



European Committee  
of the Regions

## SPEECH BY 1ST VICE PRESIDENT TZITZIKOSTAS

CYPRUS FORUM CITIES

7 APRIL 2023, LIMASSOL

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me thank you for your kind invitation,  
and let me congratulate the city of Limassol and its **Mayor Nicos Nicolaides**

on your inclusion among the **100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities!**

Knowing the particular challenges faced by islands,

I am extremely pleased to see your involvement in this pioneering EU project.

**As an island, you are further exposed** to the consequences of climate change.

At the same time, **you are a 'living lab'**, and your forward-looking vision represents an added value for all Europeans.

In addition, your engagement in mobilizing other Cyprus municipalities, as reflected by this Forum, is commendable.

Dear colleagues,

European Missions are an ambitious instrument to tackle global challenges.

The Missions set out bold, measurable targets to deliver tangible outcomes in a well-defined timeframe for all Europeans.

They aim to pool the necessary resources in terms of funding programmes, policies, and regulations,

and they aim at mobilising public and private actors in order to achieve the targets.

In particular, the "**Climate Neutral and Smart Cities Mission**" is extremely important, as its objectives are key for:

-Delivering 100 climate neutral and smart cities **by 2030**;

-Ensuring that these cities act as **experimentation and innovation hubs** to enable all European cities to follow suit by 2050.

Dear friends,

**you are local pioneers today,**

**and you will be tomorrow European leaders in this field.**

But you are not left alone in this process:

the **Horizon Europe program** is investing 359.29 million to support the implementation of the Mission.

**Several calls are currently open** until April 2023 to support the implementation of the "Cities" Mission, with an overall indicative budget of €110 million.

**The fact is that cities play a pivotal role to achieve climate neutrality, as it is by acting locally that we can impact globally.**

Even if cities take up only 4% of the EU's land area, they are home to 75% of its citizens.

They account for more than 65% of its total energy consumption and 70% of its CO2 emissions.

In the context of the **EU Green Deal**, local authorities are at the forefront of delivering on the EU's ambitious objectives.

And this is nowhere felt more directly than in urban centres, which are responsible for 23% of EU carbon emissions from transport.

Bold modal shifts are needed to promote the **decarbonisation of urban mobility**:

For instance, we need to redress the **chronic underinvestment in public transport infrastructure** and, in parallel,

to boost the **potential of active mobility**, as adjustments to the allocation of urban space can offer a win-win for both **decarbonisation and public health**.

This can be done with electric bikes, which are estimated to have the potential to replace some 50% of urban deliveries in EU cities.

Moreover, we must **combat mobility poverty** in order to ensure that citizens living outside our urban centers are not excluded from the mobility transition.

It is against this background that the 100 **Climate Neutral and Smart Cities** are called to:

-**contribute** to the EU's 55% emission reduction targets,

-**offer** cleaner air and safer transport,

-**lead** in climate and digital innovation, making Europe attractive for investments from innovative companies and qualified workers.

In other words, **cities must become living-labs,**

**the places where “policy meets people”,**

**the places where the European Green Deal comes alive.**

After all, 90% of European actions to address climate change are carried out by local and regional authorities.

Equally important,

cities **will inspire** other cities to become climate neutral.

For all these reasons, the European Committee of the Regions has strived to raise awareness of the opportunities,

and to emphasize the importance of ensuring an inclusive approach,

where the benefits and results are transmitted to non-Mission cities.

**Indeed we believe that the solutions you will put forward can be scaled up for all other European cities,**

and we really look forward to continuing our cooperation with you.

There are more than **140 members of the European Committee of the Regions** representing cities selected in the Call to participate in the "100 Cities" mission,

many of which have already developed a Climate City Contract.

In this context, we propose to create an "**EU Mission Label**" for the forerunner cities.

Let's **team up and twin**

in order to strengthen the impact of our actions and promote the **co-creation of solutions,**

**which are locally tested, and ready to be exported.**

This requires new partnerships based on local and regional interests, and defined in **Smart Specialisation Strategies.**

New **partnerships** need to be created also between the different EU Missions and the selected cities,

including through the preparation of **Climate City Contracts**, which promote place-based solutions, from the bottom up,

and which directly involve citizens, as the Conference on the Future of Europe has also suggested to us.

In this context, allow me to suggest you to make full use

of the experiences of the European Committee of the Regions and the Joint Research Centre's joint piloting exercise

called "**Partnerships for Regional Innovation**",

which will lead soon to the setting of 100 "deep tech valleys",

**as innovation is key to implementing locally the green transition.**

Dear colleagues,

last week I had the honour to open in Brussels the **Covenant of Mayors** meeting to debate the impact of the current energy crisis.

Let me be clear: the political emergency we currently live through **cannot stop** by any means our struggle towards carbon neutrality.

The **Covenant** has created a powerful political movement throughout Europe, and has inspired many beyond our borders.

It has engaged over **11 000 municipalities** to translate the EU's climate and energy targets onto the local level.

They all have set ambitious climate goals to accelerate the energy and climate transition on their territories, often faster than their respective national levels.

**I am glad to notice that 26 municipalities of Cyprus are part of the Covenant.**

I believe that this experience can serve as an instrument to integrate local actions

into the **National Energy and Climate Plans.**

For this reason, we have created a **network of National Ambassadors** for the Covenant.

in order to assure coherence between the different levels of governance.

**Stavros Stavrinides.** member of the European Committee of the Regions and Member of Strovolos Municipality,

currently acts as National Ambassador for Cyprus, and I warmly thank him for his work there.

Let me conclude by saying that we remain at your service

as **we are your voice in Brussels** throughout this process.

We look forward to further cooperating in this common struggle, guided by:

your forward-looking ideas,

your courage, and

your resilience, which may inspire all Europeans.

Thank you.

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY