

Q&As for cities

Merging climate change mitigation (Covenant of Mayors) and adaptation (Mayors Adapt) under one single umbrella initiative (Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy)

- What does this mean in practice? -

Target audiences:

- All Covenant of Mayors and Mayors Adapt Signatories.
- Any other local authorities interested in joining the new initiative.

Purposes:

- Inform cities and other stakeholders about the reasons for and the implications of the Covenant of Mayors and Mayors Adapt merge into an integrated initiative.
- Clarify the modalities (incl. the signing and other administrative procedures) under the new initiative.

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Q&As

The new initiative in a nutshell

1. Why merge the “Covenant of Mayors” and “Mayors Adapt” under one umbrella initiative?

- The international community has reached a historical agreement on climate change at the COP 21¹ conference in Paris. The agreement recognises the important role that cities and other subnational authorities have to address and respond to climate change. The agreement also encourages cities and other subnational authorities to deal with climate change mitigation and adaptation in a holistic and integrated manner.
- Mitigation of greenhouse gases and adaptation to climate change are complementary strategies for dealing with climate change. Dealing with mitigation and adaptation as one can therefore bring co-benefits and win-win solutions, make the whole process more effective and cost-efficient, help harness political support and strengthen coordination among municipal departments.
- A broad survey conducted by the Covenant of Mayors Office with the support of the Committee of the Regions in summer 2015 showed that a wide majority of cities were in favour of bringing both climate change pillars closer and merging both initiatives (Covenant of Mayors and Mayors Adapt) to promote a coordinated climate action.
- The new European policy context (i.e. the 2030 climate and energy framework agreed by EU leaders, the EU adaptation strategy and the Energy Union with forward looking climate policy) provides an opportunity for the further development of the Covenant of Mayors initiative and the reinforcement of linkages between the Covenant of Mayors and Mayors Adapt. The EU has set a domestic greenhouse gas emission reduction target of at least 40% by 2030 which would support the shift to a low-carbon energy system and contribute to a more climate-resilient Europe. Local authorities have already shown they can make a crucial contribution in achieving these goals.

2. What is the new initiative (vision, ambition, scope of action)?

- The new initiative was launched on 15 October at the 2015 Joint Covenant of Mayors and Mayors Adapt Ceremony. It constitutes the mainstream European movement involving local authorities and their citizens in the fight against climate change.
- This initiative defines renewed commitment(s) and a shared (post-2020) vision in order to tackle interconnected challenges: climate change mitigation, adaptation and sustainable energy.
- The vision is threefold:
 - Accelerating the reduction of carbon or greenhouse gas emissions in our territories, thus contributing to keeping average global warming below 2°C;
 - Strengthening our capacities to adapt to unavoidable climate change impacts, thus making our territories more resilient;
 - Increasing energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy sources on our territories, thus ensuring universal access to secure, sustainable and affordable energy services for all.
- The initiative also proposes a new “global chapter” by inviting signatories to share their vision, results, experience and know-how with fellow local and regional authorities within the EU and beyond.

¹ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Twenty-first session of the Conferences of the Parties.

3. What commitments do signatories have to fulfil?

- Signatories commit to reducing carbon or greenhouse gases emissions across their territory by at least 40% by 2030 and to increasing their resilience to the impacts of climate change.
- To translate their commitments into action, they commit to submitting a Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan (SECAP) within two years following the formal signing, including the mainstreaming of adaptation considerations into relevant policies, strategies and plans. The action plan(s) must be based on a “Baseline Emissions Inventory” (BEI) for mitigation and include a “Climate Change Risk and Vulnerability Assessment” for adaptation. The SECAP will be published on the new Covenant website. Signatories have to report on the implementation of their SECAP every two years. At this occasion, they can readjust their priorities and review the SECAP to make sure they achieve their targets.

4. Can you give concrete examples of mitigation measures in towns and cities?

- Towns and cities account for a substantial amount of CO₂ emissions and they play a crucial role in mitigation climate change, namely through the reduction of CO₂ emissions. Their actions include, among others:
 - Improving energy efficiency in buildings, which helps reduce energy consumption and therefore CO₂ emissions;
 - Promoting local renewable energy sources to secure low-carbon energy supplies;
 - Fostering smart energy solutions to make the most of new technologies allowing users to by consume only the necessary energy and at the most appropriate time;
 - Promoting sustainable mobility and reducing CO₂ emissions from transport;
 - Better information and awareness-raising of citizens so that they can adjust their behaviour and make smart choices without compromising on their comfort.

5. Can you give concrete examples of adaptation actions in towns and cities?

- Urban adaptation means assessing major climate risks and vulnerabilities of your municipality and planning accordingly how you tackle and reduce these risks. Many local authorities are already taking action, e.g. through civil protection, water management or urban planning.
 - Incorporating climate change adaptation concerns into new constructions and retrofitting measures (e.g. sewage systems, buildings, energy and transport systems).
 - Using and expanding green infrastructures (e.g. parks, forests, wetlands, green walls and roofs) to reduce temperatures in cities, improve soil permeability and better manage flood risks.
 - Combining green and grey infrastructures (e.g. construction measures using engineering services).
 - 'Soft' measures such as emergency systems, the provision of appropriate information to citizens most exposed to risks and encouraging behavioural changes accordingly.

6. Why join? What do signatories get in return?

- Participating local authorities will be able to benefit from the following:
 - Visibility and communication on cities' commitment, notably on the initiative's website;
 - Practical support in the form of a helpdesk for operational questions, and at dedicated events organised by the Office managing the initiative;
 - Networking, twinning and capacity building opportunities through regular events and online platform;
 - Knowledge support through robust guidance materials and tools to analyse, plan, implement and monitor their local energy and climate actions;
 - A common monitoring and reporting framework for participating cities;
 - Synergies with relevant stakeholders & other EU initiatives and easier access to designated EU funding (e.g. under the Smart Cities and Communities European Innovation Partnership in Horizon 2020, LIFE etc.).

7. What's so special about this new initiative?

-  The Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy is the unique initiative shaped by cities and for cities. It constitutes a strong bottom-up movement uniting local and regional authorities around common commitments and a shared vision.
-  It has proven to be a mainstream EU policy instrument (and therefore embedded in EU policies), which may enable further financing opportunities for cities (e.g. ELENA, created under the impulse of the Covenant, but also Horizon 2020, LIFE...).
-  It is built upon a unique multi-level governance model, engaging national and sub-national authorities as appropriate for a successful implementation of the local sustainable energy and climate policies.
-  It proposes a clear and flexible framework for action, an integrated and holistic approach from political commitment to the preparation and implementation of action plans (i.e. common methodological principals and reporting templates for all, jointly developed by leading city networks together with the European Commission, and in consultation with cities) – that enables local authorities to track, report, and publicly disclose their data in a structured and systematic manner.
-  Recognition and high visibility of the efforts undertaken: The (individual and collective) results are made publicly available on the Covenant website to inspire, facilitate exchanges and self-assessment. Reporting data via the Covenant thus allows signatories to demonstrate the wide impact of their actions on the ground. Data compiled through the Covenant reporting framework also gives essential feedback on local actions to international, European and national policy-makers (e.g. integration into the NAZCA web portal).
-  Thanks to i) a robust monitoring of commitments throughout the process, ii) suspension in case of non-compliance & iii) an evaluation by the initiative, it is a credible and widely acclaimed brand for local authorities

The practicalities for existing signatories of Covenant of Mayors and/or Mayors Adapt

8. I am already a signatory of the Covenant of Mayors and/or Mayors Adapt, do I have to join to the new initiative?

-  No, there is no obligation for existing Covenant of Mayors and Mayors Adapt signatories to join the new initiative – it remains up to the local authorities to decide when to renew their commitment. You are however encouraged to join the new initiative to scale up your ambitions at your convenience.

9. I am already a signatory of the Covenant of Mayors and/or Mayors Adapt, do I need to update my commitments and the related documents (BEI/MEI/SEAP, Risk and Vulnerability Assessment, local adaptation strategy/plan)?

-  If you have signed up to the Covenant of Mayors (CoM) and/or Mayors Adapt (MA) before the 1st November 2015 and decide not to join the new initiative, your current commitment and associated reporting requirements will remain unchanged:
-  If you are a CoM signatory, you are expected – in line with your initial commitment – to submit a SEAP within one year of signing up to the CoM and then a monitoring report every two years.
-  If you are a MA signatory, you are expected to develop a local adaptation strategy and/or integrate adaptation into existing relevant plans within two years of signing up to MA and then submit a monitoring report every two years.
-  If you decide to join the new initiative, you will need to make new commitments for 2030 (meaning a decision by the municipal council – see the Q&A on how to join hereafter) and prepare a Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan (SECAP) as a natural extension of your existing mitigation plan (SEAP)

and/or adaptation strategy (if any). Specific support will be provided to help you in the transition. The information you previously provided under the CoM/MA frameworks will be transferred and integrated in the framework of the new initiative.

- Important - If you are a CoM signatory: the 2020 target remains an important milestone, a step towards your 2030 commitments.

10. I am already a signatory of the Covenant of Mayors and/or Mayors Adapt. If I wish to continue my engagement on climate change and energy issues beyond 2020, do I need to sign up to the new commitment document?

- Yes, you will need to sign up to the new initiative to formalise your new (post-2020) commitments. For the sake of simplicity, the same procedure applies to newcomers as well as you who renew your commitment (meaning a decision by the municipal council – see the Q&A on how to join hereafter).

The modalities for new signatories

11. I am not a signatory of the original Covenant of Mayors or Mayors Adapt but I would now like to join, can I sign up now to any of them?

- From the 1st November 2015, it is no longer possible to join neither Mayors Adapt nor the (2020-oriented) Covenant of Mayors. It will henceforth only be possible to sign up to the new (2030-oriented) Covenant of Mayors initiative.

12. I am not a signatory of the Covenant of Mayors or Mayors Adapt but I would like to join the new initiative, how to join?

- The new Covenant of Mayors Commitment Document will need to be presented and adopted by the municipal council.
- The Adhesion Form will need to be duly signed and sent to the Covenant of Mayors office.

13. I have signed up to the new initiative – what's next?

The main Covenant of Mayors and Mayors Adapt administrative procedures are progressively going to merge in order to avoid dual processes and optimise the use of resources for participating cities.

a) Plan submission

- Signatories commit to submitting their Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan - and any other relevant planning plans - within two years following adhesion. Signatories will be invited to use the on-line submission system available via 'My Covenant' (the Covenant website extranet section).
- Note: As defined in annex to the Covenant of Mayors Commitment Document, the adaptation 'pathway' is kept flexible enough to integrate new knowledge and findings and reflect changing conditions and capacities of signatories. The adaptation strategy should be part of the SECAP and/or developed and mainstreamed in (a) separate planning document(s). Signatories can opt for the format of their choice. The adaptation strategy can be strengthened and readjusted over time.

→ Cities already engaged in the Covenant of Mayors

- Covenant Signatories that have already submitted a Sustainable Energy Action Plan (with a 2020 commitment) will be invited to revise their plan to include their renewed commitment(s).
- Covenant Signatories renewing their commitments by joining the new initiative should also comply with the adaptation commitment.

→ Cities already engaged in Mayors Adapt

- Mayors Adapt Signatories do not need to develop another adaptation strategy and/or plan if one is already in place. They can attach it to their new SECAP. Adaptation should be clearly mainstreamed into the SECAP.
- Mayors Adapt Signatories joining the new initiative should also develop and submit a mitigation strategy (if it's not already done).

b) Monitoring and Reporting

The existing Covenant of Mayors Monitoring and Reporting Framework is currently being revised and adjusted to the new 2030 commitments. It will include more specific fields related to the new commitments.

The Monitoring and Reporting Framework for adaptation is under preparation by the Mayors Adapt team and should go live in early 2016 – clear links with the existing Covenant of Mayors reporting framework are currently being explored with the support of experts from signatory cities. More information will be provided to signatories in due time.

→ Cities already engaged in the Covenant of Mayors

- Covenant Signatories that have already submitted a SEAP (with a 2020 commitment) and therefore filled in the so-called online SEAP template will be invited to update and complete their previously-submitted form with more information on their renewed commitments.
- Covenant Signatories that have not already filled in their SEAP template will be invited to fill in the form corresponding to the commitment(s) defined in their plan (2020 or 2030).
- Covenant Signatories renewing their commitment by joining the new initiative will also be invited to report on their adaptation actions.

→ Cities already engaged in Mayors Adapt

The Monitoring and Reporting Framework for adaptation is currently under elaboration – with the support of a Group of Practitioners. It should be integrated into the existing Covenant of Mayors one. More information will be provided to signatories in due time.

More information:

- **Covenant of Mayors:** info@eumayors.eu | www.covenantofmayors.eu
- **Mayors Adapt:** helpdesk@mayors-adapt.eu | www.mayors-adapt.eu