Cities and regions fear a massive social crisis and call for measures to finance RePowerEU as Russia continues gas supply cuts

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The ENVE commission meeting on 15 July showed that the prospect of the energy crisis is worsening as the approaching winter is a major concern for EU local and regional authorities. The severe droughts across the EU and the tragic collapse of the Marmolada glacier confirm the urgent need to adapt to global warming. The ENVE commission adopted two draft opinions on the energy package on gas, hydrogen and methane, and the role of cities and regions in global climate governance ahead of the United Nations climate summit to take place in November in Egypt. The priorities of the Czech Presidency were also on the discussion table.

The European Committee of the Regions' June plenary saw the adoption of a set of economic, fiscal and social measures to accelerate access to green funds, to improve energy performance of buildings and to further support vulnerable citizens and businesses to face energy and mobility poverty. To further highlight the importance of the green recovery plan, members of the CoR ENVE commission underlined that the economic recovery from the pandemic as well as from the war in Ukraine should not come at the cost of jeopardising long-term environmental and climate goals. More ambitious energy-efficiency and renewable-energy targets as proposed in the REPowerEU plan are key to overcoming the challenges that the energy sector faces and the impact on citizens and businesses.

Opening the meeting, Kata Tüttő, Deputy Mayor of Budapest and chair of the ENVE commission and of the Green Deal Going Local working group, said: "Russia continues cutting gas exports to certain Member States. Some households and companies in our cities and regions are

being forced to reduce or stop their consumption. Rising energy prices and supply disruptions are already affecting our economies, risking a social crisis. We need to ensure that in case of full disruption before next winter, the EU will be able to show its energy solidarity where most needed across all our territories. It is of paramount importance to reduce demand and save energy and we urge the adoption of measures to finance RePowerEU, the plan for speeding up the clean-energy transition."

During today's ENVE commission meeting, two draft opinions were adopted.

On the Energy package on gas, hydrogen and methane emissions, rapporteur Jakub Piotr Chełstowski (PL/ECR) , Marshal of the Śląskie Voivodeship, said: " The regulatory set to which the opinion is referring, will be critical in achieving the European Union's reduction targets included in the Fit for 55 package, and also directly contributes to the EU's strategic plans for decoupling from fossil fuels in line with REPower EU. The current geopolitical situation must not have an impact on energy prices for consumers. Our main objective should be to protect consumers from high prices and to ensure the security of gas supply. Furthermore, it is extremely important to ensure an economically predictable energy transition. "

Ahead of the United Nations climate summit in Egypt next November, the CoR commission adopted the opinion Towards a structural inclusion of Cities and Regions in UNFCCC COP27 drafted by Rapporteur Alison Gilliland (IE/PES) . The Mayor of Dublin and member of the CoR delegation to COP27 said: " The energy crisis, exacerbated by the illegal Russian invasion of Ukraine, highlighted even more the urgency to keep our ambitious climate goals when tackling climate change. We must provide an urgent large-scale response to the climate crisis by effectively coupling adaptation and mitigation measures through multilevel action. The European Committee of the Regions calls for a structural inclusion of cities and regions in UNFCCC COP 27 ."

Both opinions are scheduled for adoption at the CoR's plenary session in October.

The ENVE commission also debated the priorities of the Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union. One of the objectives of the Czech Presidency, which took the chair of ministerial

meetings in July, is the EU's energy security, which is in danger due to Russia's gas supply cuts, risking an increase in the number of citizens and business suffering energy and mobility poverty. The debate highlighted that is it vital to achieve the right balance between the greater climate ambitions presented through the Fit for 55 package and the need to alleviate the negative impact of the current geopolitical situation on energy prices and the need to reduce Europe's dependence on energy imports.

Members had an exchange of views on the EU Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles with by rapporteur Luca Menesini (IT/PES) , President of the Province of Lucca.

The documents of the ENVE commission meeting are accessible here.

Green Deal Going Local is a CoR initiative that aims at placing cities and regions at the heart of the EU's transition towards climate neutrality to empower local and regional leaders to take action on climate change and increase the delivery of sustainable EU-funded projects in local communities across the European Union.

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