

# Foreword

The COVID-19 pandemic prompted cities to rethink how they provide services, how they design their space and how they can restart economic growth. In exploring paradigm shifts towards a “new normal”, cities have recognised the urgent need to accelerate the transition to a zero-carbon economy. Many cities’ recovery plans include steps towards realising a greener future, for example through measures to promote clean mobility, nature-based solutions or the circular economy, capitalising on increasing levels of environmental awareness among urban dwellers.

Buildings and construction are an indispensable component of such a transition, as they account for nearly 40% of global energy-related CO<sub>2</sub> emissions – and up to as much as 70% in large cities like Paris, New York or Tokyo. However, the rate of progress in decarbonising buildings is far below what is required to meet the goals set by the Paris Climate Agreement and the national commitments to achieve net-zero carbon by 2050. This is due to a variety of barriers, including high upfront costs; lack of consumer awareness; and the lengthy process of negotiations with renters, co-owners and a wide array of service providers. Urgent action that cuts across sectors and levels of government is needed to overcome these barriers, to accelerate and scale up decarbonising buildings.

The OECD has long been working on buildings from an energy and environmental policy perspective, mainly at the national level. Such initiatives have included the World Energy Outlook, sectoral energy analyses, national environmental performance reviews and specific thematic work on buildings. As part of the OECD programme on *Decarbonising Buildings in Cities and Regions*, led by the Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities (CFE), this report is the first attempt to document the critical role of subnational governments in driving the decarbonisation of buildings in a shared responsibility with national governments. Key findings and recommendations call for countries, regions and cities to develop effective multilevel governance approaches to unlock the subnational potential for decarbonising buildings. Building on the Checklist for Public Action herein provided, the next outputs of the programme will continue to support the production of localised data and analysis, international policy dialogues and tailored case studies to guide better policies and decision-making for future-proof buildings in OECD and partner countries.



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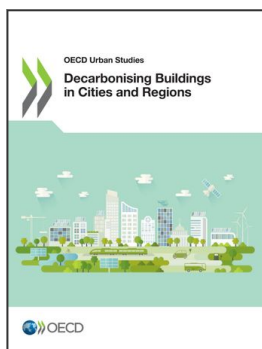
The report builds on the results of the OECD Survey on Decarbonising Buildings in Cities and Regions, which was conducted in co-operation with the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) from July to October 2021. Special thanks are due to the 21 cities and regions (see Box 1.2) for their responses to the questionnaire and feedback throughout the project. The authors also thank CoR for its co-operation in conducting and disseminating the survey, in particular Alessandra Antonini (CoR) and Jean Tanti (CoR), as well as the European Covenant of Mayors and Energy Cities.

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