

Race to Zero Cities – Carbon Neutral City

17 February 2022, Gate One Hotel, Bratislava

The Race to Zero global campaign aims to promote halving greenhouse gas emissions in this decade and to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. The initiative has already been joined by 733 cities and regions, including metropolises like Los Angeles, New York, Bangkok, Bombay, Dubai, London, Brussels, Berlin, Budapest...

Slovakia has the same goals and no doubt they can only be achieved with active involvement of local government. None of the 141 Slovak cities or any of the Slovak regions insofar have joined the campaign. What are the reasons and obstacles preventing local government from adopting long-term ambitious commitments? The event will present the goals and strategies of municipalities in the UK. Dozens of cities next to London, Birmingham, Liverpool, Bristol, Leeds, Newcastle upon Tyne, Oxford, Edinburgh and Glasgow have taken part in the campaign. We will show examples of Slovak cities with good chances of meeting the goals of the global initiative.

Green Growth

Sustainable growth of cities doesn't mean just better use of resources and energy. Green policies go further, aiming to enhance the quality of life of the inhabitants, better housing, better jobs and poverty reduction. Green growth is based on data, knowledge, research. Cities should drive innovations and innovative solutions. All of that with an active participation of their inhabitants, enhancing local democracy and strengthening cooperation with the private sector and the academia.

Local government will draw 13 billion Euros from European funds by 2027 and an extra 1.3 billion Euros from the Recovery Plan. This money can be a starting point for a change towards sustainable growth, which however is conditioned by a different approach and city development management.

Public Buildings and Energy

Buildings are responsible for 40 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions. Energy efficiency of buildings in Slovakia is a low-hanging fruit with a fast return. Local government owns school buildings, most hospitals and offices that make up for nearly 70 percent of over 15 thousand public buildings in Slovakia. Most of them were built in the 1960s – 1990s and less than one fourth of them have been completely refurbished.

The sector of public buildings plays a key role in reducing greenhouse emissions until the end of the decade. How well is local government prepared and what funds are available to meet the plans?

Circular Economy

Circular economy has been a key topic in Europe since 2015. Effective waste minimization is one of its main elements. Local government plays a pivotal role in circular economy. Slovakia is doing relatively well when it comes to waste packaging sorting and collection compared to the rest of Europe, but the country does not meet the expected goals in terms of municipal waste. How to improve conditions for cities and municipalities for waste collection and sorting? What are the tools that will raise awareness among inhabitants about the importance and use of waste? Are economic sanctions or awareness raising campaigns better?

Smart City Mobility

Personal vehicles dominate Slovak cities and we consider it completely normal. We expand roads, we give way to cars on sidewalks, they take up public space... How can we change this? How can public transport be strengthened and integrated within entire regions? What's an ideal transport mix for Slovak cities and what role should shared mobility, bikes and scooters play in the mix? Why are electric cars not so popular in Slovakia and what can cities do to promote them?