

United for a Sustainable Europe

Universities, Cities and Regions in Partnership

Working Together for a Sustainable Future

Europe today faces the pressing challenges of climate change, social transformation, and sustainable development. No single institution, municipality, or region can meet these challenges alone. Solutions must be built through strong collaboration, where universities, municipalities, and regional authorities combine knowledge, innovation, and governance capacity. Against this background, the EU GREEN University Alliance, the European Green Deal, and the Climate Neutral Smart City Network offer shared frameworks and opportunities for joint action.

EU GREEN University Alliance

The EU GREEN (European University alliance for sustainability: Responsible Growth, Inclusive Education, and Environment) brings together nine universities across Europe with a common goal; to advance education, research, and innovation for a sustainable and healthy future. By pooling resources and expertise, EU GREEN develops joint teaching programs, research initiatives, and campus living labs that directly engage with local and regional challenges. The alliance also works to equip students with the knowledge and skills to drive the green and digital transitions in their future careers and civic lives. The EU GREEN mission is to advance collaboration with municipalities and regions and thus act as both an educational and societal driver, linking science with practice and innovation with local impact.

The European Green Deal

At the policy level, the European Union has set the Green Deal as its roadmap to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050. The Green Deal is more than a climate strategy: it is a comprehensive transformation agenda covering energy, mobility, agriculture, biodiversity, health, and circular economy. It directly addresses how Europe's cities and regions can reduce emissions, build resilience, and improve the quality of life for citizens. Universities play a crucial role in this transition by providing evidence-based solutions, training professionals, and supporting innovations that municipalities and regions can implement.

Climate Neutral Smart City Network

Complementing these efforts, the EU's Climate Neutral and Smart Cities Mission supports 112 pioneering cities across Europe in becoming climate neutral by 2030. These cities serve as innovation hubs, piloting solutions that can be scaled across the continent. Four EU GREEN universities are in these cities (Angers, Gävle, Parma and Wrocław), making them natural partners for testing new approaches in areas such as renewable energy, sustainable mobility, digital solutions, and citizen engagement. The Climate Neutral Smart City Network therefore provides a practical platform for city-university partnerships to accelerate change.

Conferences of Parties 1 and 2

To strengthen collaboration between universities, municipalities, and regions, the EU GREEN Alliance is launching two Conferences of Parties (COPs). These conferences create a structured space for dialogue, knowledge exchange, and joint commitments.

- **COP1** (October 2025) will focus on best practices and roundtable discussions using the World Café method. University leaders, city mayors, and regional representatives will meet to share successful initiatives, identify opportunities, and develop a first draft for a charter of collaboration. The aim is to lay the foundation for long-term partnership by aligning academic expertise with municipal and regional priorities.
- **COP2** (October 2026) will build on this foundation by deepening and broadening the collaboration. The focus will be on concrete projects, joint applications for European funding, and the integration of students and researchers into real-life sustainability challenges faced by cities and regions. COP2 will also provide an opportunity to celebrate the signing of the charter and strengthen the network of committed partners.

A Shared Purpose

The Conferences of Parties are not only university events, they are designed to bring together the knowledge producers, decision-makers, and implementers who can jointly deliver on the ambitions of building a strong and sustainable Europe. By working together, universities, municipalities, and regions can accelerate innovation, ensure inclusive participation, and generate real impact for citizens.

For municipalities and regional leaders, this collaboration means access to targeted education, cutting-edge research and innovation, student and staff expertise, and international networks that can support local strategies. For universities, it means ensuring their research and education respond directly to societal needs. Together, we can create stronger communities, more resilient regions, and a truly sustainable Europe.