

Generation green: smart cities bring new eco-friendly jobs

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Credit: Youris.com

Smart cities across Europe are pioneering all sorts of cutting-edge technologies to reduce pollution and boost energy efficiency, becoming green role models for others to follow. The eco-friendly push is not only

helping to protect our planet, it's also stimulating growth and unleashing a new generation of jobs

This year's [EU Green Week](#) is clear in its focus: "green jobs for a greener future." It's highlighting how [environmental policies](#) are helping to create new work opportunities and a demand for new types of competences. [Smart city](#) projects are playing a big role in all of this - revolutionising the way we live and work and the resources we use.

"We have identified, especially from the municipalities side, that there is a need to create new skilled jobs for the creation of specific cross-department teams to work on defining action plans for cities, supporting the design of solutions and an understanding of the needs," says Miguel Garcia, from the [REMOURBAN project](#), which is pioneering new approaches to urban regeneration in the Spanish [city](#) of Valladolid, Nottingham in England, and Tepebasi/Eskisehir in Turkey.

"We're working on an urban regeneration model to develop more sustainable environments. This focuses on [green energy technologies](#) for retrofitting buildings and sustainable mobility technologies, including charging points for electric vehicles," he explains.

"And we need new types of jobs, more specialised jobs. For example, in maintaining the electric charging infrastructure of a city, to deliver all the services we will be providing from the urban platform and so on. We will see more jobs with a strong ICT component," continues Garcia.

The project alone is expected to create around 200 jobs in all during its five-year lifespan. But Garcia says the work, along with that of other smart city projects, is likely to deliver a much bigger return in the long-term across Europe. "In 10 years, the growth in investment will be around 25 percent in the ideas we're developing, so this will create even more [new jobs](#)," Garcia affirms.

Another example is the [Sharing Cities](#) project set to bring 300 new jobs across three demonstration cities, as it seeks to show how digital technology can make a big 'green' difference to our lives.

[According to 2013 EU figures](#), environmental economy or 'eco-industry' companies employed over 4.2 million people. Helping to manage pollution and natural resources, they generated a turnover of more than 700 billion euros.



Green businesses have been flourishing. But while countries like Denmark have been employing around 300,000 people in this sector, other European countries have [reported much lower figures](#).

The smart city projects across Europe, designed to be trailblazers for others to follow, may help to even out that jobs picture – inspiring more countries to think green when it comes to urban regeneration.

"When we started three years ago, we saw that generating jobs was important.

The economy wasn't growing as quickly as it is now," explains Gustaf Landahl, from the [GrowSmarter](#) project, which aims to develop a market for 12 'smart city solutions' covering energy, infrastructure and transport. "We think we'll create 1,500 jobs through our project. But then we hope that even more will come when these smart solutions and the companies behind them start growing."

GrowSmarter, Sharing Cities and REMOURBAN are among nine smart city projects who recently signed a [cooperation agreement](#) to share their ideas. "We think we can have a stronger impact in cities across Europe through our collaboration. We are stronger together. I'm sure we'll have a big impact in terms of new investment, new jobs and implementation of new technologies," says Garcia.

But environmental policies are often accused of being job killers, as switching to a [green economy](#) could lead to an employment deficit hard to fill. For example, "a key sector, like waste management, generates jobs often left to the underprivileged in the workforce to carry out. These 'dirty jobs' may disappear altogether. Yet, it is not clear what jobs the green economy would then offer to those with little or no skills," warns Ödül Bozkurt, a senior lecturer in the Department of Business and Management at the University of Sussex in England.

In this context, an interesting experience comes from the US, where the non-profit organisation [Greed Alternatives](#) promotes the accessibility of renewable jobs to low income communities, training [people](#) to work in the rooftop solar industry.

Similar examples are also emerging in Europe, including the smart city project [CiTyFiED](#). It's created new work and skills for unemployed people living in Laguna de Duero, Spain, through large-scale retrofitting of buildings and [energy efficiency](#) interventions.

Low-skilled or highly-skilled jobs, it seems the growing green economy is injecting new life into [jobs](#) market – and, for many countries, that is a welcome boost after all the turbulence of recent years.

Provided by Youris.com

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