

Mobilising the potential of communities, ECOLISE recommendations to COP23, Bonn, December 2017

1. Community-led initiatives are essential for implementing the Paris Agreement

Thousands of grassroots, community-led initiatives on climate change and sustainability in Europe and across the globe are making an important contribution to achieving climate and sustainability goals. Decades of research showing that communities, small groups and teams are much more effective in implementing significant changes at all levels of society. Research on climate behavior change now shows the critical contribution of community initiatives to changing norms and behaviour in the longer term. And in the short-term, studies are showing that the carbon and ecological footprints of ecovillages are significantly lower than other comparably-size communities. (For example, ecovillages in Denmark have footprints 60% lower than the national average.) Transition initiatives are also achieving impressive results in transforming communities towards much greater sustainability.

Achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement requires citizen action at policy, cultural, social, economic and practical levels. The 38 member organizations of ECOLISE are modeling what can be done by communities and coalitions of communities to significantly advance climate action at the regional, national, local, institutional and household levels through community leadership and action.

COP23 delegates can significantly scale up leadership, community and municipal action by supporting policy and funding initiatives for community-led initiatives.

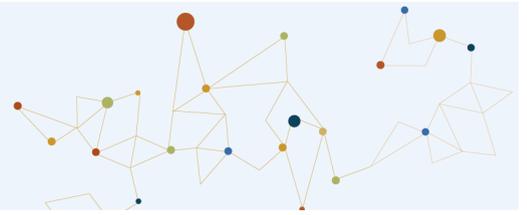
ECOLISE ask: The 38 Member Organizations in ECOLISE and thousands of grassroots organizations and initiatives around the world could significantly expand action for climate change. To catalyze action at all levels of society, we ask that “sustainable communities” be recognised in the implementation framework for the Paris Agreement as an essential partner in achieving longer term climate goals.

2. The European Day of Sustainable Communities (EDSC) is a powerful means of catalyzing and mobilising community-led action

Showing positive solutions to the climate crisis is a very effective way to engage citizens, civil society, media and governments in planning and taking stronger action. To advance the Paris goals, models of effective action must become more visible.

Community-led models are a collaborative, strategic way for UN agencies to show that positive models of a sustainable future are already here -- ready -- and can be imitated and implemented now. Change will happen more rapidly when people see solutions that are working.

UN support could take these success stories to the international level. Highlighting positive solutions that can be done by citizens, municipalities, institutional leaders, communities and researchers will raise awareness of the power of community-led action to transform society.



ECOLISE member organizations launched the European Day of Sustainable Communities on the 22 September with a conference in Brussels, co-hosted by the European Economic and Social Committee. On the 23 September 2017, hundreds of community sustainability model projects and events were shared with the public, media and policy makers across 15 EU countries.

The organisers of these events, mostly local community-led initiatives, responded to an invitation from ECOLISE to use the occasion to showcase the huge diversity of ways that local communities are taking action on climate change and sustainability. For example, the event included:

- ecovillage open days in Ireland, Italy, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden,
- a lecture on rural eco-tourism in Serbia,
- conversations about Transition in Spain,
- a gathering of social change leaders in Poland,
- a 30th anniversary celebration of wildlife conservation in Wales,
- a gathering on community-owned woodland in Northern Ireland;
- community sustainability workshops in Germany,
- the launch of a community garden in Luxembourg,
- and over 1500 events as part of *La Fête des Possibles* in France and Belgium.

ECOLISE ask: that the EDSC be used as template to launch a UN-backed International Day of Sustainable Communities.

About ECOLISE

ECOLISE, the European network for community-led initiatives on climate change and sustainability, is a coalition of 38 members organisations, including international networks of community-led initiatives such as the Transition Network (representing over 1200 Transition initiatives), the Global Ecovillage Network (15,000 ecovillages), the Permaculture movement (3 million practitioners globally) and ICLEI, the association of local governments for sustainability; national and regional networks; and other specialist bodies engaged in European-level research, training and communications to support community-led action on climate change and sustainability. By bringing these organisations together, ECOLISE seeks to establish a common, Europe-wide agenda and a platform for collective action. ECOLISE aims to celebrate, stimulate and increase the positive impact of community-led action on climate change and sustainability through awareness raising, sharing and co-creating knowledge, and by contributing to European and national policy development and delivery to empower, enable and build upon the benefits of community-led action.

