

Brussels, 10 February 2009

What is the Covenant of Mayors?

One year after the Commission launched a consultation with the cities of Europe to draft a Covenant of Mayors along the lines of formal commitments to go beyond the energy and climate change objectives of the EU. More than 400 municipalities have, upon their own initiative, committed to the ambitious target of reducing CO2 emissions and energy consumption in their cities beyond the 20% EU objectives by 2020.

There are Covenant cities in 23 EU countries plus Switzerland, Norway, Ukraine, Croatia, Turkey and Bosnia Herzegovina. Besides, cities from the United States, Argentina and New Zealand have expressed their interest to get involved in the Covenant process. 12 EU capitals are members of the Covenant, and 8 others have expressed their willingness to join. There are also many small towns, grouped around their provinces or regions, which provide them the technical and financial support to comply with the Covenant requirements.

Reducing 20% of the nowadays Covenant cities' CO2 emissions is equivalent to reforest each year a surface larger than the whole of Hungary, or taking out from the streets more than 35 million cars or closing down 20 coal-fired 50MW power plants. At a conservative estimation of 50 dollars a barrel by 2020, the estimated money savings in imports are more than 8 billion € a year.

The Covenant consists of the formal commitment of the cities to go beyond the EU 20-20-20 energy objectives. In order to justify how they will achieve those objectives, cities must submit a sustainable energy action plan within the year following adhesion. Then cities will report, to their citizens and to the Commission, once every two years to monitor implementation. The cities having signed to the Covenant accept termination of their involvement in case of non compliance.

The Commission is supporting this initiative by mobilising resources to provide technical assistance for the preparation of action plans and to create and operate an office for co-ordination and networking of the cities in the Covenant. Most of the most relevant city networks are involved in that office: Energie-Cités, Eurocities, CEMR, Climate Alliance, Fedarene.

Concerning financing, the Commission is going to fund the creation of a facility for the mobilisation of EIB credits to interested cities. For the time being a number of prospective operations in Italy, France and Spain are being analysed, but it is expected to launch the initiative full-fledged in April. The optimisation of the use of other financial facilities in relation to the Covenant is also planned.

The Covenant is also, at EU level, an exercise of institutional co-operation with the involvement of the Committee of the Regions, the European Parliament and the European Investment Bank.

Given the success and dimension of the Covenant, the Commission intends to propose a Communication on this subject within 2009. The Covenant will also be given preferential attention in the revised EU Energy Efficiency Action Plan. To coincide with the ceremony, the new Covenant of Mayors website has been

launched today to act as a network portal and support structure for participating cities and citizens alike. The new website www.eumayors.eu, offers news and pictures of the Covenant in action, as well as information on the cities involved.

Contacts:

Ferran Tarradellas: +32/2.296.62.93, +32/498.966.293 - ferran.tarradellas@ec.europa.eu