

GRAFTING CITIES

Weaving connections

8, 9, 10 APRIL 2025

Press pack

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Energy Cities, a community for decarbonised cities

A network of cities, Energy Cities has been supporting and assisting local authorities in their transition to carbon neutrality for the past 35 years. Energy Cities highlights the concrete alternatives that municipalities are developing to achieve this, pushing for changes in economic and political governance at all levels.

Every year, Energy Cities organises a conference - Grafting Cities - in a member city of its network to bring together those who shape cities and their future: elected representatives, municipal officials, associations and other economic players.

This year, Besançon will be hosting nearly 200 representatives from European local authorities, on the theme of 'Weaving Connections'.

The event will be held over 3 days - from 8 to 10 April - and will offer a rich programme to its participants around 5 key themes: Engagement for cooperation, Innovative partnerships for a city '100% renewables', Doing better with less, Eating good, eating local and Adapting to climate change.

5 themes to help municipalities meet the challenges of carbon neutrality

April 9th: 5 themes, 5 journeys

Each journey will be divided into two parts: an introduction to the subject and a site visit in the morning, and a collective intelligence and testimonial workshop in the afternoon. The site visits will be followed by an afternoon of workshops providing participants with additional resources and food for thought: existing strategies, key success factors, roles of the various stakeholders, other concrete examples, etc.

The day will close with a collective intelligence workshop to explore the challenges involved in putting the strategies explored into practice. This interactive session will enable participants to share their expertise, ask for advice and work together to overcome common obstacles.

Journey 1: « Engagement for cooperation »

How committed are local authorities prepared to be? How effective are they in ensuring that everyone's voice is heard? And what is the power of citizen engagement in times of crisis?

Participants will visit the [Grette Brulard](#) district. This urban development project is transforming a 25-hectare site close to the historic centre into 600 homes. The project is exemplary in that, unlike usual practice, the site will be greened first, followed by construction. Residents were actively involved in the planning phase using an advanced participation method. The result should combine alternative and collective forms of housing with traditional detached houses and high environmental standards, while guaranteeing a balanced social mix of users.

Journey 2: « Innovative partnerships for a city « 100% renewables »

How can we accelerate the use of sustainable resources by communities? How can we use our resources more wisely and continue to offer citizens the services they need?

During the journey, participants will visit the [Planoise biomass heating plant](#), a key component of Besançon's district heating network, which currently supplies around 14,850 homes, with over 70% of its energy coming from renewable sources. The journey will also include a presentation of the Port Douvot wastewater treatment plant, which has maintained a positive energy balance since 2022 thanks to a combination of photovoltaic electricity, geothermal energy and biomethane production.

Journey 3: « Doing better with less »

How can the use of existing resources be optimised? How far can we go in re-using resources that have already been produced?

Participants will discover [the Arsenal site](#), a 7,000 m² former military site that became a Medical School and then a School of Arts, the renovation of which will be completed this summer. This is the first school project based on the circular economy and reuse launched by the French government. The project owner has chosen to experiment with the circular economy on a large scale, since all the materials, such as joinery, wood, sanitary fittings, light fittings, furniture, ashlar, rafters, concrete elements, metal cable sheaths and door handles, have been reused to refurbish the new university site.

Journey 4: « Eating well, eating local »

How can we ensure quality, local food for residents?

During this journey, participants will visit the [Graines de maraîchers nursery](#), where entrepreneurs with no farming experience can test their skills in the nursery before starting off on their own.

Journey 5: « Adapting to climate change »

How can local players anticipate and adapt to global warming, which is damaging urban ecosystems? How can we ensure a liveable environment for our citizens?

This journey will explore the green transformation of the [Place de la Révolution](#). Providing shade, installing new street furniture, highlighting the facades of historic buildings... The aim is to make the Place de la Révolution a living space for everyone, whatever the weather or events. All of this is being done in consultation with the residents of Besançon and those involved in bringing the square to life.

Participants will also visit the Brossolette school, which was the first in Besançon to have its school grounds planted with trees. The work was carried out with the help of residents, children and teachers. The entire area was revegetated and redefined using 100% permeable materials. A total of 30 smaller school grounds are to be renovated and redeveloped in this way.

April 10th: networking and inspiration with Martin Vanier

The conference will be held at the Région Bourgogne-Franche Comté (4 Square Castan) on 10th April and will give participants the opportunity to share their experiences and projects in various morning sessions.

The morning will close with a keynote by [Martin Vanier](#), a geographer and professor at the Paris School of Urban Planning and is also a consultant to local authorities within the Acadie consultancy cooperative. His work focuses on territories, their transformations, their future, their development and the public policies that govern them. He is also the author of 'Le temps des liens, essai sur l'anti-fracture', published by L'aube in 2024.

Around 200 urban practitioners in attendance

Mayors, municipal officials and experts from all over Europe have registered for the forum to share their challenges and ideas for decarbonising our cities and the support they need from the European Union.

Elected representatives

Many European elected representatives will be present:

- Namur, Louvain - Belgium
- Guimarães - Portugal
- Chernivtsi, Chortkiv - Ukraine
- Rustavi - Georgia
- Verona, Mesagne - Italy
- Zagreb - Croatia

French elected representatives will also be taking part in our forum:

- Marseille
- Annecy
- Rennes
- Lyon Métropole
- Ivry
- Clermont-Ferrand

Elected representatives from Besançon and the Bourgogne-Franche-Comté region, which are hosting the conference, will also be present.

Besançon, the host city

Besançon, a committed city

Over the last few decades, Besançon has demonstrated its commitment to becoming a more sustainable and resilient city, one that takes care of the environment and the well-being of its citizens. Its aim is to become a Positive Energy Territory (TEPOS) by 2050. This French label designates an area that is committed to reducing the energy needs of its residents, buildings, economic activities, transport and leisure activities.

To this end, its Territorial Climate-Air-Energy Plan (PCAET), is going to ensure a new development model that is both more sober and more efficient. This plan constitutes a roadmap for the ecological transition and defines the region's strategic and operational objectives for curbing climate change, combating its effects and adapting to it. In 2016, Grand Besançon Métropole presented its first programme and, since 2018, the authority has been developing new initiatives and setting new targets for the future 2024-2029 strategy, which was adopted on 26 September 2024. This new plan retains the main ambition of becoming a positive energy territory by 2050, but includes other objectives that are necessary for the territory's successful adaptation to the new climate regime: resilience in the face of risks, a more sustained commitment to zero waste and the circular economy, and safeguarding and strengthening carbon sinks.

Many examples to share with its European neighbours

In the Grand Besançon Métropole (GBM) area, 43 municipalities have already developed projects based on different energy sources:

- **Solar Energy:** Photovoltaic installations on rooftops and parking lots, with plans for a solar power plant supplying 1,800 people.
- **Biogas Production:** An operational biogas facility since 2021.
- **Wood Energy:** A biomass heating network supplying public buildings.
- **Wind Energy:** The Nancréole wind farm, set to generate electricity for 14,000 people by 2028.

Besançon also launched the **Climate Club** in 2020, a platform for businesses, associations, and public institutions to share knowledge and develop joint sustainability projects.

Besançon, Energy Cities' birthplace

Founded 35 years ago in Besançon, Energy Cities has grown into a European network dedicated to sustainable urban development. Given this historical connection and its strong commitment to climate action, Besançon proudly hosts this year's Grafting Cities conference.

Additional information

Conference programme <https://annualforum.energy-cities.eu>

English will be the main language at the event, but French will be also used. Interpretation will be provided for some of the sessions.

Your contacts

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