



# Annual Climate Pact Event Report

The [European Climate Pact's annual event: Community driving the change](#) gathered 210 members of the Climate Pact Community in Brussels and 197 online on 5 March 2024. It was an opportunity for Pact Ambassadors, partners and Country Coordinators from across Europe to come together to discuss experiences, ideas and cooperation opportunities for putting climate action into practice. This report summarises key takeaways from the day's conversations.

## Key messages from the European Pact Community

### Opening remarks – EVP Maroš Šefčovič

The **opening remarks delivered by Executive Vice-President (EVP) of the European Commission for the European Green Deal Maroš Šefčovič** set the tone for the day. With a focus on cooperation across Europe, he highlighted the evolution of the Climate Pact Community since its launch as part of the Green Deal. He emphasised the role of citizens in the transition to a climate-neutral and resilient EU and called on the Pact Community to act as the bridge between EU action and local communities. To push the Pact forward, he urged the community to use the Climate Pact as an EU-wide platform for sharing and collaborating on concrete activities.

EVP Šefčovič also spoke with **Pact Ambassadors Halina Jagielska** and **Laura Basconi**. Halina asked about how countries can ensure a socially inclusive green energy transition that involves youth. EVP Šefčovič highlighted the Member States' [national energy and climate plans](#) as a key planning tool at national level and encouraged citizens and stakeholders to get involved. He also highlighted the [Social Climate Fund](#) which aims to ensure funding targets those most vulnerable, so that they are not left behind in the green transition. Processes such as the recently launched [Citizen's Panel on Energy Efficiency](#) also aim to give a voice and offer opportunities to all citizen stakeholders to be part of the conversation.

Laura asked EVP Šefčovič about the role of partnerships in boosting climate action. In response, EVP Šefčovič emphasised that the [European Climate Law](#) and the updated EU climate policy spans all sectors and governance levels. He highlighted the indispensability of collaboration and innovation, citing initiatives like the [Covenant of Mayors](#) and [EU Missions](#). Engaging industry through clean transition dialogues and promoting citizen participation through the Climate Pact were identified as crucial for achieving a successful transition.

*'Achieving the transition to a climate-neutral EU will not be easy, but by working together, we have the power to shape a more sustainable future and improve people's lives – through cleaner environments, healthier food, better-insulated homes, new green jobs and opportunities to innovate.'*  
– EVP Maroš Šefčovič.



## Pact tools for engagement: Empowering citizens in climate action

Pact Ambassadors, partners and Country Coordinators came together for a hands-on discussion on [tools to empower citizens](#) to lead climate action in their local communities. The session explored four tools, discussed in four parallel sessions, and an online session, and encouraged participants to share stories, tips and ideas for their use and further development.

[Climate walks](#) were discussed in a breakout session moderated by [Cesar Gonzalez Fernandez](#).

Climate walks are an easy-to-use, modular educational tool that bring people together and can be combined with other activities for a greater impact. In the discussion, the key insights raised emphasised the importance of climate-walk facilitators' self-education to ensure that the walk is not only engaging but also **tailored and relevant to local situations** by addressing **local challenges** and problems. The activity should be **inclusive** and easily **accessible**, using easy-to-understand language that is **adapted to the audience**, such as children. An online session, moderated by [Rodrigo Pérez-García](#) also discussed climate walks.

In the second breakout session, moderated by [Maria Chiara Pettenati](#), participants discussed [peer parliaments](#), a tool that brings people together to discuss and vote on a climate issue. The activity raises awareness of opportunities for climate action in daily life among small groups of friends, family, neighbours or colleagues. The group highlighted the benefits of organising peer parliaments in **partnership with stakeholders**. These could be the **business sector**, or **experts** among the network of **Climate Pact Ambassadors**, but **local municipalities and schools** can also be hugely influential. The peer parliament should also be embedded within other activities that tackle climate issues, rather than being conceived in isolation as stand-alone sessions.

Another group, moderated by [Frida Berry Eklund](#) discussed [local climate action groups](#), which gather with a common interest to work together on a specific climate project or initiative. During the session participants stressed the need to use **strategic communications** to reach **outside of the 'green bubble'** and to avoid making the initiative too complex. The group also highlighted the **listen and learn approach**, which is to learn from peers, experts and other stakeholders with an aim to **localise and customise actions** to a specific audience.

The last tool explored in the session moderated by [Simone Padovani](#) was [photo story](#), which uses photography as a tool to capture and **share experiences and perspectives** on climate-related issues. The photo story approach gives citizens the opportunity to **get to know their local area better**, **engage with their community** and **empower their voices** towards decision makers and institutions that will see the result of the photo story at the end. To increase the impact of the approach, there could be a **photo competition**, offering a reward at the end.



## The power of partnerships: Joining forces for climate action

The session focused on the **barriers and solutions to forging partnerships** to accelerate climate action. The session was opened by DG CLIMA and then moved to an overview of the Pact Partnership presented by the Secretariat. The Partner Spotlight presentation then followed, where three Partners, the European Federation of Agencies and Regions for Energy and Environment (FEDERANE), European Citizen Science Association and Slow Food, presented the innovative approaches they use as organisations when engaging with citizens.

The room was divided into three sub-groups to brainstorm the challenges and opportunities when it comes to engaging with citizens on climate action. In parallel a breakout group also took place online. The text below summarises insights from both the in-person and online groups.

The session emphasised several key opportunities. First, it highlighted the importance of individual actions in tackling climate change and dispelled the common **misunderstanding that citizens' actions cannot foster change**. Second, it emphasised the importance of **aligning people's priorities with climate initiatives**. Thirdly, it emphasised on the need to bring climate science to the local level and to widely employ citizen science for **hands-on engagement**. Lastly, it underscored the role of **stakeholder collaboration** in facilitating meaningful change.

A key strategy to achieve these solutions included ensuring climate actions are **responsive to people's priorities, needs, and interests**, to generate high levels of engagement. **Engaging youth** was highlighted as another strategy to foster greater citizen engagement, especially through **educational programmes and citizen science initiatives**.

The session's participants noted that climate actions should be **relevant to local communities** and use **clear communication and concrete, positive messaging**. They highlighted a resounding need for **improved communication and outreach** to counter public apathy towards climate change, including **messaging tailored to distinct audiences** that would showcase **real-life examples** to motivate action and **leverage local knowledge**. The session also stressed the need for **inclusivity**, urging the active inclusion of and **outreach to marginalised groups and hard-to-reach communities**. **Importantly, citizen science** was highlighted as a hands-on approach to engage diverse communities and bridge the gap between scientists and rural populations.

## Telling facts from fiction: Communicating climate change and fighting disinformation

This session, moderated by Jeremy Herry (DG CLIMA), addressed the topic of climate disinformation, including **how the EU combats disinformation**, with a panel discussion on **counter-strategies** to be put in place and examples of good practices in tackling disinformation. European Climate Pact Ambassadors [Marc Esteve del Valle](#), [Ioana-Maria Petrescu](#), [Rozárie Haškovcová](#), [Bruno Lisboa Diotallévy](#) and [Alan Cappelli](#) participated as speakers.



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The discussion emphasised the need to **raise awareness** about the causes and consequences of climate change, the importance of **distinguishing between freedom of speech and freedom of reach**, and the role of various stakeholders in addressing disinformation. On the EU front, the [Digital Services Act](#) was mentioned, as well as the [EU Climate Action](#) and Climate Pact websites, as sources to learn about what the EU is doing and how to talk to people about climate action.

The session underscored the urgency of **combating climate disinformation** particularly in the context of the upcoming **European elections in June 2024**. It highlighted the diverse strategies employed by different speakers, from **pre-bunking campaigns** to **connecting with diverse audiences** and how artificial intelligence plays a role in decreasing the cost of disinformation. Panellists stressed the **power of language in shaping narratives** and the **need for marketing investments** to help accurate information to reach more people, but also **patience and persistence** when engaging with audiences that are not interested in climate-related issues.

Moreover, the discussion emphasised the **importance of various sectors collaborating with each other** – including government, civil society, and the private sector – to effectively tackle climate disinformation and promote climate action.

### Localising climate action: Engaging with local authorities through EU initiatives

The session explored the vital role that **local and regional authorities** play in generating climate action and enabling collaboration among relevant stakeholders. The urgency for local authorities and communities to join forces to carry out climate action locally was acknowledged, with cooperation increasingly seen as a “local duty”. Local authorities also play a key role in consulting and involving citizens, which is essential for effective climate action.

Participants discussed collaboration between the Climate Pact and other EU networks, initiatives and projects that share **information about EU action** at local level, **bring local voices to the EU policy sphere**, support **climate action on the ground** and **empower citizens to take action**. The session focused on the following:

- The Commission Representations in Member States act as the Commission’s voice in the host country, offer information on the EU and organise EU-themed events.
- A network of more than 400 Europe Direct Centres across the EU help bring the EU closer to people on the ground and answer questions about EU policies, programmes and priorities, and proactively engage with citizens and stakeholders.
- Building Europe with Local Councillors is a network for local politicians to work together and disseminate information about EU issues that concern their constituents at the local level.
- The European Committee of the Regions (CoR) is an EU institution that represents local and regional authorities across the European Union.
- The EU Mission Adaptation to Climate Change supports EU regions, cities and local authorities in their efforts to build resilience against the impacts of climate change.





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Participants emphasised the importance of the Pact Community liaising with **European Commission Representations, Europe Direct Centres and other networks** present in their country or region to **connect EU issues with local action**. This connection would allow them to explore cooperation opportunities and access the support available. Furthermore, EC Representations and other actors can help connect the Pact Community with local stakeholders, media and research entities, and amplify messages about their activities.

Institutions and networks such as the **CoR** and **Building Europe with Local Councillors** bring together locally elected representatives from across the EU and can help connect the Pact Community with **local authorities**. The CoR partners with the Pact, and several CoR Ambassadors are also Climate Pact Ambassadors.

Set up as part of the **EU Mission on Adaptation to Climate Change**, the MIP4Adapt platform brings together more than 300 regions and local authorities working on pathways and solutions to improve their resilience to climate change. Members of the Climate Pact Community have the opportunity to organise **joint community level events** with the Mission participants.

### Climate action on the ground – exchange between the European Commissioner for Climate Action Wopke Hoekstra and the Pact Community

The afternoon's plenary session featured a conversation between **Wopke Hoekstra**, the **European Commissioner for Climate Action**, and **four Pact Ambassadors**. During their exchange, the Commissioner stressed that the science is clear: there is need for urgent climate action. He also emphasised the importance of collaborating with businesses and industry, and of working with EU countries and international partners – which are essential for advancing progress in addressing climate change.

*'If there was one word that I would single out to make sure we drive climate action further, the word would be **"together"** – doing this together with the various European countries and stakeholders in society' – Commissioner Hoekstra.*

Before the Commissioner's discussion with a panel of Climate Pact Ambassadors, **Alice Corovessi**, the European Climate Pact [Country Coordinator](#) for Greece and the session's moderator, welcomed the newcomers – newly onboarded Pact Ambassadors and Partners – to the Pact Community. She said that this year's annual event is a **celebration of yet another year of collaboration**, working together on the shared values of the Climate Pact Community.

The four Pact Ambassadors joining the panel – experts specialising in fields ranging from energy to fashion – highlighted the **rich diversity and active engagement** of the Climate Pact Community as well as their efforts to advance climate action in their respective fields and communities.



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Each panellist brought a unique perspective to the discussion:

- [Damilola Adeyanju](#), Global Future Energy Leader at the World Energy Council and Co-leader of the Future Energy Leaders initiative of the Netherlands, focused on how support to grassroots solutions is boosting the **energy efficiency** of buildings through collaboration and communication between stakeholder groups and businesses.
- [Dan Boyle](#), Chair of Ireland's Cork City Council's Environment Policy Committee, cited the Community Climate Action Programme as an example of a project that helps communities play a meaningful part in tackling both the **climate crisis and biodiversity loss** across Cork by incorporating nature-based solutions.
- [Timo Huhtamäki](#), circular economy expert and CEO of Emmy Clothing Company (a second-hand fashion e-commerce company based in the Nordic countries) from Finland, spoke about the potential of using a **circular economy** to transform consumer markets, leveraging the example of the clothing industry.
- [Luisa Barateiro](#), a biologist and epidemiologist from Portugal who is a member of the board of the Union of Women Alternative and Response, put the spotlight on the need to ensure a **just transition** and support and empower vulnerable groups within the transition.

Watch their full interventions, questions and reactions from the Commissioner [here](#).

### Community driving the change

As the day came to a close, the Pact Community reflected on the impactful stories shared about **empowering citizens, fostering partnerships, engaging with local authorities and combating disinformation**. This [gathering](#) showcased the impactful actions and opportunities within the Pact Community that drive change.

To keep up this momentum, everyone is encouraged to visit the [website](#) for resources, get started with [climate action at home](#), take part in an [event](#), or [organise a group climate activity](#). Let's continue driving the change together.



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## Annex I: Agenda

<b>Morning</b>			
<b>European Commission, Berlaymont building</b>			
08.30 – 09.00	Registration and welcome coffee		
09.15 – 09.45	<p><b>Opening remarks</b></p> <p>Maroš Šefčovič, Executive Vice-President of the European Commission for the European Green Deal</p>		
09.45 – 11.00	<table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <p><b>Pact tools for engagement:</b> Empowering citizens in climate action Room 'Robert Schuman'</p> <p>Moderator: Ana Leandro, European Climate Pact Secretariat</p> <p>European Climate Pact Ambassadors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frida Berry Eklund</li> <li>• César González Fernández</li> <li>• Maria Chiara Pettenati</li> <li>• Simone Padovani</li> <li>• Rodrigo Pérez-Garcia</li> </ul> </td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <p><b>The power of partnerships:</b> Joining forces for climate action Room 'Walter Hallstein'</p> <p>Moderator: Monica Pisani, DG CLIMA, European Commission</p> <p>European Climate Pact Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diana Prsancova, FEDARENE</li> <li>• Anna Verones, European Citizen Science Association</li> <li>• Marta Messa, Slow Food</li> </ul> </td> </tr> </table>	<p><b>Pact tools for engagement:</b> Empowering citizens in climate action Room 'Robert Schuman'</p> <p>Moderator: Ana Leandro, European Climate Pact Secretariat</p> <p>European Climate Pact Ambassadors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frida Berry Eklund</li> <li>• César González Fernández</li> <li>• Maria Chiara Pettenati</li> <li>• Simone Padovani</li> <li>• Rodrigo Pérez-Garcia</li> </ul>	<p><b>The power of partnerships:</b> Joining forces for climate action Room 'Walter Hallstein'</p> <p>Moderator: Monica Pisani, DG CLIMA, European Commission</p> <p>European Climate Pact Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diana Prsancova, FEDARENE</li> <li>• Anna Verones, European Citizen Science Association</li> <li>• Marta Messa, Slow Food</li> </ul>
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11.00 – 11.30	Coffee break		
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12.45 – 14.30	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Networking lunch</b></p>
<p><b>Afternoon</b></p> <p>European Commission, Breydel building</p>	
14.30 – 15.00	<p><b>Highlights from the Pact Community sessions</b>          Moderator: Alice Corovessi, European Climate Pact Country coordinator (Greece)</p> <p>European Climate Pact Ambassadors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frida Berry Eklund</li> <li>• Diana Prsancova</li> <li>• Stefano Cisternino</li> <li>• Elena López Gunn</li> </ul>
15.00 – 16.00	<p><b>Climate action on the ground</b>          Exchange between Wopke Hoekstra, European Commissioner for Climate Action, and the Pact Community</p> <p>Moderator: Alice Corovessi, European Climate Pact Country coordinator (Greece)</p> <p>European Climate Pact Ambassadors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Damilola Adeyanju</li> <li>• Dan Boyle</li> <li>• Timo Huhtamäki</li> <li>• Luísa Barateiro</li> </ul>
16.00 – 17.30	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Networking cocktail</b></p>