



Climate Alliance

Teaming up local and national climate action

- A governance perspective

Proceedings from the UNFCCC side event, COP22



The Framework

The Paris Agreement changed the way the International Climate Process is being defined, run and organised. The Agreement aims at moving from the action of few to action of all, by shifting towards a more inclusive approach. National Governments cannot alone define and implement the Paris Agreement and its commitments. This needs to happen in close collaboration with different actors that can ensure action – and accelerate it - on the ground, thus supporting Central Governments in raising their ambition and implementing their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC).

The so called Global Climate Action Agenda was established in Lima, COP 20 (previously Lima Paris Action Agenda - LPAA), in order to enhance mobilisation of Local Governments and non-state actors around the climate process, and to foster action on the ground. An important indication of that development could be observed in Marrakesh for example via the vision presented by the high level climate champions. More is needed though to strengthen this movement, structure it further and reinforce the link with the official negotiating process. Parties discussed in Marrakech the modalities of the Facilitative Dialogue, which will take place in 2018. This event represents a crucial opportunity to encourage countries to enhance their nationally determined contributions, in order to close the emissions gap and ensure that the long term goals of the Paris Agreement can be met.

At the same time in Europe, the Energy Union Governance regulation has just been proposed by the European Commission. The EU has previously announced that the citizen needs to be in the centre of the Energy Union. In practice this (should) mean moving from “top down” and centralised energy policy into more decentralised solutions recognising that the citizen - and the local governments as the closest government level to the citizen – have an important role in the transformation towards the new energy system that will lead to reaching the ambitions climate and energy targets of the European Union.

Local level can support the national level in raising its ambition level and contribute to close the emission gap. For example, average ambition of the Covenant of Mayors signatories (31% of the EU-28 population in 2014) is to reduce GHG emission by 27%, well above the EU target of 20%. In Denmark the country has pledged to become carbon free by 2050, while the city of Copenhagen has the same target already for 2025. The city of Albertslund (in the Copenhagen region) has already reduced its emissions by 63 %! Central Governments could take better advantage of this movement and existing local climate action by setting up appropriate mechanisms in order to bolster climate action implemented by local governments.

Drawing lessons from existing examples

On 11 November in the context of COP 22, Climate Alliance organised together with the Swedish Government an event highlighting the above mentioned challenges and how to move towards more teamed up approaches when defining climate and energy strategies and concrete plans.

The Fossil Free Sweden initiative aims to make Sweden the first fossil fuel free welfare state. This is only possible by mobilising all actors: cities, regions, private sector and citizen around the same long term objective. At the same time many European cities have pledged to become carbon neutral or 100 % renewable and are implementing long term climate plans, for example in the context of Covenant of Mayors. Bringing the different government levels together and identifying the best cooperation mechanisms can provide the right recipe for success for reaching the goals of the Paris agreement.



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Teaming up with a national government – and an ambitious one such as Sweden, allowed the event to showcase that both developing and implementing an ambitious long term climate strategy is only possible with a wide involvement of different actors, including cities and the private sector. Sweden is aiming for zero net emissions of greenhouse gases at 2045. This is a very ambitious objective, which has wide social and economical impacts that call for a permanent dialogue and co-creation together with the different actors. Cities such as Malmö, are eager to share their experience, help other cities to replicate those and to push the national government to find new ways of further supporting local action. Malmö is one of over 200 actors from municipalities, enterprises and organisations that have joined the Fossil Free Sweden initiative and its aim to achieve a fossil free society. The initiative supports the actors in their climate efforts by acting as a platform for dialogue, cooperation and inspiration between the government and the actors as well as among the actors themselves.

The Austrian government is also in a process of developing its long term climate and energy plan. As a joint initiative of four different ministries, this process shows a strong interdisciplinary and participatory approach which shall deliver good and well supported results. The government can also draw from the long standing experience and work done both by the Austrian climate and energy model regions as well as from progressive practices in many municipalities. For example in the framework of Climate Alliance more than 900 municipalities are actively implementing climate action at the local level. They do so together with their local businesses and educational institutions and thus create extensive synergies between the different actors. On a regional level there are funding programmes that support regions to become independent of fossil fuels and to develop their own way towards reducing energy consumption and enhancing the use of renewable energies. Those initiatives support the integration of local and regional actors in the overall development process.

The German Government announced – during the COP 22 – its Climate Action Plan 2050. This plan passed through a series of consultations and aimed at creating strong consensus among the different actors in Germany involved in developing and implementing climate policy. Already since 2008 the German Government has been running the “National Climate Initiative” (NKI) that supports widely municipalities in their climate actions. The initiative aims to mobilise existing emission reduction potential at the city level and develop innovative pilot projects. The NKI also supports the employment of climate managers in German municipalities. Climate action is, however, not explicitly a duty of municipalities in Germany. Cities, such as Cologne, argue that making climate protection a specific task for municipalities, would allow allocating further dedicated funding streams to support that work.

The Government of Luxembourg is an inspiring example when it comes to mobilising and supporting the local level. In 2012 the Luxembourg established a law on creating a Climate Pact with municipalities. This is essentially an agreement between the national government and municipalities, which they can voluntarily join. The municipalities commit to taking coherent action on climate and the national government in its turn commits to supporting those efforts with both finance and technical assistance. This has been a success story and at this moment all but one municipality in Luxembourg is taking part in the programme. It has created a win-win situation between the two government levels: municipalities are eager to find innovative solutions and commit to CO₂ emission reduction, and the national government can be sure that the municipalities are doing their share of reducing emissions and thus allow the country to reach its emission reduction targets.



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Main recommendations stemming from the debate

Good examples on collaboration between the different levels of government exist and our event highlighted some of them. However, a more systematic understanding of how does that cooperation between the different government levels influence climate policy and help reaching climate objectives seems to be missing. The main recommendations from the event are:

1. Existing cooperation practices within the EU member states need to be screened and analysed. At this moment, there is not sufficient information gathered on how the different levels of government interact in the different EU member states when it comes to climate and energy policy and planning. This applies to consultation processes, supporting structures and programmes that have been put in place, as well as to the more advanced dialogues and co-ordinated planning practices, which still needs to be mapped. Well functioning examples should be further promoted among the EU member states, taking into account the national contexts.
2. Local climate and energy plans (such as the Sustainable Energy and Climate Plans developed in the framework of the Covenant of Mayors) can be used as means to define the “Locally Determined Contributions”. Local contributions should be part of the national frameworks when the nationally determined contributions (NDCs) are developed and revised. This effective makes the local climate and energy plans as the starting point of better understanding the emission reduction potential at various government levels as well as what types of measures are being implemented by cities. Second step in this process should be the creation of an effective dialogue between the national government and the sub-national governments.¹
3. The Energy Union Governance regulation is an opportunity to valorise and systemise cooperation practices between the different levels of government. Good governance practices should start from the EU level and trickle down to the member states. Based on the study of existing cooperation practices (our first recommendation) the Energy Union Governance regulation should include a dedicated chapter on multi-level cooperation in planning and reporting with a strong focus on the role of cities.

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Further reading

- [Climate Alliance Response to the Energy Union Governance](#)
- [Climate Alliance recommendations to the Global Climate Action Agenda](#)
- [Joint statement with European networks on the Energy Union Governance](#)

¹ In its Response to the Consultation on the Energy Union Governance Climate Alliance proposes: 1) Integrating local and subnational action plans and reporting frameworks into the National Energy and Climate Plans and reports 2) Co-designing of the National Energy and Climate Plans with national, local and regional governments in collaboration with other stakeholders