European Committee
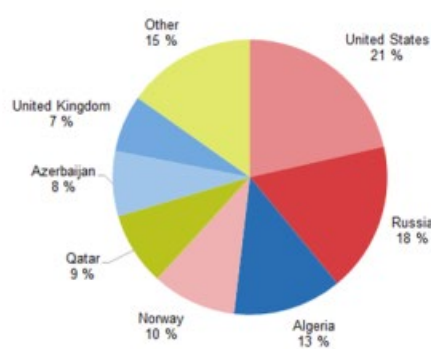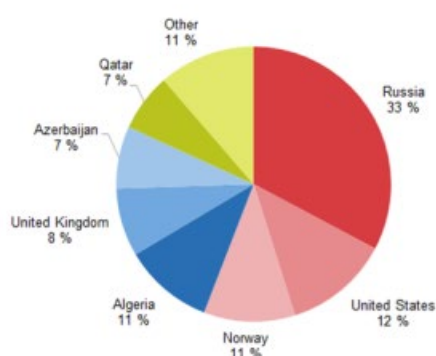of the Regions

sustainable energy policy

# FACTS AND FIGURES

Until the end of 2021, Russia was the main supplier of natural gas and petroleum oils to the EU. After Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the EU imposed massive and unprecedented **sanctions against Russia**, including restrictions on imports of energy products. Since the invasion, gas imports from Russia to the EU have been significantly reduced. At the end of 2022, Russia accounted for less than a quarter of EU gas imports.

**Main partners for extra-EU imports of natural gas**

Fourth quarter 2021

Fourth quarter 2022



Source: © European Union, 2023

**Households, businesses and local and regional authorities (LRAs) alike have been hit hard by the increasing energy prices following the outbreak of the war in Ukraine**. Gas is mainly used for power generation, household heating (with over 30% of households in the EU using gas to heat their homes) and industrial processes. LRAs are also vulnerable to changes in gas prices, as they are responsible for managing high-energy-consuming public buildings (schools, hospitals, sports facilities, etc.) in addition to social housing and vehicle fleets.

With energy prices at record levels and green policies accelerating, **LRAs once again showed their readiness to respond**. On top of delivering ambitious climate solutions, they put in place immediate low-cost actions to reduce energy demand in public facilities and increased the share of renewables while supporting the most vulnerable households and local businesses.
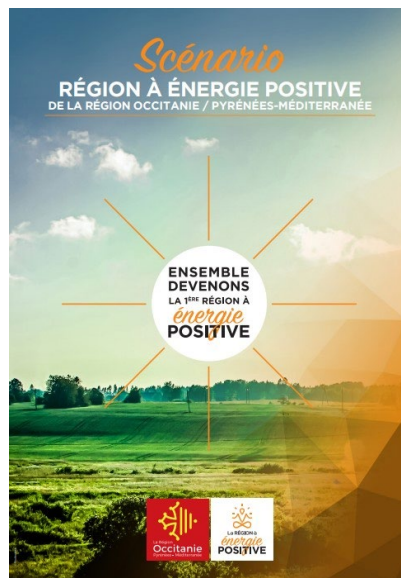
# MAIN TERRITORIAL ACHIEVEMENTS AND/OR CHALLENGES

Many cities and regions have **adopted more ambitious sustainable energy targets than their national governments** in their national energy and climate plans (NECPs). According to the OECD, local governments are estimated to have direct power to cut up to one third of greenhouse gas emissions in their cities, with the remaining two thirds of urban emission reductions depending either on national governments or on coordination across levels of government.

**Increasing the use of renewable energy sources** has helped cities and regions reduce their dependence on fossil fuels and lower their carbon footprints. For instance, the Occitania region (France) aims to be the first positive energy region in Europe by 2050. In addition to reducing energy consumption and improving energy efficiency, the region will develop renewable energy production to cover 100% of its own energy needs by 2050.

Source: Région Occitanie/Pyrénées-Méditerranée (brochure), 2017

LRAs have implemented numerous measures to **improve energy efficiency in buildings and transportation**. This includes retrofitting buildings with energy-efficient systems, promoting public transportation and encouraging the use of electric vehicles. For instance, the city of Valencia in Spain has invested heavily in solar and wind energy and is promoting sustainable transportation options like bike-sharing programmes. The city has also set a goal to reduce carbon emissions by 40% by 2030.

Many LRAs have also launched **public awareness campaigns** to educate residents about the importance of energy conservation and the benefits of using renewable energy sources.

# MAIN MESSAGES TO PROMOTE (POLICY DEMANDS)

The CoR urgent resolution on the energy crisis adopted on 23 February 2023 summarises LRAs' key policy demands for improved and continued support to **accelerate the clean energy transition** and enhance cities' and regions' resilience to crises. These include the following calls:

- **National governments should <u>involve local and regional authorities in updates of NECPs</u>**. The European Commission and co-legislators should ensure that this involvement takes place as provided for in the Governance Regulation.

- There is an urgent need to **<u>train local workforces</u>** and ensure that experts and technicians are available in small communities, not only in big cities.

- Energy efficiency and energy savings are highlighted as key priority areas, complemented by renewables. In this regard, the **<u>development of energy communities</u>** should be promoted and facilitated.

- There is a need for **<u>more direct funding for cities and regions</u>**. This should be mirrored by stronger financial support from the Member States and better use of regional and cohesion funds.

- Local and regional authorities should be **<u>involved</u>** in drafting the new REPowerEU chapters of the Recovery and Resilience Facility plans to ensure that they finance strategic projects which will benefit local communities.

- **<u>Green Deal initiatives</u>**, such as the Covenant of Mayors and the Horizon Missions, should be supported and further expanded.

Source: © European Union, Green Deal

# ILLUSTRATION OF HOW THE POLICY WORKS IN PRACTICE

**"Cities Energy Saving Sprint"**

On 19 May 2022, the European Commission, the Committee of the Regions and the Covenant of Mayors – Europe launched the Cities Energy Saving Sprint, a joint initiative enabling cities to immediately reduce energy consumption and be better prepared for next winter by using a simple energy-saving toolkit.

The Cities Energy Saving Toolkit provides LRAs with a set of simple and quickly implementable measures to reduce energy consumption and prepare for winter. The toolkit is composed of practical short-term energy-saving actions by sector, including transport, lighting, heating and cooling, and involves engaging with the general public and local stakeholders.

Many CoR members have joined the sprint and put forward energy-saving measures in their cities. These include members from Liepāja in Latvia, Łódź and Warsaw in Poland, and Budapest in Hungary.

For instance, **Warsaw** will save over EUR 4 million a year with an integrated energy-saving system. The system consists of interconnected measurement and control devices (electricity and heat meters, thermostatic heads) together with teletransmission devices. The aim of this technology network is to connect all of the municipal facilities in the Polish capital. This will generate annual savings of up to PLN 20 million a year (about EUR 4.2 million) in utility bills.

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**European Committee
of the Regions**

Created in 1994, the European Committee of the Regions is the EU's political assem regional and local representatives such as regional presidents or city mayors from all 27 Member States, representing over 446 million Europeans.

Edited by the Directorate for Communication of the European Committee of the Regions

**Publications Office
of the European Union**