Resolution on the European Year of Greener Cities 2022

2019/2805(RSP) - 17/09/2020 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 593 votes to 80, with 13 abstentions, a resolution tabled by the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety on the European Year of Greener Cities 2022.

European strategy for greener cities

Members pointed out that 72% of EU citizens now live in towns and cities or in the suburbs, and that the share of the urban population continues to grow and could reach 80% in 2020. These figures underline the important role that greener cities can play in achieving the objectives of the Paris agreement and in strengthening the EU's capacity to adapt to climate change.

The Commission is invited to establish a new European strategy for greener cities and to propose measures in the framework of the European green deal to address in particular the role of cities and to promote investment in green infrastructure.

The resolution stressed the importance of:

- effectively integrating climate and environmental perspectives into the development of local, regional, national and global urban policies;

- adopting an adaptation strategy for cities exposed to the consequences of climate change, based on a new and innovative ecosystem approach to risk prevention and management, including the identification of setback zones, flood risk areas and areas of natural protection;

- promoting the development of nature-based solutions for biodiversity conservation and for the further incorporation and integration of biodiversity and ecosystem functions in urban design.

Member States and local and regional authorities were invited to devise action plans and actively engage in activities designed to promote and maintain green urban areas in cooperation with relevant stakeholders, including civil society.

European year of greener cities

Parliament proposed to make 2022 the European Year of Greener Cities and Towns with the following objectives:

- raise awareness of the benefits of green spaces in a built environment;

- improve the quality of life in cities and providing targeted support for ‘sustainable digitisation’ in the EU;

- encourage local authorities and citizens to take action and improve their neighbourhoods and their environment;

- develop a culture of enhancing green spaces and blue-green infrastructure;

- promote the use of climate-friendly materials and services through public procurement;

- share best practices between Member States on, *inter alia*, urban planning, sustainable infrastructure and urban design, nature-based solutions, green architecture, clean energy, pedestrians and cyclist mobility, efficient management of water resources, and sustainable and circular waste management;

- establish a roadmap for the creation and maintenance of green areas in EU cities by 2030;

- set up educational activities aimed in particular at children;

- encourage initiatives to reduce urban traffic and promote and invest in public transport;

- phase-out the use of pesticides and herbicides in urban areas;

- ensure that environmental non-governmental organisations are involved in environmental protection actions;

- increase urban roofing and façade greening to improve urban climate, air quality and insulation and support ‘urban gardening’.

Parliament called on the Commission to act swiftly to improve air quality in cities, to support ambitious measures for a more efficient use of energy and resources and to help ensure sufficient funding for actions that contribute to sustainable urban development.