

# Report



- Date and time: 7 December 2020, 14:15 - 15:45
- Title of the session: **#EUGreenDeal – What's in it for communication?**
- Format (select one): Workshop
- Moderator: **Joanna Sullivan** (founder and CEO, CONSCIENCE) / Speakers: **Anthony Agotha** (senior diplomatic expert, European Commission, Cabinet of Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans), **Rafal Trzaskowski** (mayor, Warsaw), **Céline Charveriat** (executive director, Institute for European Environmental Policy), **Juan Espadas** (mayor, Seville)

## Main topics discussed

There is a need to engage the public in climate ambitions, though COVID-19 is hampering progress.

The transition will not always be easy and smooth.

There is a need to transfer EU policies to the local level. One way of doing that is to implement a participatory budget and involve citizens in policy-making at local level.

Local governments need to be able to implement European policies, accelerate local change and have more capacity. If this is to come about, resources are key. COVID-19 is turning out to be something of a help for this purpose: the new recovery programmes are providing funds that prioritise the energy transition, for example. COVID-19 is providing us with a historical opportunity to not only set up goals, but to actually meet them. Synergy between local and supranational levels of governance is crucial.

Local politics can help to create green habits (e.g. encouraging walking, biking, use of public transport).

## Key messages from each speaker

Importance of framing green topics in a positive way, with no fictitious or destructive rhetoric that ends up in a "lost battle" approach.

Encouraging new solutions. Listening to people.

The Green Deal is a topic that interests young people.

Produce changes in the public. The role of local government is to promote and produce changes in citizens directly in everyday tasks.

Provide education in green habits from an early age.

Consumption: convey the message of consuming less, that happiness is associated with consuming less, not more.

## Solutions proposed

Conduct listening exercises: run public consultations or introduce participatory budget decisions.

We need to be ready for inconvenient truths: changing habits take time, but societies have changed behaviours (e.g. ban on smoking indoors), and after some time people got used to the change and no longer even want to go back to their old habits.

### **Questions from the audience**

Following on from the approach of communication and building understanding between citizens and officials, how can we create a trusted conversation at local level? Set up a citizens' panel, whereby people are chosen from among the inhabitants of the city and, when 80% of citizens vote, the mayor is obliged to implement that solution. A participatory project allows citizens to vote on where to invest, and some of these initiatives show that green deals are a topic of interest for people.

How to find the main message to communicate? COVID-19 has shown us the fragility of humans and of our economic system. The decrease in human activity has led to a decrease in environmental consequences during lockdowns. Policies on where resources are spent should from now on be coherent with the acceleration of transformations for citizens' health. Focusing on citizens' health and actions that prevent risks and enhance health will help communication with the public. Communicate investments and discriminate positively by channelling investments to help poor areas where health and jobs are compromised.

COVID-19 has shed light on a very real aspect of environmental needs: it has had a major impact on health and employment.

Communicate an agenda that is for the people and by the people: explain what the Green Deal does for them and their communities.

### **Take-away messages**

Frame the Green Deal positively. Positive communication should help people understand how to work more closely with the environment.

A successful Green Deal will be the result of co-creation between politics/policies and citizens.