networks and cooperative initiatives (ICIs) of LRGs (**ref. Keys to Understanding**) has led to the building of an extended "transnational climate change governance". (Bulkeley et al., 2014) Accordingly, there has been "a surge of transnational partnerships" seeking to address various aspects of climate policy, from information collection, sharing of best practices and experiences, and capacity building and implementation, to common rule and standard setting (Streck, 2021).

NETWORKS OR INITIATIVES?

In this analysis, as in the all the report, we distinguish between networks and initiatives of LRGs. **Networks** designate full-fledged, stand-alone organisations with a membership system. Once a member of the network, the city or the region can benefit from its services and take part in the projects. At the transnational level, this is the case of ICLEI, UCLG or Energy Cities, for instance. **International cooperative initiatives** refer to spaces for collaboration of local and subnational governments, with a commitment system. The signatories voluntarily commit to align themselves with a set of shared principles and targets. Their progress can be subject to monitoring process and abidance to the rules set out by the initiative. International cooperative initiatives for climate action can have many forms. Some are administered by several networks of local governments, with separate secretariats, as in the case of the Global Covenant of Mayors; some are opened to members of a single organisation, others are open but administered by a network, as the Under2 Coalition, for which Climate Group is the Secretariat, or RegionsAdapt, coordinated by Regions4 (ref. Focus Under2 Coalition and Regions4). (**ref. Part III Under2 Coalition**).

Besides, there are **hybrid organisations** supporting the various networks and initiatives or working in complementarity with them and directly engaging with LRGs, be it in their administration, in providing research and capacity building, or a common platform for reporting and disclosure – as in the case of CDP (**ref. Focus CDP**).

Urban Policy Networks, a Centuries-Old Practice that has Spread Across the World

Typically, networks of local governments gather member cities or regions to collaborate on shared issues related to urban policies. National associations of local governments, in their crudest form have existed for centuries, taking on more formalised structures in recent decades. The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), for instance, traces its history back 800 years, to the Convention of Royal Burghs. National networks can be understood as arising from the quest of LRGs seeking a more "granular understanding" of policies, tools and financing available to them within their countries. (Ryan, 2021)

International networks arose as a natural reaction to the difficulty of LRGs in representing themselves in the international arena, as coming together in transitional networks give them the "critical mass" they require to acquire international legitimacy, visibility and strength (Fernandez de Losada, 2019). There exist presently over 200 city networks, each with their own myriad links to and between their members, States, international organisations and corporate actors (Acuto & Rayner, 2016).

United Cities and Local Governments (**ref. Part III UCLG**), for example, is the largest such network at the global level, which works to give a platform for local and regional voices. It was created in 2004 from the merger of the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA) and United Towns and Cities (UTO), formed in 1913 and 1957, respectively. There are also regional networks, gathering members from a certain region of the world, to create regional synergies and give a voice to the local authorities of the region. Eurocities, and the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), the European section of UCLG, are examples of such networks at the European level. Networks and initiatives of local actors also often have regional or national "chapters" or branches, not to be confused with independent regional and national networks.

Climate- and Environment-Focused Networks Amount to Nearly One Third of Global Networks

The development of domain-specific focuses has been a more recent step in the evolution of networks. Around 29% of the 200 and more networks existing at various levels have an explicit environmental focus, and 12.4% have an energy-related one, while most of them could be classified as "multi-purpose", due to interconnected nature of urban challenges (Acuto & Rayner, 2016). Networks like ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, created in 1990 (ref. Focus ICLEI), or C40, created in 2005, (**ref. Part III C40**) bring together members to act in the domains of environment and climate. At the European level, which marks the highest level of "municipalisation" (Fernandez de Losada, 2019), there exist networks like Energy Cities or Climate Alliance, with specialised areas of action as indicated by the names. (**ref. Part III Energy Cities and Cli-**

mate Alliance) In Latin America, the Argentinian Network of Municipalities facing Climate Change (RAMCC) is one of the most proactive national networks specifically dedicated to climate policy, and counts among the coalition partners of the Cities Race to Zero campaign at global level.

As members of national level networks all operate within the same regulatory and policy frameworks, the knowledge exchanges, collective problem-solving and advocacy can take on a more practical and concrete form; and thus national networks have shown to fill in gaps in multi-level climate governance in the countries that they exist. (Ryan, 2021)

The Creation of Joint Initiatives, The Complexification of Interrelations, and the Effectiveness of the Emerging Governance

One or more networks may launch specific initiatives, to which members can be signatory or participate in, with more specific, and often time-bound goals. In the ecosystem of local and regional government networks and their actions, initiatives often bring networks together, to further channelise their actions. The Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy (GCoM), for instance, was created in 2016 from the merger of the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy in Europe and the Compact of Mayors, which in turn were founded by networks of local actors coming together (**see below**).

The proliferation of LRG networks and cooperative initiatives has been pushed by a need to fill in the gaps in existing intergovernmental cooperation. The multiplication in recent years of networks and initiatives is also a result of the increasing importance of local actors on the global agenda. This reconfiguration of the ecosystem presents both challenges and opportunities – challenges in terms of a diffusion of efforts and a lack of coordination, and opportunities, evidently, in terms of increased spaces for fostering alliances with various actors. (Fernandez de Losada & Abdullah, 2019)

International cooperative initiatives, as an approach, have been gaining traction in the last decade as complementary to internationally negotiated top-down approaches, to meet the goal of reducing global GHG emissions. This implies a need larger integration of these initiatives into the existing international climate governance system. Measuring the effectiveness of ICIs however is rather complicated, and is conditional to their type, functions, membership and other factors in general, and to the existence of quantifiable targets and "additionality"[a] in particular. (Widerberg & Pattberg, 2014)

Supporting and Partner Organisations: Completing the Picture

The final piece of the puzzle are organisations or structures that aren't networks or initiatives per se, but are crucial to the functioning of and coordination between them. This is often through a wide range of activities, from hosting the secretariats and supporting them in their daily functioning,

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a   Additionality here means that the emissions reduction considered to be resulting from ICIs should not be a double-counting of reductions listed elsewhere.

to scientific or research-based backing, or the provision of a disclosure platform, as already explained. The roles played by these organisations would also add to the legitimacy and institutional fit of networks or initiatives – identified as important factors influencing their contribution to international climate governance and climate change mitigation. (Widerberg & Pattberg, 2014) The CDP for instance, a "not-for-profit charity that runs the global disclosure system for investors, companies, cities, states and regions to manage their environmental impacts", works closely with LRGs networks and ICIs to support their monitoring practices.

The Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy (GCoM)

GCoM is the largest global alliance of cities committed to climate action. It was created in 2016 from the merger of the European Union's Convenant of Mayors and the Compact of Mayors, which in turn were created from networks coming together at various points in time, as explained in the **indicators**. 13 Regional or National Covenants are members of the Global Covenant of Mayors alliance, depicted in the **indicators** (and **see below**). The aim of regional/national Covenants is to adapt the common principles to local realities (GCoM, n.d.), uniting all the local, regional and national partners. The regional and national covenants mobilise new signatories around locally relevant commitments, facilitate access to specially adapted tools, guidance, capacity-building and technical support, and also communicate and share experiences. The Global Secretariat promotes coherence, identifies synergies, and facilitates the exchange of best practices among Regional and National Covenants stakeholders.

GCoM Governance

The Board, which provides the strategic direction for the initiative, is co-chaired by the two main funders of the initiative: the European Commission, represented by the Executive Vice President for the European Green Deal Frans Timmermans, and UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Climate Ambition and Solutions and former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg. Ex-Officio Members include UNFCCC Executive Secretary Patricia Espinosa, UN-Habitat Executive Director Maimunah Mohd Sharif. Ten mayors are members of the Board, representative of all the regional covenants, and ensuring that the Covenant is led by mayors. The mayors on the Board serve a term of two years, which is further renewable for two years.

The Board is supported by a Strategic Advisory Committee which helps to ensure collaboration, bolster governance, and provide support for the mayors, as depicted in the **indicators**.

The GCoM Global Secretariat, co-funded by Bloomberg Philanthropies and the European Commission, carries out the day-to-day working of the Covenant, working with Regional and National secretariats. Currently the GCOM Secretariat supports the coordination of city network partners through five "Technical Working Groups" on the following areas: (1) Global and Regional Coherence; (2) Data Management, Monitoring, and Reporting; (3) Finance; (4) Communications; (5) Research and Innovation.

The Regional and National Secretariats

The GCoM has also established Regional/ National Covenants as regional chapters of the global alliance. Some already existed before the creation of the Global Covenant. Being the primary founder network in 2008, the European Covenant accounts for the largest number of GCoM signatory cities. The European Commission, as the main funder of the European Covenant and co-founder of the GCoM, also finances most of the regional and national secretariats of the GCoM.

The Covenant of Mayors for Sub Saharan Africa (CoMSSA), for instance, is co-funded by the European Union (EU) along with the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), and the Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo (AECID) (**ref. Part III CoM SSA**). Its Secretariat and Technical Helpdesk is led by ICLEI Africa with support from United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLG-A) and the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), the European chapter of UCLG. It was born in 2015, just one year before the GCoM was established.

Some Covenants have also been created as the result of multi-actor projects. Among the most recent examples is the Covenant of Mayors for the Mediterranean (CoM Med), was launched as part of Clima-Med, an EU-funded project. Initially funded through the European Neighbourhood Policy (2018-2021), then extended up to 2025 by the Cities4Climate Program, Clima Med established the CoM Med to provide technical assistance to support the formulation and implementation of local Sustainable Energy Access and Climate Action Plans (SEACAPs), in line with the GCoM principles (**ref. Part III Clima-Med**).