WWF

ONE PLANET CITY CHALLENGE

LOCAL WINS, GLOBAL CHANGE

Enablers for Scaling Climate Solutions for More Resilient and Thriving Cities

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS | OCTOBER 2026

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 3

INTRODUCTION 4

MAINSTREAMING CLIMATE LEADERSHIP 6

BRINGING CITIZENS ON BOARD 7

GIVING YOUTH A REAL SEAT AT THE TABLE 8

FINANCING THE TRANSITION 9

CLIMATE ACTION & COMPETITIVENESS 10

WORKING WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS 11

NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS (NBS) 12

DRIVING THE FOSSIL FUEL TRANSITION 14

PARTICIPANTS 15

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper is based on eight facilitated round-table discussions held at the LIFE ASAP EU Seminar and Award Ceremony in Hamburg (June 2026). The discussions brought together local decision-makers, practitioners and partner organisations from 21 cities across 13 countries.

The paper presents findings and recommendations for decision-makers at local, national and EU level on how to scale effective local climate action. It does not represent the position of WWF or the EU.

Five structural barriers recur across all eight discussion themes:

1. **Multi-level governance gaps.** Policies, responsibilities and resources are insufficiently aligned between local, national and EU levels. Cities are required to deliver on EU climate targets but are frequently not involved in designing the national frameworks that determine whether delivery is possible. Furthermore cities are showing high ambition with realistic actionaplans and fundable projects but this is not always seen on the national and EU level. Existing intermediary mechanisms — including the Covenant of Mayors Territorial Coordinator and National Coordinator models as well as programs such as CapaCITIES — demonstrate that this gap can be addressed but these types of mechanisms need to be strengthened in order for this to work on all levels across the EU.
2. **Climate policy de-prioritisation and uncertainty.** Delays and partial transpositions of EU climate legislation, including provisions with direct implications for cities, weaken the framework within which municipalities operate. Cities cannot sustain local ambition without consistent EU and national policy implementation.
3. **Structural barriers to finance.** The primary constraint for most cities is not the total volume of available funding but its structure. Funding tends to be short-term, project-specific and fragmented. Smaller municipalities, in particular, lack the institutional capacity to access, manage and combine available instruments. Expanding the reach of proven mechanisms such as ELENA is more effective than creating new programmes to address this issue.
4. **Tokenistic engagement.** Citizen and youth participation in city climate planning frequently satisfies a procedural requirement without producing genuine influence. Engagement that begins early, links to real decisions and is supported by sustained structures produces more effective and durable outcomes.
5. **Insufficient institutional voice for cities.** Formal bodies such as the Committee of the Regions provide EU-level representation, but many cities — particularly smaller municipalities — lack the capacity or access to use existing channels effectively. Stronger intermediary support is needed to make these routes accessible in practice, rather than new institutional structures.

At city level, two further challenges recur: institutional silos that prevent integrated climate action across municipal departments, and trust deficits between local governments and citizens, arising from disinformation, broken commitments and a sense of disengagement.

A central point is that the priority should be to improve and better connect existing mechanisms rather than to design new ones. Cities — particularly smaller and less-resourced municipalities — need support to access and use what already exists. Effective climate action also requires that climate objectives are integrated with resilience, nature and economic development. For many cities, these are not peripheral co-benefits but practical conditions for implementation.




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INTRODUCTION

This paper draws on discussions from “Local Wins, Global Change: Celebrating and Scaling Climate Solutions” — held as a side event of the Hamburg Sustainability Conference 2026.

Organised by WWF, with EU support through the project LIFE ASAP, in collaboration with CapaCITIES and NetZeroCities, it brought together city decision makers, practitioners and partners from 13 countries. The event combined an international award ceremony recognising leading EU and global climate cities, and a structured working session.

The award ceremony celebrated the achievements of national winners and finalists from Hungary, Portugal, Romania and Sweden, and announced the two global winners of WWF’s One Planet City Challenge 2025/26 — Paris (France) and Makati (Philippines) — selected from nearly 400 participating cities in the program worldwide. This was followed by eight facilitated round-table discussions, each addressing a key theme in urban climate governance, ranging from climate financing and citizen engagement to nature-based solutions and the fossil fuel transition. The aim of the discussions was to see what is already happening on the ground, what can enable scaling those examples and what hurdles need to be overcome.

This policy paper presents the key findings and resulting policy recommendations for decision makers on the local, national and EU level to support scaling practical and effective local climate solutions, based on input from local decision makers, practitioners and partners.

These policy recommendations aim to inform decision-making and accelerate ongoing efforts to help local governments advance climate actions across the EU under the European Green Deal.

The most urgent, cross-cutting recommendations in this policy paper, those that point to structural issues beyond any single topic or policy area, are listed on the next page.

In summary, the EU has a valuable role in continuing to support the climate ambitions of local governments ensure resilient and thriving cities and towns across the EU. What is needed is a focus on improving and scaling mechanisms already in place, rather than inventing new ones and giving cities a stronger voice while genuinely connecting all levels of decision-making.


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Cross-cutting issues

WHAT WE SEE	WHAT'S NEEDED FROM EU AND NATIONAL DECISION MAKERS
Multi-level governance gap. Misaligned policies, insufficient national support for municipal ambition, and a lack of coordination mechanisms between local, national and EU levels.	**Increased focus on multi-level governance** — strengthening the mandate of local authorities and more efforts to align EU policy and national frameworks with local climate actions. Concretely, this could be done by strengthening intermediary mechanisms such as the Covenant of Mayors' Territorial Coordinator model and CapaCITIES, including the national platforms that this program is built by.
Climate policies de-prioritisation. National governments are currently developing climate actions plan under the EU Green Deal frameworks (e.g. RED III), however several delays and partial transpositions are occurring in a wide range of Member States, including provisions related to urban climate actions (e.g. EED).	**Engage national levels into climate policy actions.** To avoid infringement procedures and financial sanctions, EU member states must implement the key climate regulations, with the help of the cities most advanced on climate actions.
Structural barriers to funding. While funding amounts remain a challenge, funding shortfalls are less about total volume and more about structure. Short-term, project-specific, fragmented across schemes, and poorly aligned with the pace of municipal climate action.	**Longer, more predictable financing for all** — i.e. financing that municipalities can plan around as well as eligibility and reporting rules realistic for smaller, less-resourced authorities; expanding and replicating proven technical assistance models like ELENA rather than reinventing new mechanisms.
Genuine vs. tokenistic engagement. There is a need to move from formality with little genuine influence towards early, meaningful engagement linked to real outcomes across all efforts to engage citizen, youth and partners.	**Ensure realistic timelines for collaboration are built** into existing instruments (Climate City Contracts, Climate Pact) For youth specifically, strengthen existing mechanisms (youth municipal councils, micro-grants, EU-backed youth camps and networks) with clearer feedback loops, education to enable informed engagement and active outreach efforts to reach diverse stakeholders.
Formal roles for cities. Despite growing visibility in international discourse, cities lack a formal, dedicated role in events, roadmaps and processes on the EU and international level — and recognition in principle has not translated into institutional status or resourcing, making it harder for cities to access support tailored to their needs.	**Give cities a clearer seat at the table.** Strengthen the mandate for cities to have a role in decision making on the EU level and support their engagement in existing processes, especially for smaller cities, through intermediary support.

WHAT WE SEE ON THE LOCAL LEVEL	WHAT IS NEEDED FROM LOCAL DECISION MAKERS
Institutional fragmentation. Silos within municipalities and between departments hinder coherent, integrated climate action — echoing the multi-level governance gap at a more local, administrative level.	**Break internal silos,** e.g. by working with cross-cutting projects and budgets that span across different departments.
Trust deficits. Lack of trust between citizens and institutions, driven by disinformation[1], broken past commitments, and a sense of hopelessness — a foundational, cross-cutting challenge.	**Build trust with citizens.** Invest in transparent, ongoing communication about climate action — from vision to results — and follow through visibly on commitments to rebuild credibility over time.

1 What are climate misinformation and disinformation and how can we tackle them? | UNDP Climate Promise



MAINSTREAMING CLIMATE LEADERSHIP

What Can Leading Cities Do To Support Others?

Leading cities can support others by sharing effective practices for engaging partners – businesses in particular – as well as best practices for motivating and retaining citizen buy-in.

They can also support other cities directly, encouraging them to cultivate their own commitments.

There are many existing mechanisms cities can use to share their knowledge e.g. city twinning, working through peer-to-peer networks such as EU Missions' city-to-city exchange, and mentoring. There are also civil servant training opportunities, e.g. PACT, that can be a mechanism through which to share knowledge. Moreover, partner collaborations can be a core tool through which cities can connect e.g. partners that work across cities can connect different city representatives.

Recommendations for Local Policy Makers

- **Share lessons on how to break silos.** Many cities face challenges with fragmented governance structures that can hinder a coherent municipal-wide development of integrated climate action. Sharing lessons learned on addressing this challenge should be an important focus for leading cities.

Recommendations for National Policy Makers

- **Strengthen enabling environments for cities to share knowledge.** Support cities and create an enabling environment for them to work within to share knowledge. Invest in and expand the current mission ecosystems and national platforms being built under the CapaCITIES program as these already provide country-specific expertise and networks well placed to drive replication of good practice across municipalities. Also, make sure programs and grants are used to share knowledge and best practice e.g. URBACT, Interreg, and youth-focused funds such as the Bloomberg Youth Climate Action Fund.

Recommendations for EU Policy Makers

- **Strengthen multi-level governance to bridge local and national policy.** EU support can see the most benefit in lessening the gap between local and national policies and helping increase the capacity of local authorities by strengthening multi-level governance.
- **Support scaling and replicating best practices.** Ensure continuation of EU wide programs, such as CapaCITIES, that provide experience on the benefits of establishing national mission ecosystems and the role of national platforms – a key function in driving replication of good practice in the national context.
- **Strengthen intermediary support to close the gap between smaller and larger municipalities.** Smaller cities face resource restrictions and can lag behind better-funded and better-supported entities in their climate journey. The EU should therefore ensure structures that support exchanges between different types of local governments. The Covenant of Mayors' Territorial Coordinator model, which provides regional-level intermediary support, is one example already showing results—helping smaller municipalities with climate planning who might otherwise be left behind. Similarly, the Covenant of Mayors National Coordinator model demonstrates how national-level coordination can systematically support municipalities in developing and implementing sustainable energy and climate action plans. Strengthening and expanding these models offers a concrete route to narrowing the gap between better- and less-resourced local governments.

TOPIC SUMMARY STATEMENT[2]:

"Peer-to-peer exchange – both within local government and between local governments – helps disseminate lessons learnt and good practices. More effective communication and coordination between stakeholders to share experiences is key."

2 These summary statements were produced by the group on the day of the workshop.

BRINGING CITIZENS ON BOARD

How Do You Co-Create Climate Action with Citizens?

Citizen engagement can be seen as resource- and time-intensive and it is often felt that the processes and their implementation take too long and are labour intensive.

A lack of clear and easy communication channels to communicate and demonstrate success stories can also become an impediment. Cities often are not funded in a way that enables citizen engagement. A lack of alignment between different levels of government, and a lack of understanding of the legislative framework and its barriers, further compound these impediments.

Another issue facing cities is also a common global challenge – i.e. the current zeitgeist of disinformation and a negative and critical skew on social media. There is a heightened lack of trust in many EU cities between governments and their citizens. In addition, there is often a feeling of hopelessness on the part of citizens – especially in relation to climate change. In some EU countries the norm and perception around the role of citizens – e.g. the culture of volunteering and engagement – is not at a point where it is easy to initiate citizen involvement in government processes.

Despite all this, cities are already putting a range of concrete solutions into practice: innovative educational programmes for youth civic engagement, and the formation of energy transition teams bringing together the public sector, private sector and civil society. Strategic programmes are being co-created with the community, making use of community places such as libraries and schools, alongside recycling and upcycling workshops and "cities as classrooms" approaches that take citizens from ideas through to policy making. Tactical urbanism and digital platforms are also in use, e.g. city apps for gathering citizen feedback, alongside climate city contracts, public budgeting processes, and citizens' forums. Live feedback is being gathered through project sensors and physical measurements such as air quality alarms, as well as apps that let individuals measure their own actions.

Recommendations for Local Policy Makers

- **Create safe and accessible spaces.** Create spaces, processes and tools that enable safe interaction between citizens and government. Draw on existing urban civic-engagement platforms and networks, and work closely with NGOs, volunteer bodies, and other locally active and trusted organisations.
- **Make civic education inclusive and accessible to all groups.** Education should cover civic engagement, while formal and informal education systems should address group-specific barriers to participation, such as gaps in digital literacy among older people and low-income citizens.

Recommendations Across All Policy Levels

- **Foster an open and collaborative culture that strengthens citizen agency.** The culture within local governments—and at national and EU levels—needs to shift towards a more open, collaborative spirit. Citizens should feel empowered to act, which requires not only involvement but also clear communication throughout the climate-action process: from vision and planning to implementation and results.

TOPIC SUMMARY STATEMENT:

"Citizens must feel that their city belongs to them and we should start creating safe places e.g. "Idea Labs" where this process can happen."



Centre for Ageing Better / Pexels (CC0)

GIVING YOUTH A REAL SEAT AT THE TABLE

How do you Meaningfully Involve Young People?

There are a number of common mistakes made by institutions when seeking to engage youth in climate planning and action.

The first – that can be an underlying cause of subsequent errors – is starting engagement processes without real interest in input other than to fulfil a metric, i.e. tokenism. This results in a process where youth are only there to be present and do not have genuine influence in the process. This can result in youth feeling unheard even when participating and can increase the distance young people can feel to institutions and formal processes.

There is a tendency to see youth opinions as less valid than those of adults and to bring youth into the process in a way that doesn't reflect how they themselves prefer to interact or are comfortable with e.g. formal meeting settings or use of technical and inaccessible language within meetings.

Recommendations for Local Policy Makers

- **Provide institutional support, information and responsibility.** Meaningful youth involvement requires institutional support and political commitment. Institutions should provide young people with sufficient education, context and accessible, age-appropriate information to enable informed contributions. Involve young people from the earliest stages of a process and entrust them with real responsibility. Short introductory training ahead of formal consultations, for example, can help ensure their input is well informed.
- **Use accessible, youth-friendly entry points to participation.** Cities can engage young people through informal, low-pressure settings—such as sports events, community gardens and other youth-friendly spaces—that make participation feel accessible. Schools and teachers can act as important intermediaries, while mapping existing youth NGOs helps build on established momentum rather than starting from scratch.
- **Build trust through context-sensitive and ongoing dialogue.** Cities and other partners need to understand the context in which engagement takes place. Histories of broken commitments or unfulfilled promises can lead young people to feel their voices are not taken seriously. Clearly communicate expectations and constraints, particularly where administrative processes move slowly and may not match young people's timelines. Dialogue should be continuous, rather than limited to individual activities, and should include feedback when proposals cannot be implemented.

Recommendations Across All Policy Levels

- **Establish long-term structures that sustain youth engagement.** Create mechanisms such as youth municipal councils, alongside recognition and prizes that reinforce motivation. Micro-grants enabling youth groups to pursue their own plans can be especially valuable in building genuine ownership and educational impact, while community-building and enjoyable activities help sustain interest over time.
- **Ensure youth engagement is inclusive, meaningful and impactful.** Actively lower barriers for young people from different socioeconomic, educational and geographical backgrounds. Meaningful engagement is not about bringing young people to pre-set tables, but about creating spaces, opportunities and conditions in which their contributions genuinely matter and lead to visible results.

TOPIC SUMMARY STATEMENT:

"Young people engage more deeply when they see their ideas taken seriously, when they are trusted with real responsibility, and when they can see actual change resulting from their contributions — the challenge is creating the conditions where this is genuinely possible."



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FINANCING THE TRANSITION
What Actually Works?

Cities need to create an attractive narrative for funding – this implies, among other things: having a clear vision and using funding to accelerate projects, instead of looking for one time/project/issue-specific funding.

A good way for municipalities to take advantage of external funding is by matching funding priorities with local needs.

Cities need to respond to the ever-changing needs of their communities, which are increasing rather than decreasing. This includes mitigating climate change and building resilience while supporting recovery from extreme weather events and delivering energy-efficient refurbishment of existing buildings while also creating more housing.

Cities' access to funding is sometimes restricted by the national financial situation. Moreover, public money alone is not enough and therefore there is the need to leverage private funding, but economic and other interests may also lobby against municipal climate action.

Recommendations for Local Policy Makers

- **Explore innovative and participatory financing models.** Investigate funding beyond conventional approaches, including blended-finance schemes, public–private collaboration and participatory funding involving citizens. Stakeholder engagement can unlock collective intelligence and help devise innovative financing solutions.
- **Build strong business partnerships and incentives for climate action.** Work with local companies and businesses by making a clear business case for climate action—one that recognises environmental, social and economic sustainability as essential to long-term business profitability. Context-appropriate incentives for business involvement are crucial to advancing local climate action.
- **Embed climate action across all municipal investment and decision-making.** Integrate climate action across all municipal areas so that all municipal funding and investment contribute to climate objectives. Use available tools, including public procurement, to embed climate considerations across workstreams.
- **Use multilevel governance and intermunicipal cooperation to unlock investment.** Work with neighbouring municipalities to develop joint investment pipelines, build the scale needed to attract funders and bundle projects where appropriate. Use multilevel governance mechanisms to influence national policies and remove regulatory barriers that restrict municipalities' and public actors' access to innovative financing, such as green bonds. Where national-government backing is required for multilateral development bank financing, use mechanisms including CHAMP and CapaCITIES national platforms to secure it.

Recommendations for EU Policy Makers

- **Expand proven technical-assistance models for municipal climate finance.** Create systems through which cities can access technical assistance to build capacity to obtain, manage and coordinate funding. Support should strengthen municipal teams' ability to prepare financeable projects and cooperate effectively. Existing models, such as the European Local Energy Assistance facility (ELENA), demonstrate that this approach works in practice. Expanding and replicating proven mechanisms, rather than creating new ones, would enable more cities to benefit from established support structures.

TOPIC SUMMARY STATEMENT:

"If we support cities well, funding becomes an accelerator — not a destination. All investment should be for sustainability — this is done by integrating climate action across all areas and making it systemic."

CLIMATE ACTION & COMPETITIVENESS
How Can Cities Have Both?

Cities face process-related barriers to truly combine climate actions with competitiveness. These barriers include limited implementation capacity, poor coordination, and unclear responsibility for achieving climate targets.

Regulatory instability and rigid procurement procedures compound these challenges. This can both limit local authorities' financial flexibility and block new solutions.

Cities also face a set of underlying structural barriers to climate competitiveness: limited fiscal and fund-raising capabilities, lack of regulatory stability, insufficient prioritization of resources, and limited funds more broadly. These are compounded by a lack of local power, short-termism in decision-making, and insufficient local and national capacities to act.

Despite this, there are examples of cities and projects where climate action and competitiveness come hand-in-hand. Private firms are already driving several innovative climate technologies, including drone monitoring of electrical grids for maintenance, water leak detection, and smart integration of EVs, batteries and flexible grids into utilities. Connecting climate action with resilience, nature and economic competitiveness is not simply a matter of communicating co-benefits. For many cities, these connections are conditions for implementation — securing the political support, partnerships and investment that make climate projects viable.

Recommendations for Local Policy Makers

- **Invest in partnerships that connect science, policy and society.** Clear communication and partnerships around the benefits of climate action is essential to address resistance from citizens and other organisations, while energy communities can help build local buy-in. Build on and support the work of committed businesses and citizens as they are key partners in the transition.

Recommendations for EU Policy Makers

- **Maintain a place-based, city-centred approach in EU research and innovation.** Ensure that the next EU Research and Innovation Framework retains a strong focus on place-based and city-centred action. A shift towards purely technology-oriented instruments risks losing the integrated, locally grounded implementation model developed through the EU Missions.

Recommendations for Policy Makers Across All Levels

- **Integrate local authorities into regional and national planning.** Ensure local authorities are clearly integrated into national and regional planning and programmes, with particular attention to closer coordination between local and regional levels on energy utilities such as heating and electricity.
- **Invest in complementary tools that reinforce the connection between climate action and economic competitiveness.** This should include funding for cleaner heating and transport systems and circular-resource hubs. Ensure that private households, especially vulnerable households, can access this funding by avoiding overly complex and frequently changing grant rules.

TOPIC SUMMARY STATEMENT:

"Programmes and collaboration across governance levels that accelerate climate actions in cities are delivering concrete results on the ground. Examples span from deploying renewable energy sources leading to a 50% GHG reduction in a Hungarian city, to replacing fossil fuel-based heating systems in Polish cities to improve urban air quality, to improve circularity in hubs to support companies in the transition."

WORKING WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS

How Do You Build Genuine Partnerships for Climate Action?

Building genuine partnerships for climate action requires strong political alignment and leadership across levels of governance, along with long-term, predictable funding to sustain collaborative efforts.

Mechanisms such as local green deals, green procurement, and structured engagement with companies can help anchor these partnerships.

Effective partnerships depend on a bottom-up approach that actively engages communities and local stakeholders, including through citizen participation mechanisms such as citizen assemblies. Meaningfully involving companies is equally important, alongside aligning environmental objectives with economic and social priorities.

Key challenges include short political cycles and shifting political priorities, along with the difficulty of reconciling different stakeholder interests and timelines.



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Recommendations for Local Policy Makers

- **Build long-term partnerships.** Develop lasting partnerships with other cities, civil-society and local organisations, and the private sector through shared ESG commitments and climate goals, local green deals, and sustainable business strategies.

Recommendations for National and EU Decision Makers

- **Provide sustained resources for local partnership-building.** Enable long-term funding and resources for local governments to build partnerships and maintain engagement and trust over time.

TOPIC SUMMARY STATEMENT:

"Successful climate action depends on genuine partnerships between municipalities, citizens, and businesses, built on shared goals, trust and long-term commitment."



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NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS (NBS)

How Can Cities Move from Green Ideas to Real Projects?

Nature-Based Solutions (NbS) offer cities a practical way to address multiple urban challenges at the same time, from climate adaptation and biodiversity loss to public health and quality of life.

Their value lies in having multiple benefits through the same intervention, making nature an integral part of how cities develop and respond to future challenges. To realise their full potential NbS need to be mainstreamed into urban planning, investment and development, moving beyond stand alone green projects towards more integrated and systemic approaches.

Effective NbS rely on proper mapping of eco-climate zones to support evidence-based, realistic planning, alongside stakeholder engagement throughout the planning, design and implementation. But it is also important that stakeholders in general, and cities in particular, are open to try new approaches and find the right balance between green and grey infrastructure. Dedicated funds, better cooperation across sectors and institutions, break down silos and integrate NbS into infrastructure projects are key to move from isolated green ideas to wider and long term implementation.

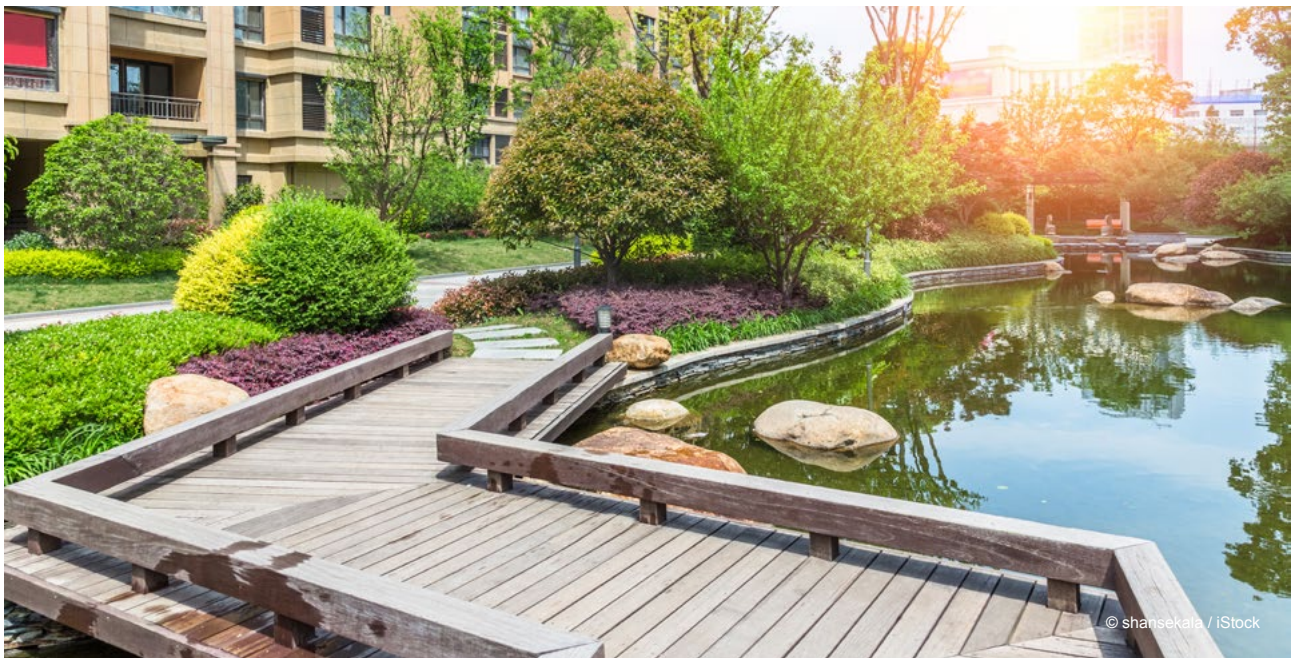
While several pilot NbS projects have already been implemented, there is a clear need for stronger mapping and strategic planning of NbS at both the local and regional levels to maximise their impact and scalability. Key lessons from these projects include the value of treating shared natural resources as an opportunity for inter-municipal cooperation, alongside making nature accessible within short walking distance for all residents. Young people, alongside other representative stakeholder groups, are seen as important drivers of change who can inspire new ways of thinking about nature-based solutions.

Cities' ability to move in more scale from green ideas to real nature-based projects is hindered by local government structures not yet organised around climate objectives, outdated administrative systems, and a lack of policy coherence. Departments and institutions often work in silos, making it difficult to combine different urban objectives into a single project or to measure benefits across people, nature, biodiversity, energy and well-being. Being more open to innovation and smart city solutions is seen as one way to help address this.

Other key barriers for scaling up NbS are financial constraints, limited public understanding of NbS, complex bureaucratic procedures, transparency and governance concerns and the high investment and long-term maintenance costs. These challenges are compounded by limited financial support from central government for local authorities. Frequent changes in national and local legislation also hinder progress.



Maryan Ivasyk / Unsplash (CC0).



Recommendations for Local Policy Makers

- **Develop a shared, equitable vision and roadmap.** Base this on eco-climate mapping, local vulnerabilities and existing natural assets. Ensure that all residents can access nature within a short walk, recognising equitable access to green space and its benefits as a core element of urban quality of life.
- **Scale up proven, locally appropriate nature-based solutions.** Promote and replicate context-specific solutions that have demonstrated results in strengthening household resilience and increasing the use of NbS across municipal buildings and public spaces.
- **Build municipal capacity.** Invest in training and capacity building for municipal staff to strengthen their ability to plan, finance, procure, implement and monitor NbS projects. Foster openness to innovation and the use of green infrastructure that supports climate resilience, biodiversity and sustainable resource management.
- **Collaborate across municipal boundaries.** Strengthen cooperation between cities and neighbouring municipalities where ecosystems, rivers, ecological corridors and climate risks extend beyond administrative boundaries. Joint management of shared natural resources, such as rivers and watersheds, can turn common challenges into opportunities for collaboration and long-term resilience.
- **Engage citizens and stakeholders.** Ensure meaningful participation by citizens and relevant stakeholder groups in the planning, design, implementation and monitoring of NbS.

Recommendations for National Policy Makers

- **Mobilise predictable domestic funding.** Develop a domestic resource-mobilisation strategy to strengthen local climate finance for NbS and provide municipalities with more predictable, accessible funding opportunities.
- **Develop a strong national pool of expertise.** Invest in training and capacity building to ensure a sufficient number of qualified NbS and green-infrastructure designers and experts can support municipalities from planning through implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
- **Enable knowledge exchange and replication.** Create mechanisms for knowledge exchange across municipalities, making proven NbS initiatives, methodologies and lessons learned easily accessible to local authorities and relevant stakeholders.

TOPIC SUMMARY STATEMENT:

"Nature-based solutions (NbS) should no longer be viewed as just environmental measures, but as investments that deliver multiple benefits for climate resilience, public health, energy, biodiversity and community well-being etc. Achieving this requires integrated policy, stakeholder cooperation, public awareness, innovative financing and the mainstreaming of green infrastructure."

DRIVING THE FOSSIL FUEL TRANSITION

What Role Can Cities Play?

Cities' role in driving the fossil fuel transition is constrained by a lack of political support and low ambition and priorities at the national government level.

This is sometimes compounded by national initiatives that actually push for more fossil fuel use in transportation. However, financial leverage held by national and EU governments is seen as a potential lever for change.

Key enablers include the benefit of unexpected alliances. This can be both within municipal boundaries and with neighbouring municipalities, as well as collaboration across the local business sector, e.g. working with local trade chambers. Partnerships and alliances also play a role in lobbying, promoting and implementing fossil fuel transition initiatives. Cooperation with NGOs and regional governments can help unlock EU finance, while cross-border cooperation with other local and regional governments broadens impact. Specific examples included partnering with local energy providers, e.g. MVV in Mannheim, or with companies to utilise residual heat, as seen in Lund.

A weakening of national policy, e.g. reduced fossil fuel taxes in the transport sector, combined with low local government budgets and limited local plans, is seen as a barrier to progress. A particular challenge highlighted was the strong coal-based culture in countries like Poland and Germany.

Recommendations for Local Policy Makers

- **Build alliances.** Partner with other municipalities, organisations and internal municipal departments to strengthen support for lobbying, promoting and implementing fossil-fuel transition initiatives.

Recommendations for EU Policy Makers

- **Increase pressure.** Help local governments overcome coal-based cultures by applying stronger financial and legislative pressure on national governments to speed up the transition.
- **Facilitate city-to-city exchange.** Support cities in their transition efforts by establishing dedicated opportunities to exchange experiences, knowledge and practical approaches to moving away from fossil fuels.

TOPIC SUMMARY STATEMENT:

"When national governments struggle to maintain progressive policies that make the transition from fossil fuels easier and faster, local governments become essential. However, they still need consistent policies that do not jeopardize their local efforts. It is also crucial, as seen in the cases of Romania and Poland, that national governments direct more funding toward municipalities so they can work more progressively."



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APPENDIX

PARTICIPANTS

Please note: These participants attended the workshop as individuals. The views expressed reflect a group consensus and do not necessarily represent the views of their organisations.

CITY AND GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES

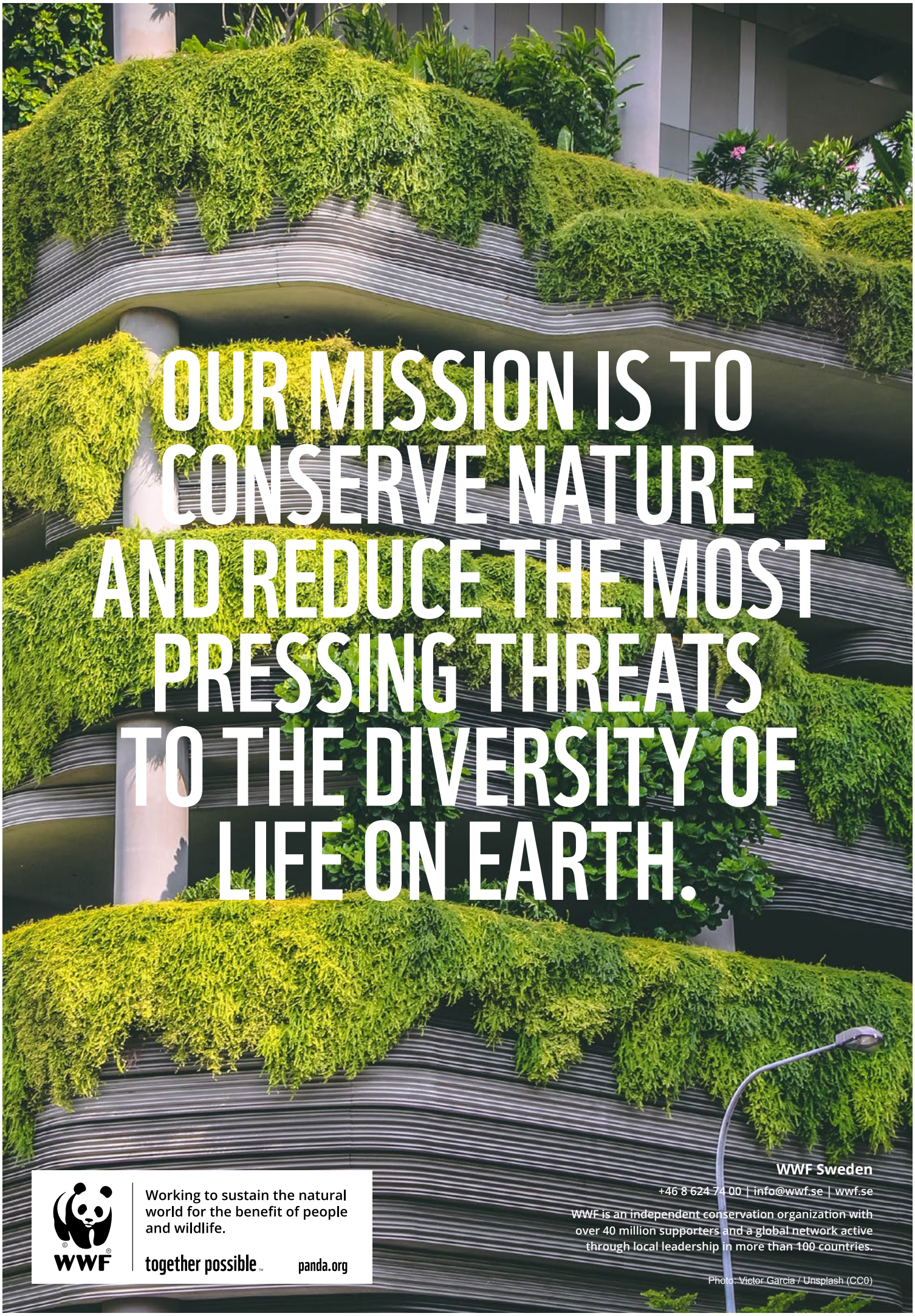
NAME	POSITION	ORGANISATION	COUNTRY
Anders Almgren	Mayor	City of Lund	Sweden
Ricardo Araújo	Mayor	Municipality of Guimarães	Portugal
Diana Roswitha Pretzell	Mayor	City of Mannheim	Germany
Béla Schwartz	Mayor	City of Ajka	Hungary
Lemuel Honor	Mayor	Municipality of Silago	Philippines
Linda Eskilsson	Deputy Mayor	Uppsala Municipality	Sweden
Márk Monostori-Kalovits	Deputy Mayor	Municipality of Budaörs	Hungary
Andriana Alevizou	Mayor	Municipality of Ilion	Greece
Linda Birkedal	Environmental Strategist	City of Lund	Sweden
Maria Sofia Cordeiro	Coordinator for Local Climate Action	ADENE, Portuguese Energy Agency	Portugal
Fatima Margarida de Almeida Bento Pinto	Director	Matosinhos Municipality	Portugal
Maria Manuela de Carvalho Álvares	City Council	Câmara Municipal de Matosinhos	Portugal
Karin Degerfeldt	Head of Community Development	Skellefteå Municipality	Sweden
João Dinis	Director	Cascais Municipality	Portugal
Dalila Sepúlveda	Head of Environmental Department	Municipality of Guimarães	Portugal
João Medeiros	Vice-President Advisor	Braga Municipality	Portugal
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Dimitrios Koukouvinos	President of the Municipal Council	Municipality of Ilion	Greece
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Uchita de Zoysa	—	Centre for Environment and Development	Sri Lanka
Janna Hoppmann	—	ClimateMind	Germany
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