

**Presentation and launch of the Covenant of
Mayors by Commissioner A. Piebalgs**

Charlemagne S3

Brussels, 29 January 2008

The Covenant of Mayors

Why a Covenant of Mayors?

- The fight against climate change is a top priority for the EU. We have made a commitment to curb our CO₂ emissions by at least 20% by 2020. Climate change, we all know, is a global problem whose solutions are very local. More than half our greenhouse emissions are created in and for the cities.
- Cities are becoming the places to deliver new ideas and innovative projects against global warming. Cities are the public spaces where the strategies for the use of resources are publicly debated and agreed upon. The individual and collective creativity is manifested in the cities, whether in the field of development of alternative energy or pollution control, energy management or change of behaviour
- Cities are also the privileged places where it is possible to find multicultural, cross-sectorial 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 citizen participation. This complex picture is best managed at local level
- Therefore, cities must become leading actors for implementing the sustainable energy policies, and must be supported in their effort.

How does the Covenant fit in Community Energy policy? The concept.

- The Commission included in the Energy Efficiency Action Plan released at the end of 2006 the creation of a Covenant of Mayors as the top priority for action at local and regional level
- The Covenant should contribute to the achievement of the EU energy policy objectives. Therefore an ambitious but credible aim was fixed: that cities and regions joining the Covenant would **formally commit to go beyond the 20% reduction** of CO₂ emissions fixed for the EU as a whole
- In order to do that, cities and regions would submit a **sustainable energy action plan** to the 2020 horizon, outlining the concrete measures and strategies conducting to such objectives
- **Each year**, the Covenant cities and regions will submit a public **report**, to show the state of advancement of the Action Plan. This report can be monitored by third parties
- There are then no conditional clauses of vague statements of goodwill: it is just a self-commitment by the cities to work for their citizens in concrete policies, measures and projects delivering tangible results in terms of less greenhouse gas emissions

- It is understood that the Covenant is the right of the citizens to live in a city committed against climate change rather than a duty for the local administrations. In consequence, the Covenant is open to any city willing to formally adhere to its conditions.
- The Commission formally commits to support and fund a secretariat for the Covenant, in charge among other things of monitoring progress, provide technical assistance and facilitate exchange of experiences. To that purpose, a budget provision in the Intelligent Energy Europe Programme is approved.
- The Commission also provides public recognition to the Covenant regions and cities, and commits to facilitate exchange of experience liaising the Covenant with Europe' leading urban examples of excellence, such as Concerto, Civitas, Sustainable Energy Europe Campaign or ManagEnergy.
- Finally, the Commission endeavours to negotiate with financial actors and other parties their contributions to the Covenant. To highlight the ongoing friendly discussions with Committee of the Regions and EIB, for instance.

Process, conclusion

- Naturally, such an initiative needs to be worked out and adopted by the cities and regions. The present draft Covenant is the result of an informal consultation with many cities in Europe. A wider and deeper formal consultation is open from now until late 2008
- In parallel, a number of technical and political events will be organised during the year to work out all the details of the Covenant and facilitate the negotiations with other parties while the future Covenant cities prepare the formalisation of their adhesion and the secretariat is implemented.
- The informal consultation has resulted in 95 cities and regions in Europe expressing their willingness to join the Covenant, including 15 capital cities. I would like to thank all of them for their commitment and their contributions. I thank as well the networks of cities and national administrations that have supported us and given precious advice.
- At a moment when the citizens are strongly requesting decisive action from the political decision makers, the Covenant of Mayors may be the most appropriate instrument to satisfy the requests, and may serve to devolve to the term 'policy' its original sense: what is done in the 'polis', in the city. The climate crisis may give the opportunity to put the cities into the global mainstream policy, through initiatives such as the Covenant.
- I look forward to meeting you again at the end of 2008 for a formal ceremony of signature of a Covenant satisfying the expectations of the citizens of Europe, and offer again my full support to the success of this new challenge.