Towards a Low Carbon Future

The Covenant of Mayors is the mainstream EU initiative uniting local and regional authorities in a common commitment to improve the quality of life of their citizens by contributing to the European community’s “3x20”climate and energy objectives*. In December 2008, following the adoption of the EU Climate and Energy Package, the European Commission took the unprecedented decision to directly involve local and regional decision makers in the achievement of EU objectives. Through energy efficiency measures and investment in renewable energy, Covenant of Mayors Signatories undertake to curb CO₂ emissions on their territory by at least 20% by 2020.

The numerous cities which have joined the movement back up their words with deeds: Signatories officially commit to submitting, within a year of joining the initiative, a Sustainable Energy Action Plan (SEAP) in which they outline in concrete measures how they intend to reach the Covenant of Mayors objectives. To produce such an ambitious document an assessment of the situation is necessary. This is carried out by Covenant Signatories through the development of a Baseline Emission Inventory, which is to be submitted alongside the SEAP and should pinpoint the carbon-intensive sectors on which action should be focused. Additional steps, such as adaptation of administrative structures, appropriate training of municipal staff, stakeholder engagement – for example through the organisation of local energy days – are then taken to guarantee the successful implementation of the action plan.

The end-result of this process is a decrease in CO₂ emissions which exceeds the target set out by the EU. Sustainable energy planning also leads to various collateral benefits, including improved quality of life, better provision of public services, greater energy security, development of the local economy and job creation.

* The EU 20-20-20 targets call for a 20% reduction in CO₂ emissions by 2020, compared with 1990 levels; a 20% increase in the share of renewables and a 20% cut in energy consumption.
WHAT’S SO SPECIAL ABOUT THE COVENANT?

FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF EU INSTITUTIONS...

José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission:
“From the local level you are building a European and global initiative, in the most genuine expression of European democratic values.”
Brussels, 4 May 2010

Mercedes Bresso, President of the Committee of the Regions:
“So far, the Covenant of Mayors has been a success story, since it is translating a European political agenda into, firstly, political commitments at local level, then into Sustainable Energy Action Plans, and, in some cases, into practical projects on the ground. And it is doing all this by shaping a truly European community of best practices.”
Brussels, 2 March 2011

Andris Piebalgs, EU Commissioner for Development:
“I would like to propose that we build on this success with a new chapter in the Covenant of Mayors. It should allow decentralised co-operation between the European signatories of the Covenant and cities or regions in developing countries.”
Brussels, 30 March 2011

WHAT’S SO SPECIAL ABOUT THE COVENANT?

...AND COVENANT OF MAYORS ACTORS

Giuseppe Castiglione, President of the Union of Italian Provinces:
“Contrary to the usual trend, whereby opposition movements are created out of the rejection of European policies and orientations, the Covenant of Mayors is a voluntary initiative led by local and regional decision-makers in full support and recognition of EU objectives.”

José Juan Diaz Trillo, Regional Environment Minister of Andalusia, Spain:
“Within the Covenant of Mayors framework, the Andalusian government has supported over 500 municipalities in their commitment to mitigate climate change and improve the quality of life of citizens.”

Bo Frank, Mayor of Växjö, Sweden:
“The Covenant was the first European movement to officially recognize and support the crucial contribution of local authorities in the fight against climate change.”

Milan Bandić, Mayor of Zagreb, Croatia:
“Through the Covenant, a new experience-sharing platform is born, where all information is made public and signatories, coordinators and supporters share successes and lessons learnt, inspiring each other to develop innovative and replicable solutions.”

Luís Filipe Menezes, Mayor of Vila Nova de Gaia:
“Due to its unprecedented success, the Covenant of Mayors is playing an increasingly important role in the definition of EU programmes and initiatives, and has fostered the development of several financing instruments for energy sustainability at local level.”

Hep Monatzeder, Deputy Mayor of Munich, Germany:
“The Covenant of Mayors’ methodology relies on a sound technical and scientific basis. Flexible and adapted to local realities, it provides a unique, common framework against which local authorities can benchmark themselves.”

Connie Hedegaard, Commissioner for Climate:
“Under the Covenant of Mayors, more than 2300 local authorities have gone beyond the 2020 targets. That is really a substantial contribution, a substantial effort to deliver on this.”
Brussels, 12 April 2011
COVENANT SIGNATORIES

Whatever their size or location on the world map, Covenant Signatories share a common goal: to provide an environmentally, socially and economically stable environment to their citizens. As the international community grapples with political, economic and social crises; practical, co-operative solutions are being found at local and regional levels.

Covenant Signatories include local authorities of all kinds, from small rural villages to major EU capitals. In fact, holding 80% of the world population, consuming 75% of the world’s energy and responsible for over half of greenhouse gas emissions: Who better than the local authorities to tackle climate, social and economic challenges? Indeed, the local administration is the closest government level to engage citizens and reconcile public and private interests.

Thanks to the Covenant of Mayors and related EU-funded projects, local authorities have moved from mere implementers of European policies to actual forerunners, committed to translating EU objectives into concrete, life-changing actions.

COVENANT COORDINATORS

Through the implication of regions, provinces and national public authorities, the Covenant of Mayors movement has fostered the emergence of a new governance model in Europe.

Regional and provincial authorities categorised as “Territorial Coordinators”, together with national energy agencies and ministries, acting as “National Coordinators”, have established a close cooperation with Covenant cities and municipalities in order to implement sustainable energy strategies based on a whole-territory approach.

Numerous Territorial Coordinators see the Covenant as a reference framework for structuring their territorial energy strategy. This is notably the case for the Province of Limburg (Belgium), where the administration is taking advantage of the Covenant to involve municipalities in its climate-neutral strategy. In Andalusia, Spain, the regional ministry of Environment is working hand in hand with the eight provinces of the region to assist the municipalities in translating their Covenant of Mayors objectives into concrete actions.

ASSOCIATED PARTNERS

The Covenant of Mayors also involves business-representative associations and other private or public entities willing to put their expertise at the service of Covenant Signatories.

Thanks to their continued involvement, especially in decentralised countries where sub-national governments play a catalysing role, the number of Covenant Signatories is soaring, alongside the submission of Sustainable Energy Action Plans.

Playing an ever more important role in the initiative, Covenant Coordinators are notably responsible for providing administrative, technical and financial support to signatories, especially as regards the development and implementation of their SEAPs.
Covenant of Mayors Signatories have set the bar high by pledging to meet – and even exceed – the EU’s ambitious CO₂ emissions reduction objectives. On the occasion of the second Covenant of Mayors ceremony in May 2010, European Commission President José Manuel Barroso enthusiastically remarked that, through the implementation of their SEAPs, Covenant local authorities would contribute as much as “one fifth of the total effort needed for the whole EU”.

The Sustainable Energy Action Plan – which local authorities are to submit within a year of their adhesion – is the roadmap that will guide them towards this final destination of reduced CO₂ emissions, outlining the major milestones to get there and the passengers to be taken on-board.

A series of strategic requirements associated with the Plan ensure that the Covenant fosters specific and tangible results: the elaboration of a Baseline Emission Inventory (BEI) helps signatories determine the sectors which consume and pollute the most, indicating where the bulk of action should be concentrated. The BEI must cover at least three of the Covenant’s four key sectors – (1) transport, (2) municipal & (3) tertiary buildings, equipments and facilities, and (4) residential buildings –, and at least two of these should be included in the corresponding SEAP. Finally, considering that actions and results are core to the Covenant of Mayors initiative, signatories who fail to fulfil their commitments are temporarily suspended from the initiative, until they can prove otherwise. In addition, the actual implementation of the SEAP is ensured by the biannual submission of a monitoring report.

Although these steps might seem demanding, they play a crucial role in helping the city move towards an integrated, sustainable approach to town planning, in which energy and climate considerations play a decisive part and bring new local development opportunities.

By delivering the programmes outlined in the SEAP, there is a clear expectation that the local economy will benefit and jobs will be created. The initial Birmingham Energy Savers programme for example has the potential to create an estimated 260 jobs and to deliver an estimated £16M gross value added to the local economy.

Source: Birmingham City Council Sustainable Energy Action Plan

FURTHER READING

TAPPING INTO EU FUNDING...

The unprecedented mobilisation of Covenant of Mayors Signatories to contribute to strategic EU policy objectives has resulted in the launch of specific financing instruments, aimed at supporting pioneering cities and regions’ efforts.

One of the first major financial engineering tools created under the impulse of the Covenant was the European Local Energy Assistance (ELENA) facility, financed by the Intelligent Energy – Europe Programme and initially implemented by the European Investment Bank, with the objective of supporting the technical costs associated with developing, structuring, tendering and launching large sustainable energy investment programmes.

Later, the ELENA Facility was extended by including two new windows providing technical assistance grants for the development of smaller-scale investments: ELENA – KfW supports small investment projects and provides a global loan option through participating financial institutions; and ELENA – CEB targets energy-related social housing investments.

But the snowball effect doesn’t stop there. The recently-launched European Energy Efficiency Fund (EEE-F) is yet another example of a financial facility created by the European Commission and participating financial institutions to support the sustainable energy projects of cities having committed to the 20% CO₂ reduction objective. EEE-F is an investment vehicle providing commercial equity and debt finance for sustainable energy investment projects, in particular supporting Energy Performance Contracting*.

However, in a period of economic slowdown and budgetary cuts, local authorities need more than just the EU’s contribution. On top of the community’s financial aid, much creativity is needed to kick-start innovative financial schemes or public-private partnerships supporting sustainable energy investments. A great number of Covenant of Mayors Signatories have already understood this, as notably evidenced by the unique joint public - procurement project initiated by Dijon and Brest, or by Berlin’s initiative to rent municipal building roofs to private investors.

The strong commitments and results of local authorities have also led to the European Commission’s proposal for the 2014-2020 ERDF regulation, which allocates significant resources to energy efficiency and distributed renewable energy, and has a strong focus on urban development issues.

Thanks to its successful application to ELENA, the City of Paris, France, has been able to kick-start the preparation of a large-scale investment programme for the energy efficient refurbishment of 300 public schools. The city is to invest an estimated €180 million in the project, and energy consumption is expected to decrease by 30% as a result of the implemented measures.

Vila Nova de Gaia, a smaller city located in Northern Portugal, is also benefitting from this European instrument, which notably allowed the administration to carry out feasibility studies to evaluate the technical and economic viability of sustainable energy projects and set up a qualified team of experts within the municipality to deal with legal and contractual procedures.

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FURTHER READING
Thematic Leaflet on financing instruments:
http://www.eumayors.eu/support/library_en.html

* Performance-based energy-saving contracts between the public and private sectors.
Covenant of Mayors Signatories are supported in their endeavours by the Covenant of Mayors Office (CoMO), funded by the Intelligent Energy Europe Programme and acting as the official Secretariat of the initiative.

Managed by a consortium of networks representing local and regional authorities, the CoMO provides Covenant Signatories with promotional, technical and administrative assistance on a daily basis.

Scientific and technical credibility is also one of the strengths of the Covenant, thanks to the involvement of the European Commission’s Joint Research Centre (JRC).

In cooperation with the CoMO, the JRC assists signatories with questions mostly related to emission inventories and action plans. Signatories are guided through the SEAP development process thanks to the methodological guidebook and other tools that have been developed in coordination with the CoMO.

Alongside the European Commission, the Covenant enjoys full institutional support, including that of the Committee of the Regions, which supported the initiative since its inception; the European Parliament, where the two first signing ceremonies were held; and the European Investment Bank, which assists local authorities in unlocking their investment potential.
The all-encompassing nature of the Covenant of Mayors – addressing the broad spectrum of sustainable energy planning – has fostered the development of an ever-growing number of initiatives and projects designed to support its objective and simultaneously reinforcing its momentum.

The list of EU-funded projects specifically aimed at supporting the Covenant commitments is long. To name just a few, we shall mention the “Come2CoM” project, which helps Covenant local authorities in the elaboration of their SEAP; “COMBAT” – whose main objective is to accelerate the Covenant implementation in central Baltic capitals; “ENGAGE” supporting Covenant Signatories in their public engagement activities and “NETCOM”, a project centred on the development of national Covenant of Mayors “clubs” and networking platforms.

Alongside the organisation of informative events and experience-sharing activities by the Covenant of Mayors Office, signatories and other Covenant stakeholders are supported by capacity-building workshops – organised notably as part of the ManagEnergy initiative – and opportunities to take part in awareness-raising campaigns such as the European Sustainable Energy and Mobility Weeks.

The Covenant website and communication materials offer many opportunities for cities, provinces and regions to learn from each other and be inspired by successful initiatives:

- Browsing through the Sustainable Energy Action Plan catalogue
- Looking into the “Benchmark of Excellence” section
- Consulting the case studies database
- and much for on the website
GROWING PROMINENCE

ON THE WORLD MAP...

As shown by the adhesion of Ushuaia – the southernmost city in the world – the Covenant of Mayors’ appeal reaches far beyond EU borders. Numerous non-EU local authorities have joined the initiative, including major cities and capitals such as Zagreb, Tbilisi, Skopje, Buenos Aires and Oslo.

In addition, a new branch of the Covenant of Mayors Office with staff based in Lviv (Ukraine) and Tbilisi (Georgia), recently opened to support the commitments of cities from the European neighbourhood regions and Central Asia.

While talks regarding the opening of a similar branch office in the South Mediterranean regions are underway, the CoMO is also increasingly engaging in cooperation activities with American, Indian and Chinese cities.

…AND EU POLICY AGENDA

Within the EU institutions, an increasing number of voices are calling for the emulation of the Covenant model to other policy areas. This call was first made by European Commission’s President José Manuel Barroso, who expressed his wish to see “innovative partnerships like the Covenant of Mayors” extended to other sectors.

Committee of the Regions President Mercedes Bresso later echoed Barroso’s suggestion by calling for the extension of the Covenant to the whole resource-efficiency agenda. In addition, the Commissioner for development Andris Piebalgs suggested creating a new Covenant “chapter” to support decentralised cooperation work between European authorities and partners in developing countries.

EXPECTED IMPACT OF THE COVENANT SUSTAINABLE ENERGY ACTION PLANS

According to a first set of SEAPs analysed by the Joint Research Centre, Covenant of Mayors Signatories emit on average 5.5 tonnes of CO₂ per capita, which they aim to reduce by an overall 28% by 2020.

The CO₂ emissions reduction will be achieved through the implementation of actions covering several key sectors of activity. A first analysis of SEAPs shows that action in the buildings and transport sectors will contribute to over 60% of overall expected CO₂ emissions reduction until 2020.

In October 2011, the Covenant of Mayors exceeded the landmark threshold of 3,000 signatories, representing over 144 million European citizens. More than 150 Covenant Supporters and Coordinators had joined the initiative and over 850 Sustainable Energy Action Plans were uploaded on the website. Keeping track of these numbers is no easy task as the growing enthusiasm for the Covenant has them rising on a daily basis.

To gain a better understanding of what the Covenant means in terms of job creation and economic development, one could take a closer look at the Covenant-related figures collected by the city of Frankfurt, home to 680,000 inhabitants:

➜ 20 municipal employees working on energy and climate issues
➜ €200 million invested in energy & climate measures between 1990 and 2010
➜ 300 GWh of energy savings generated every year
➜ €20 million saved every year
➜ 40 additional jobs created every year

FURTHER READING

www.eumayors.eu/about/covenant-in-figures_en.html
Covenant in Pictures

European Commissioner for Energy Günther Oettinger, witnessing the public signature of the first ELENA contract signed with the Province of Barcelona (Spain), on the occasion of the second Covenant of Mayors Ceremony in May 2010.

Secretary General of CITENERGO, a Covenant Supporter, Marián Minarovič speaking on the occasion of the launching event of the Covenant of Mayors Slovak platform in Bratislava (Slovakia).

Covenant of Mayors cyclists biking in Malmö (Sweden).

President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso at the occasion of the second Covenant of Mayors Ceremony in May 2010.

Petra Roth, Lord Mayor of Frankfurt am Main (Germany), getting ready for a tour on one of the city’s electric bikes.

Mayors signing the Covenant at the occasion of the first annual ceremony held in the European Parliament, Brussels (Belgium), in February 2009.

Secretary General of CITENERGO, a Covenant Supporter, Marián Minarovič speaking on the occasion of the launching event of the Covenant of Mayors Slovak platform in Bratislava (Slovakia).

Adhesion statements of Friedrichshafen (Germany), Sâle (Morocco) & Polotsk (Belarus), who jointly signed up to the Covenant of Mayors at the occasion of a signing ceremony held in September 2011.

Ugo Cappellacci, President of the Sardinia region (Italy), signing as Territorial Coordinator in the presence of the European Commission.

Mayors from the Province of Limburg (Belgium), a Covenant Territorial Coordinator, gathered on the occasion of a seminar held in May 2011 on the topic of the Province CO2-neutral strategy.

Picture of the Energiochi Energy Day organised by the Abruzzo Region (Italy) in the framework of the Covenant of Mayors.

Picture of the EU-funded ENGAGE campaign displaying the commitments of citizens in Helsinki (Finland), one of the numerous signatories taking part in the initiative.

Picture of the City of Helsinki - Pirita Männikkö

Petra Roth, Lord Mayor of Frankfurt am Main (Germany), getting ready for a tour on one of the city’s electric bikes.

Ugo Cappellacci, President of the Sardinia region (Italy), signing as Territorial Coordinator in the presence of the European Commission.

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Photo credit: Paul O’Driscoll

Photo credit: City of Friedrichshafen

Photo credit: City of Helsinki - Peta Männiko

Photo credit: Paul O’Driscoll

Photo credit: Cité of Friedrichshafen

Photo credit: Covenant of Mayors Office

Photo credit: Abgnova

Photo credit: FEDARENE

Photo credit: Sardinia region

Photo credit: Robin Reynders, Province of Limburg

Photo credit: CITERNEGO

Photo credit: Abruzzo Region

Photo credit: Abruzzo Region

Photo credit: Sardinia region
WANT TO LEARN MORE?

WEBSITE

The Covenant of Mayors website is available in 23 languages and features:
- Step-by-step information on how to get involved
- Interactive map of Covenant Signatories, Supporters and Coordinators
- Online catalogue of Sustainable Energy Action Plans
- Case studies and Benchmarks of Excellence
- Daily news and monthly interviews with Covenant stakeholders
- Easy-to-browse events section
- Pictures, videos, publications and more

CONTACT

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- Covenant Coordinators & Supporters Helpdesk: support@eumayors.eu
- Media Helpdesk: press@eumayors.eu
- Technical enquiries about SEAPs: technical.info@eumayors.eu
- Enquiries about events: events@eumayors.eu

Find us on facebook and twitter!

The Covenant of Mayors Office is managed by a consortium of local and regional authorities networks, led by Energy Cities, composed of CEMR, Climate Alliance, EUROCITIES and FEDARENE.