

Brussels, 29 January 2008

Sustainable Energy Cities take the lead on climate change: the European Commission launches the Covenant of Mayors

Today the European Commission launched the Covenant of Mayors, the most ambitious initiative to date involving the citizens in the fight against global warming. It comes after an informal consultation with numerous cities across Europe, whose Mayors will join the Commission in launching the Covenant. The Covenant consists of the formal commitment of the adhering cities to go beyond the objectives of the EU in terms of reducing their CO₂ emissions through energy efficiency and renewable energy actions. Almost 100 cities throughout Europe, including 15 capital cities, have expressed their early support for the Covenant.

"Cities are becoming the places to deliver new ideas and innovative projects against global warming. Cities are also the public spaces where it is possible to find multicultural, cross-sectoral solutions, where the necessary conciliation between private and public interests may be found. The approach to tackle the climate crisis challenge can only be holistic, integrated, long-term and, most of all, based on the participation of citizens. This complex picture is best managed at local level. Cities must therefore become leading actors for implementing sustainable energy policies, and must be supported in their effort", said European Commissioner for Energy Andris Piebalgs.

The Covenant of Mayors will be a result-oriented initiative, focusing on concrete projects and measurable results. The adhering cities and regions will formally commit to reduce their CO₂ emission by more than 20% by 2020, by developing Sustainable Energy Action Plans. Citizens will be informed of the achievements of their respective cities through periodic reports, which can be monitored by a third party.

The Commission will give support to the sharing of the best sustainable energy practices in the world to the Covenant cities and regions through a 'benchmarks for excellence' mechanism. The Commission also intends to negotiate the terms of the involvement of other major stakeholders in the Covenant. A Covenant secretariat, funded through the Intelligent Energy Europe programme, will facilitate monitoring, networking and promotion tasks of this new challenge.

The proposed Covenant text comes as a result of an informal consultation with a broad number of cities throughout Europe. As a result, almost one hundred cities throughout Europe, including 15 capital cities, have expressed their early interest in the Covenant. Elected representatives from London, Helsinki, Riga, Berlin, Bonn, Milan, Venezia, Nantes, Ljubljana, Warsaw and other cities will attend the launching event, together with Commissioner Piebalgs and President of the Committee of the Regions Michel Delebarre.

Now it is time to produce a final version of the Covenant, through a formal consultation, and to open the period to formalise adhesions to the Covenant. In parallel, a number of high level debates and events will take place to work out the terms of participation of financial entities and the benchmarks for excellence in the Covenant. The first group of Covenant cities will formalise their adhesion no later than the next EU Sustainable Energy Week.