



Open Letter to European Commission Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič

Brussels, 12 November 2015

Energy Union: New system calls for new leadership

Dear Vice-President,

We are writing to you not only in our capacity as local elected leaders, but also as Presidents of five European networks collectively representing all local and regional authorities across Europe.

We do not need to remind you of the crucial contribution of cities and sub-national governments to reaching the EU energy and climate goals. You have already shown great conviction in this regard and we welcome the numerous steps you have taken to pledge your support to local action, notably via the continuous reinforcement of the Covenant of Mayors movement.

What we call for is a change of perspective. As the energy landscape is undergoing dramatic change, from a once hierarchical and monopolistic system to a more distributed and decentralised one, so should the decision making architecture. Local and regional governments, as the most legitimate ambassadors and facilitators of this new reality, ought to be represented on an equal footing, alongside Member States, in the governance of the EU Energy Union.

Indeed, a new system cannot be constructed from outdated models: as we write a new chapter of our history, we must also empower its new protagonists. We, local and regional governments, are these new actors, through the role we play in mobilizing civil society and SMEs, tapping into the large array of dispersed renewable or locally recovered energy sources, increasing energy savings and efficiency through ambitious building, urban planning and mobility strategies.

We stand at the forefront of bridging crucial gaps between policy aspiration and implementation, ramping up savings in primary energy and increasing the heat produced from cogeneration and through district heating.

As the government level closest to citizens, we also play a crucial role in building public support for the Energy Union project. We can help the EU move from a logic of macro, large-scale infrastructure investments to one that favours a set of smaller, democratically-mandated projects with community involvement. Such bottom-up initiatives with local payback and engagement hold the promise of rebuilding faith into the European project. By contrast, recent events have demonstrated how large, sometimes environmentally-destructive, energy interconnection plans are sparking protest across Europe.

Through our voluntary commitment to climate and energy objectives via the Covenant of Mayors, we collectively have adopted close to 5,000 action plans, including measures to tackle fuel poverty, refurbish schools and hospitals, build new green leisure areas or reduce traffic and energy bills, thereby improving citizens' quality of life. This is the vision that should feed a truly inclusive Energy Union, one that is about a bigger society transition.

Ahead of your much anticipated state of the Energy Union Report, we thus count on you to make the case for a strong partnership with local and regional authorities, as an essential part of the new governance process.

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