

— Communiqué from European ministers of the Under2 Coalition

Outlining a shared green agenda and a commitment to a climate neutral Europe through action at all levels of government | June 2024

Delivering the European Green Deal through multi-level climate action

We, the European regions, states, provinces and territories of the Under2 Coalition, congratulate the recently elected Members of the European Parliament [and the incoming President-elect of the Commission].

Progress achieved so far under the European Green Deal represents the comprehensive and transformative vision of the European Council, the European Commission and the European Parliament, to achieve climate neutrality by 2050. Furthermore, ambitious interim targets for 2030 and the "Fit for 55" legislative package also pave the way towards achieving these targets.

As subnational governments of the Under2 Coalition, we remain firmly committed to achieving the ambitious goals of the European Green Deal and stand ready to partner with you in its successful implementation and building a stronger, safer and more prosperous future for our communities.

The EU must now move beyond targets to implementation. As we enter a new legislative term, it is crucial to implement current legislation and maintain momentum for the climate. We hope to work with you, the elected members of the European Parliament and the President-elect of the Commission, to uphold the EU's ongoing commitment to climate neutrality by 2050 and a just transition for all regions, as well as a 2040 climate target that will help to make this a reality.

This year, the European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change has [reported](#) that greater efforts and significant additional measures are needed across *all* economic sectors to achieve Europe's climate neutrality goals by 2050. The European Environment Agency's first [European Climate Risk Assessment](#) has also warned that Europe is not prepared for the rapidly increasing climate risks affecting our communities here and now. These risks further demonstrate the need to address loss and damage within Europe as well as Europe's accountability for the loss and damage experienced by developing countries.

We underline too that the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework is essential for the realisation of the EU's climate targets. Natural resources are crucial both of their

own account and for the provision of much-needed ecosystem services, particularly regarding mitigating climate change effects and improving carbon sequestration. The European Environment Agency warns that the EU will not achieve its biodiversity goals with the current measures.

The science is clear: **we need more action along the trajectory of the Green Deal to tackle the climate crisis.** For the EU to retain its international credibility at the upcoming UN Climate Change Conference, COP29, urgent action is essential. The European Council's strategic agenda for 2024-2029 must place climate as a central element to increase resilience, energy security and economic competitiveness.

At the centre of these goals are the people we represent and the challenges they are facing every day, from the ongoing cost of living crisis to climate change and the persistent need for social cohesion and security. We firmly believe that strong multilevel governance is essential to addressing these issues effectively and ensuring the inclusion of all people.

As subnational governments, we play a crucial role in implementing EU strategies, given our ability and responsibility to drive climate action at the local level. We do this through our own policies, investments in green infrastructure and the development of new regulations. We can also deliver on many of the key aspects of effective climate governance, on mitigation, adaptation and resilience as first responders on the ground. However, we do need appropriate resources, mandates and human capacity to do this.

In line with these realities, **we call on the incoming EU leadership to partner with us** to achieve:

- 1. Ambitious climate targets and a package of legislation for 2040:** We call for binding EU-wide climate targets for 2040 that do not fall short of the 90% reduction in emissions proposed by the European Commission. We call for all sectoral policies to play their part in reducing emissions. Preference must be given to the energy mix that can provide decarbonised energy regionally in the most cost-effective and fastest way. This requires the expansion and modernisation of electricity grids and storage facilities. We further call for a biodiversity strategy with legislative and non-legislative measures to ensure compliance with the targets set in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.
- 2. Multi-level governance and subnational implementation of the Green Deal:** We call for policies that empower subnational regions to develop their unique economic strengths, foster innovation and invest in infrastructure and skills development. In line with that, we further call on you to work with member states to ensure the full and meaningful participation of subnational governments in contributing to, updating, implementing and reporting on Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and long-term low greenhouse gas (GHG) emission development strategies as outlined in the principles of the Coalition for High Ambition Coalition Partnership (CHAMP) for climate action.
- 3. More investment for implementation at the subnational level:** We call for more cohesive and responsive financing mechanisms that prioritise local needs and empower communities to drive the green transition. Therefore, we call on leaders to develop an EU budget that prioritises local-level implementation and recognises the key role of subnational governments in implementing Green Deal policies, such as bottom-up approaches like Integrated Territorial Investments. Moreover, we call on the EU leadership to strengthen coordination and the strategic pooling of funds across government levels to improve access to finance for subnational governments, improve effectiveness and save

costs. This could include innovative financing tools such as green bonds and regional development funds dedicated to the Green Deal.

As a network of 40 ambitious European states and regions, we are already undertaking actions and projects addressing climate and biodiversity issues, in line with the Green Deal. We work together as subnational governments as well as with partners such as scientific experts, international businesses, NGOs and academia. We stand ready to collaborate further with you, the elected members of the European Parliament and the President-elect of the Commission, as well as with other parties on this important task – the most important that we face today.

Scottish Government Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero and Energy, Màiri McAllan said:

“Taking action on the climate emergency is our collective responsibility and will require collaboration at all levels of government. As co-chair of the Under2 Coalition, the Scottish Government is determined to play its part in reducing emissions and supporting international climate targets.

“The race to net zero is one that we must work together to win. As new MEPs get to work after the European Elections, it is critical that countries continue to work together to tackle climate change - and the connected crisis of nature loss – with the ambition, urgency and scale that future generations require of us.”

David Mascort, Minister for Climate Action, Food and Rural Agenda, Catalonia, adds:

“It’s time to act. There can be no more delays in making the changes we need for a cleaner, greener future for us and our children. Catalonia has led the way on developing clean energy and transport systems to drive down emissions, but we need others to step up with us. So, we urge the EU to adopt binding targets for 2040 that meet and or exceed those agreed in the EU legislation proposed by the European Commission. Nothing less than strong, committed climate action will do.”

Minister Thekla Walker, Baden-Württemberg, adds:

“For strong industrialized regions such as Baden-Württemberg, competitiveness and climate protection are not contradictory, but complementary. We in Baden-Württemberg have set the goal of being climate-neutral by 2040 for ourselves. Therefore, we are campaigning in Europe for the ambitious emission reduction targets set by EU law for 2040. With the Green Deal, the EU has set itself the goal of becoming the world's first climate-neutral continent by 2050. There can be no backing away from this goal. It must be reliably achieved.”

Huw Irranca-Davies MS, Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs, Welsh Government, adds:

“The climate emergency is a global emergency, and so it requires action from all of us. Working together across national and international borders, we can act to reduce emissions and adapt to the impacts of our changing climate. I’m pleased to continue supporting the work of the Under2 Coalition to illustrate the power of subnational governments and drive the momentum we need to tackle the biggest threat we’re facing.”