



European Committee
of the Regions

Digital Local Dialogue about the European Climate Pact and the Green Deal

28 May 2021, Rotterdam, The Netherlands



Event type	Date	Initialising member	Audience
Online Local Dialogue	28 May 2021	Ahmed Aboutaleb (NL/PES)	Over 200 viewers on YouTube and Facebook
Organiser	European Commission EC Representation in The Netherlands		Partners
		City of Rotterdam	Themes
		European Climate Pact, European Green Deal	



Speakers

- Frans Timmermans, Executive Vice-President of the European Commission responsible for the European Green Deal
- Ahmed Aboutaleb, Mayor of Rotterdam, alternate member of the CoR (NL/PES)
- Moderator: Talitha Muusse, Dutch entrepreneur and former Dutch TV presenter



Key messages

The **European Climate Pact** and the **Green Deal** aim at making Europe the first climate-neutral continent. This is both a challenge and an opportunity to work towards a better future for all of us. The choices we make every day are central to this: how we produce, consume, work, live together, travel and heat or cool our home.

We will discuss the wishes and interests of young people and what each of us can contribute in concrete terms in our cities, regions and in Europe.

This digital dialogue provided the opportunity to young Dutch people to discuss their wishes and interests in relation to the European Climate Pact and the Green Deal with **Frans Timmermans**, Executive Vice-President of the European Commission responsible for the European Green Deal, and **Ahmed Aboutaleb**, Mayor of Rotterdam and alternate member of the European Committee of the Regions.

Commissioner Timmermans highlighted that public-private partnership is key between government, industry and businesses; they can learn from each other to improve climate action. He stressed that without young people's commitment we would not have a Green Deal.

Mayor Aboutaleb, CoR member, said that mutual interaction between cities and the EU is needed so they build up policies which support each other and ensure that development is inclusive. Where there is a need, he said, we have to deliver. Mayor Aboutaleb stressed the importance of making sure the most serious consequences of climate are avoided for citizens. Every transition, he explained, costs money. To ensure that it remains affordable for all, public supply is the only way to ensure successful transitions to environmental policies. The cost should not be on the consumer.



Press/Social media coverage

Media coverage

[link](#)

[EBS recording](#)

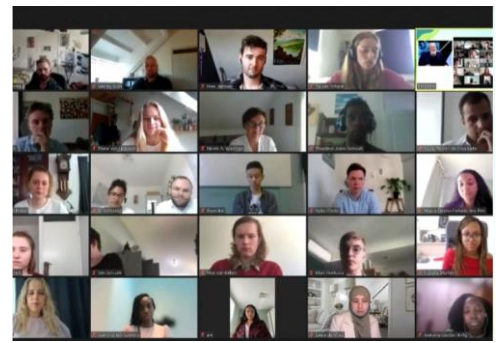
Website

[EC Representation](#)

[Facebook streaming](#)

Social Media

[#EUGreenDeal](#)
[#ClimateAction](#)



Background

On 28th May 2021, Ahmed Aboutaleb, Mayor of Rotterdam and Member of the European Committee of the Regions participate in a digital dialogue with Frans Timmermans, European Commission Executive Vice-President for the European Green Deal. During the hour long event, young Dutch citizens participated remotely by asking questions and sharing their experiences. The event began with a short video in different EU languages showing young Europeans stating that "acting for climate is urgent, feasible and is everyone's business". A video also introduced the "Watermonsters" initiative: a citizen science project aiming to draw a map of the water quality of small aquatic bodies (ditches, puddles, lakes, marshlands) in the Netherlands. It will be a collaborative project between civil scientists, citizens and Netherland's largest sustainable bank.

Consequences and responses to climate change: the European Green Deal

Asked about the increased population displacement and migration which climate change will provoke, Frans Timmermans said protective measures toward water and food were needed, as shortages in these two fields cause migration flows. The solution is not to build walls to prevent migrants from coming to our countries but to make their regions liveable, so they are not obliged to migrate. This means developing irrigation and energy saving policies and self-supporting infrastructure. This is compulsory and also in the EU's own interest because if the populations in need can maintain a decent life in their own region, they will develop their region, grow their economy and hence trade with us, which is good for us too. It is in our interest to help those people grow where they live. However, they barely have the financial resources to develop their economies; therefore, the EU must invest in those countries.

Commissioner Timmermans was asked to explain how climate-focused public-private partnerships could be implemented, for example regarding insurance. He said that insurance field is directly concerned with climate change (more and more violent weather episodes such as storms, draught, floods). Cooperation between all levels of government, industry and insurance companies is key; insurers should be better informed so they can develop more efficient/targeted and cheaper insurance policies; governments, industries and insurance companies can learn from each other to improve risk management. Climate change also means an industrial revolution, as it involves investing in circular economy, green energy, public transport etc. Young people are directly involved as this is about their future; they are more interested in where/how they will live than in retiring. They must be encouraged to get involved and to invest in themselves, in their own education to give them a chance to better contribute to the economy of the future. Commissioner Timmermans said we have to stop working on an economy that provides no future for our children. We have to develop insulation, heat pumps, solar panels for housing.

Mayor Abutaleb was asked about how Rotterdam is implementing the Green Deal: he explained how several communes in Rotterdam have started cooperation schemes ('Geveltuinendag') with citizens to make pavements greener and reduce concreted areas. He said there is no other option than to make the port of Rotterdam greener as it is also the biggest polluter in the Netherlands. Adaptations are required, which means a combined financial effort from the city of Rotterdam, the Netherlands and the EU to develop totally new ecological construction inside and outside Rotterdam.

In the port of Rotterdam several measures are implemented in practice: the shipping industry cannot be exempt from taxes and clean ships get a reduction on port taxes. A number of measures have been implemented to increase air quality. It is a serious issue as ships are the ones that use the most polluting fuel.

Mayor Abutaleb upheld the need to make sure development is inclusive. During the pandemic, he meet with Rotterdam citizens informally to try reduce their anxiety and find solutions for those in financial need. He gave the example of meeting people in financial turmoil who had problems with their gas heaters and how his administration could find solutions locally to solve the problem.

Both speakers concluded by highlighting the need to build trust both between levels of government and between government and citizens. Mayour Abutaleb does this by having a soup with citizens at his local café.