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## Press release

### Arnold Schwarzenegger joins EU mayors in flexing climate muscles

**In the presence of climate champion Arnold Schwarzenegger, some 200 mayors from 35 European countries gathered today at the European Parliament in Brussels to show their determination in achieving the EU climate and energy objectives, to which they have voluntarily committed through the Covenant of Mayors.**

President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso welcomed the 600 participants of the Covenant of Mayors ceremony and praised "the leading role of cities and regions in turning the climate policy agenda into concrete actions". He described the Covenant of Mayors as "a great initiative which is all about sharing experiences, pooling resources and making investments that have a tangible impact on people's lives".

Former Governor of California and current chairman of *R20 – Regions of Climate Action* Arnold Schwarzenegger gave an inspiring speech about the power of sub-national governments and grassroots initiatives such as the Covenant of Mayors. He notably said "I am so excited today to speak at this gathering of mayors, I can feel the passion, the energy and the power of you all". He called European leaders to work together at the international level "to lead the world to a sustainable energy future".

Mayors from cities such as Ghent, Heidelberg, Tampere, and Lviv had the opportunity to present concrete examples of how their citizens have benefitted from sustainable energy initiatives in a crisis context where budget cuts seem to be the norm. Undeniably, Covenant signatory cities have proved that local energy actions can be regarded as cost-effective measures that support economic growth and job creation as mentioned Anni Podimata, Vice-President of the European Parliament: *"Not only is your action enabling to provide good value for money by undertaking initiatives that are well targeted and adapted to local realities, but your action is also an important lever for local employment and economic growth"*.

Around 150 new cities and regions joined the Covenant of Mayors initiative this year through a virtual, ICT-enabled signing ceremony well in tune with the speech of Commissioner for the Digital Agenda Neelie Kroes who emphasized "the power of digital tools to make cities greener and healthier for all European citizens".

Mayor of Ghent, Daniël Termont urged for a more cross-sectorial cooperation between the different actors involved in local sustainable energy management: "The Covenant of Mayors strongly emphasizes the role of the mayor. But today, in times of diminished public means, it becomes increasingly important to start looking for cross-sectorial cooperation and win-win opportunities with a broad range of stakeholders, including the private sector". His statement was fully supported by Anna Kaisa-Ikonen, Mayor of Tampere, who highlighted "the importance of local action to develop and promote low carbon and clean technologies by bringing together companies, universities, research institutions, and cities".

The Covenant initiative is certainly an emblematic example of multi-level governance and bottom-up action in Europe, promoting the involvement of citizens and actors at local, regional and national levels in building a sustainable energy future. Ramón Luís Varcárcel Siso, President of the Committee of the Regions described the initiative as an "overwhelming success", especially when it comes to "mainstreaming local sustainable energy actions and spreading a culture of CO<sub>2</sub> measurement and reduction across municipalities".



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Once a year mayors from across Europe gather in the European Parliament in Brussels to join or reaffirm their commitment to the Covenant of Mayors initiative.

Since 2009, the Covenant of Mayors is the mainstream European movement involving local and regional authorities, voluntarily committed to increasing energy efficiency and use of renewable energy sources in their territories.

To date close to 5,000 European cities and regions have joined the initiative representing some 167,000,000 citizens. By their commitment, Covenant Signatories aim to meet and exceed the European Union 20% CO<sub>2</sub> reduction objective by 2020.

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**More information:** [www.eumayors.eu](http://www.eumayors.eu)

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