

Empowering local leadership: A vision for a future-proof EU budget



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The Local Alliance – a coalition of Europe’s eight leading city and regional networks – has today published a pivotal new policy paper calling on EU leaders to ensure the next EU budget (2028–2034) becomes a strong, comprehensive tool for a just, climate-neutral and competitive Europe.

The policy paper states that recognising local and regional governments as key partners in the implementation of the EU budget is essential to achieving a prosperous Europe, where people want to live, work and thrive. As Europe faces unprecedented challenges, including climate change and digital transformation, the Local Alliance makes it clear that closer collaboration across all levels of government is critical for success.

In the paper, the Local Alliance envisions an EU budget that acts as a long-term investment tool, bringing together public and private financing to support local projects that improve people’s lives. Central to this vision is the safeguarding of Cohesion Policy, the EU’s most effective means of ensuring balanced territorial development and tackling inequalities.

The paper says that local governments already implement 70% of the European Green Deal legislation and account for 69% of climate-related public spending. It states that strengthening multi-level governance and adopting a place-based investment strategy will ensure EU funds reach all territories.

Cities and regions are the beating heart of Europe’s prosperity, resilience and democracy, driving the transition to a fair and climate-neutral future,

says André Sobczak, Secretary General of Eurocities. “The next EU budget must empower local governments with the resources they need to deliver lasting results, including greener cities, stronger economies, and better quality of life.

By prioritising place-based investment and stronger multi-level governance, we can ensure no one and no territory is left behind, transforming Europe's ambitions into meaningful outcomes for everyone in Europe.

In the paper, the Local Alliance calls for the next EU budget to:

- Strengthen the place-based approach: Empower local authorities through improved partnership principles, including ex-ante conditionality requiring member states to consult them before accessing EU funds.
- Increase efficiency with multi-level governance: Avoid centralising planning and investment decisions to prevent delays and inefficiencies. Shared governance will improve fund absorption. Integrated Territorial Investments and cross border cooperation are also crucial for effective territorial strategies.
- Broaden the definition of reforms: Include capacity building, technical support and multi-level governance to enhance public administrations' preparedness.
- Simplify without compromising accountability: Streamline EU funding processes while maintaining transparency and conditionalities.
- Guarantee that any future EU competitiveness fund remains accessible to cities and regions, so they can drive green innovation, decarbonisation and resilience, supporting Europe's industrial transformation.

1. Download the full report from the Local Alliance: A grounded EU budget: Investing in Europe, our local communities and citizens for a competitive, resilient and fair future.

2. The members of the Local Alliance are: Association of Cities and Regions for sustainable Resource management (ACR+); The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR); Climate Alliance; Energy Cities; Eurocities; FEDARENE; ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability; POLIS.

3. Eurocities wants to make cities places where everyone can enjoy a good quality of life, is able to move around safely, access quality and inclusive public services and benefit from a healthy environment. We do this by networking more than 200 larger European cities, which together represent some 150 million people across 38 countries, and by

gathering evidence of how policy making impacts people to inspire other cities and EU decision makers. Connect with us at <https://eurocities.eu/> or by following our Bluesky, Threads, Twitter.

4. Download the new Local Alliance logo, and view it below:

2. Download the full report from the Local Alliance:

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