

Networking the Covenant of Mayors

Guidebook to accelerate
the implementation of the Covenant
of Mayors via national clubs





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Abstract



The Covenant of Mayors is much more successful than anticipated. Initially designed to commit a limited (25-30) number of local authorities, the interest of mayors and municipal councils has been growing. More than 5,000 local authorities have signed the Covenant of Mayors up to November 2013.

Transforming this current quantitative success into a qualitative one is a challenge we are collectively facing. With so many cities involved, individual technical assistance is simply impossible.

The first part of this Guidebook will help you find ideas on collaborative ways to be explored and implemented to manage the current situation and anticipate the future.

The second part is based on national observations describing the perception of the Covenant of Mayors and factors influencing its implementation in 12 countries and regions. These opinions are based on the experiences of 12 associations of local authorities, as well as on direct interviews with other Covenant Signatories, Covenant Supporters and Coordinators and Non-Signatories in their respective countries. The results show that the visibility of the Covenant of Mayors has increased in all countries. However, the drivers and obstacles which influence the implementation of the Covenant of Mayors and the perceived negative and positive aspects are recurrent. The political impact of the Covenant of Mayors in the municipality and at European level is the initiative's uncontested positive aspect and driver. On the other hand, the technocratic image and high reporting workload is still perceived as an obstacle for the Covenant implementation. The willingness and vigour to work on these obstacles and drivers have to be kept up.

We hope that the feedback presented in this report and the recommendations from the local level will continue to strengthen and improve the Covenant implementation and will contribute to the further success of the initiative.



European Recipe Book
to accelerate the implementation
of the Covenant of Mayors



Part 1

What's on the menu? Boosting action to reach the "3x20"!

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What is a Covenant of Mayors Club?

A national Covenant Club is formed by:

■ **Covenant Signatories**, as well as other interested local authorities willing to commit to the initiative in the future. Both local elected representatives and civil servants are targeted;

■ **Key national stakeholders** (associations of local authorities, professional associations, universities and research centres, Covenant Supporters and Coordinators, energy agencies, NGOs, demand-side oriented manufacturers, financial institutions, etc.). Indeed, a strategic collaboration among various stakeholders at national level is crucial to help local authorities, Member States and the European Union meet their energy and climate targets.

A national Covenant Club aims to create and share a powerful vision and to develop common decentralised energy and territorial cohesion priority actions. It encourages and facilitates best practice exchange and capacity building among local authorities and national stakeholders.

Increasingly local authorities are implementing sustainable energy initiatives hand-in-hand with local territorial cohesion policies. These are successful examples of how to achieve the "3x20" objectives by 2020. Thus, the Covenant Clubs also have the role of expressing relevant feedback from the ground and providing suggestions for new solutions to the national government and the European Union.



Quick & easy recipe to build a Covenant Club

Ingredients

- An enthusiastic and motivated club coordinator
- A membership charter
- A marketing document
- A communication strategy and initial work plan
- A list of potential committed members

Cooking time

From 6 months to 1 year

Top tips from the chef

Your club must be "needs-oriented". Remember that the club is not your organisation, but the members'. It is necessary to have a clear strategy and vision from the very beginning of the process.

A flexible structure

Your club must be **“needs-oriented”**. This means that potential stakeholders must not feel locked in a rigid structure that would impose on them duties to fulfil, increase their workload and hamper their actions. Being part of a national Covenant Club should not mean new constraints for stakeholders but new opportunities!



Top tip !

“Pay special attention to the needs! What is the core topic dealt with in the framework of the club and is there a need for a club? What are the pre-requisites: To get information in own native language? To exchange with others? To highlight national issues? Adapt your club accordingly. Don't try to fulfil all these expectations, but select the most promising to define the shape of your club.”

– German Covenant Club

As an innovative structure you are to invent new governance and you cannot predict the outcomes of the interactions with your potential partners. It will be up to you and your future partners to find the answers that will outline your club. But this will depend on many external factors, from the specific political context in your country to the state of progress of sustainable energy policies within the municipalities you will work with.

The structure of your club will rely on its members. It is up to them to gradually frame their cooperation inside the club by defining what they consider to be the top priorities and the actions they want to work

on. That is why it must be a flexible organisation, adaptable to change and include new stakeholders and fresh ideas. For instance, your club must be strong enough to adjust to changing political situations, or to address new policies following the adoption of new European legislation.

A focus on duties or any specific expectation toward members should not be favoured. **Your club must not be a binding organisation, as the Covenant of Mayors already is.** Experience has shown that potential members do not feel comfortable with such demands. Although you have objectives to achieve, do not feel forced to impose obligations on members. Membership charters symbolise involvement and are used by existing club members' to convince other partners to sign and join the Covenant Signatories.



It's not a piece of cake!

Some stakeholders might feel uncomfortable with signing the membership charter.



Top tip !

“To address this shortcoming, rely on active and involved municipalities to convince other local authorities. This highlights the importance of having key frontrunners among your members to facilitate the adhesion of other stakeholders.”

– Baltic Sea Region Covenant Club

A grassroots movement

Remember that the club is not your organisation, but the members'. Through its functioning and its actions it must be seen as a bottom-up movement coming from local stakeholders and promoted by them for their own interests. In order to carry out your objectives, you should frame their actions by giving them – through the charter – the main needs and ideas on which your club is based and what joining it means. Thanks to this framework, you can assure the coherence of the club and ensure win-win exchanges among signatories and other stakeholders.

It is important to propose relevant discussion topics to your members during workshops or meetings. As the coordinator of this network of plural stakeholders, you are in a unique position to decisively influence all the members by stressing certain aspects you might consider of major importance (for you but also for the members). However, it must be up to members to discuss the different topics and decide what strategy fits best with the Covenant of Mayors objectives.

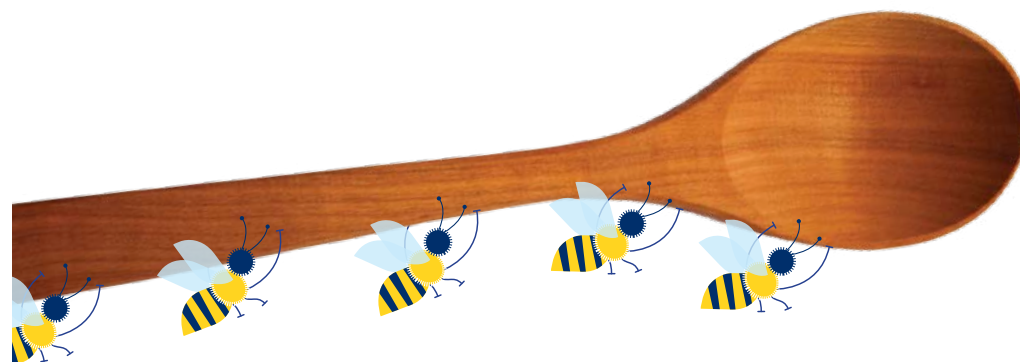


Top tip !

“Creativity during the organisation of club meetings will help to mobilise members to brainstorm on the Covenant of Mayors issues which will be mutually beneficial for both the club team itself and Covenant Signatories.”

– Polish Covenant Club

To put it in a nutshell, a Covenant Club must be a loose and flexible organisation by the members, for the members and must be able to fit both the members and coordinator's expectations.





Political representatives do not see the necessity to join an organisation that would appear as a useless duplication coming from European bureaucracy.

German and Austrian Covenant Clubs are for instance suffering from the existence of well-established and long-standing organisations involved in sustainable energy and climate protection. This situation results from the early and deep involvement of local authorities in sustainability issues in both countries, well before the inception of a comprehensive European policy or the Covenant of Mayors. For the coordinators of these clubs, this particular context demands creativity to overcome political representatives' scepticism. Stressing on the European expertise can be a trump card.



"The main success is that more and more organisations/key stakeholders/cities/political representatives are becoming aware of the outstanding success of the Covenant of Mayors. As Austria enjoys several existing successful initiatives, the added value of the Covenant of Mayors has not been recognised for a long time. However the Covenant of Mayors is now seen as a powerful instrument which might help change the energy situation in Europe because so many cities are joining in."

– Austrian Covenant Club

A vision in motion

A **clear strategy** is necessary from the very beginning of the process. This strategy will later be discussed and refined with the members, when the club is truly operational, but you need at least to define its *raison d'être* early on to give your club a true legitimacy as well as the opportunity to succeed right from the start. Indeed, by knowing what you want to achieve with your club, you will be able to lay solid foundations and to clarify your position regarding sustainable energy issues in front of your potential target groups. Moreover, this will make you more efficient in your search for potential partners as it will be easier to convince them to join since you will have strong arguments.



"It is very important to develop a long-term strategy with clear objectives, definition of roles and incentives for different stakeholders who are interested to be actively involved in the national club."

– Slovak Covenant Club

"By focusing on the economic aspects, such as creating jobs locally as a result of local energy generation, we are showing that there is an important reason to get involved."

– Dutch Covenant Club

Launching strategy for starters



"Start with a good plan including strategy, communication and events!"

– Dutch Covenant Club

The success of your club will depend on the solid basis that will be acquired at the launching event. It is crucial to establish your club with already engaged or highly interested stakeholders. If you start it without a strong enough basis, it could be much more difficult to convince other officials to join in.

Use convincing arguments

To convince potential members, it is necessary to develop arguments specifically connected to each of the numerous stakeholders of your list. Different steps are needed:

1. Map potential partners

It is only when you have defined a clear strategy and vision that you will be able to carefully and correctly select potential members to join your club. Categorising potential stakeholders according to their activities will help ease this process: public authorities, business stakeholders, NGOs, universities and research centres, etc. This will allow you to decide which of these categories matter most, but also to assure equilibrium between them so that your club remains diverse and plural.

2. Identify their specific needs

Once you have listed priority targets, tailor your points for each of them, to develop an argumentation as close as possible to their own interests. It can be very time demanding, but it is a crucial step in the implementation phase of your club.



"The easiest and most useful way to reach stakeholders and potential partners is tailored communication adapted to each category of recipients and their needs/advantages. For example, political stakeholders are addressed in terms of adhesion to a common European framework, energy agencies are addressed in terms of becoming Covenant Supporters and how they can help Signatories from their area, private sector representatives are addressed in terms of direct contact with local authorities, etc."

– Romanian Covenant Club

Indeed, it will be far easier to show them how helpful you can be by assisting them in their actions as regards sustainable energy policies. If you want stakeholders to be involved, it is important to make them understand all the benefits they can get from being members of the club. You can only succeed by personalising your message and showing that you are facing similar challenges.

Moreover, such a demanding task will turn out to be extremely valuable for your coordinating actions on a long-term basis, as it will allow you to know each of your members, their specific interests as well as their added-value for the club and other partners. You will be able to easily manage and network with the different stakeholders once you know them. So do not underestimate this crucial part of your must-do list!



It's not a piece of cake!

Local elections might make it difficult to attract political representatives.



Top tip !

"Don't waste your time trying to convince elected officials that could be replaced in a couple of weeks to join the club. You'd better delay this step after the elections. You will need to adjust to frequent changes within municipalities"

– Flemish & Bulgarian Covenant Clubs

7 good reasons for stakeholders to join your Covenant Club:

- 1 Prepare and enrich their own strategy related to the "3x20" objectives.
- 2 Network to reinforce existing partnerships and create new ones.
- 3 Exchange information with political representatives.
- 4 Create synergies between the Covenant of Mayors and ongoing processes in your country as well as initiatives launched by different stakeholders.
- 5 Boost innovation and create new economic opportunities by accessing innovative financing schemes.
- 6 Seize the rare opportunity to discuss and improve the national and European policy frameworks and government measures.
- 7 Participate in practical and free of charge workshops.

Implement an efficient communication strategy

It is necessary to develop a communication strategy that you can adopt to strengthen the club's identity and attract targeted stakeholders. In this critical period of time, what matters most is arguably the **visibility of your initiative**. Among the existing organisations, whether at European, national or local level, you will have to find room for your own club. In short: **make it attractive in an extremely competitive environment!** The more renowned you are, the easier it is to secure participation of different stakeholders.

To reach this objective, use diverse communication tools to promote your club. Spread your ideas both via digital and printed media to ensure visibility at national level, i.e. send leaflets to targeted stakeholders to introduce your club and its main objectives.



Top tip !

"For information sessions, we try to use existing forums where relevant people meet (e.g. periodical meetings of civil servants and/or elected representatives), especially those (co-)organised by the members of the club. This also helps create trust towards the club, instead of the club organising everything by itself."

– Flemish Covenant Club



Top tip !

"We started to develop the 'market brand' of the Polish Covenant Club from the very beginning. We were very active in informing potential club members about this initiative during all events that we organised or participated in (by giving thematic presentations, distributing information flyers, etc.). In addition, we kept promoting the club on our webpage."

– Polish Covenant Club

Last but not least, it might be positive for your launching event to secure the **participation of a high-level speaker**. If you fail to convince that person to come to your meeting, there is still another opportunity for you: participate directly in an existing high-level meeting to launch your club. This is the experience of several existing Covenant Clubs for instance. In both cases you gain more visibility and this ensures a higher attendance.



© photo Christian Vassie

Furthermore, evolving in a competitive environment is not necessarily an obstacle but can be beneficial. Indeed, it might be interesting for you to participate in existing events to directly get in touch with potential partners. Many coordinators have used this strategy for their own clubs.

Whet the appetite & highlight your expertise

Getting visibility does not only rely on communication tools. It also depends on your own ability to organise actions and contents that are as attractive as possible considering local stakeholders' needs.

It is therefore necessary for you, as a club, to acquire the strongest knowledge in the fields the Covenant of Mayors is working on and **develop your expertise in local and European energy policies**. Local stakeholders will know they can count on you and on your know-how in case they face difficulties and will then have a strong interest in joining your club.



Top tip !

"It was important to build credibility and visibility for our organisation in the specific field of local energy policy and the Covenant of Mayors. We did that through communication on the topic (articles in our paper and digital magazines) and through a basic info session and a landmark event (Energy Day for Local Authorities)."

– Flemish Covenant Club



Achieving the Covenant of Mayors objectives can indeed be costly for municipalities and a lot of them are willing to gain access to EU funds in order to facilitate the implementation of the action plans. However, meeting European demands can represent a challenging task for many local stakeholders and your help may be greatly welcome! With such an expertise the attractiveness of your club will be significantly improved.

Besides, through participation in the implementation of their energy policies, you will have more chance – and legitimacy – to frame debates and discussions within your club, enabling this network of stakeholders to follow a path that is in line with the Covenant of Mayors objectives.



The proof is in the pudding

The most important factor in this process is certainly the content of the club. After having identified the potential members and their interests, it will be easier to determine which actions are significant.



Top tip !

"The major mobilising factors were defined to be 1) personal engagement in policy-making; 2) visibility for the region; 3) networking opportunities; 4) access to trainings; 5) EU-dimension of the activities."

– Bulgarian Covenant Club



Associate members to the club's strategy

It is necessary to ask members for their expectations during the meetings through a brief presentation of themselves and the points they would like to discuss. This will allow them to make it clear why they want to join the club, enable other participants to adjust their own position and know better the partners they will work with. More broadly, **participants will identify with the club**.

This support for your own work as a coordinator will help you refine your strategy in the organisation of your workshops. You must indeed be sure to suggest relevant and attractive topics during these working sessions and relate them to the members' needs, in addition to your own goals and those of the Covenant of Mayors.

By doing so, you secure instructive talks and exchanges and favour a positive dynamic among members. The workshops may assure relevant outcomes for them, strengthen the club and ease the adhesion of new members, thus reinforcing the assets and the visibility of the structure. You will then have to ensure, from the first meeting of your club, to take into account local demands when selecting the topics to be tackled collectively.



Top tip !

"Have well-organised meetings, with very much time for getting to know each other's actions and plans and for interaction on common or different visions on concrete Covenant of Mayors topics, in order to create a sense of equality and give a good synthesis of visions."

– Flemish Covenant Club

Ensure a smooth coordination of the club

Content matters but is not exclusive! The way you will interact with potential members is of course of prime importance: you must do your best to make this structure the members' club, to secure as much grassroots flexibility as possible for a self-sustaining process. But you shouldn't adopt a low profile either. During the launching phase in particular, your role is crucial for the success of the club. However, instead of playing a leading role, it might be useful to take a more "behind the scene" position when the club is strong enough. You should then act as a facilitator to ensure smooth multi-sectoral cooperation between members.



Top tip !

"It is the role of the coordinator to incite members to engage in discussions on burning issues related to development and implementation of SEAPs; inspire members with innovative social and technological approaches to be assessed and/or adopted; attract members' attention to Covenant-related issues with relevant news."

– Polish Covenant Club

Instead of picking the discussion topics yourself, create a framework of dialogue in which members will feel free to discuss and exchange on what they want to. You can also try to engage club members in discussions on controversial topics but without appearing as "the person in charge".

To put it short, you must act as a coordinator in the truest sense of the word: managing discussions between members to obtain concrete results while giving them room for manoeuvre.



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Mobilise key stakeholders

No matter how good you are as a coordinator, the facilitation of the club cannot lay exclusively on your shoulders: the active participation of key stakeholders is essential to keep the club dynamic. Here again, it is important to foster a sense of ownership among the members of the club.



Top tip !

"It is important to focus on so-called leading 'exemplary' municipalities with active technical and political staff. This is a good strategy to accumulate information on initiatives, events and experiences. The more information and broader the network, the better incentives to engage as a municipality."

– Baltic Sea Region Covenant Club

Giving a leading role to motivated stakeholders has many advantages:

As local stakeholders are in touch with day-to-day challenges that other members are dealing with, they have the legitimacy to define the strategy and take part in the establishment of the top priorities to be discussed. By giving them the floor, you will provide a tangible meaning to the "movement from the ground" concept, promoted by the Covenant of Mayors;

By stressing the exemplary actions of these key stakeholders, you create a healthy emulation among members through a kind of "friendly competition": if one local official is confronted with the advanced policy of one of its colleagues, he might get the urge to revamp its municipality's policies to get in line with the frontrunners. These exemplary stakeholders will inspire other members by introducing innovative tools and presenting their solutions to bypass difficulties encountered by their colleagues;

Having these partners engaged in the success of your club could greatly facilitate the adhesion of other members. The power of conviction relies very much on the image of the structure. By having well-known stakeholders already involved on your side, it will be easier to convince other partners to join the club. Moreover, concerning certain political representatives, you might not have the legitimacy to ask them to join your organisation. This is why it matters, in that context, to have local mayors aboard, as they will ease the invitation of other local officials. However, to make the best from their presence and not turn it into a burden, your club must not show any political colour; mayors involved should represent a large political spectrum in your country. Finally, these active local elected representatives could become the "ambassadors" or "spokespersons" of your club in order to represent and promote it during political and high-profile meetings.



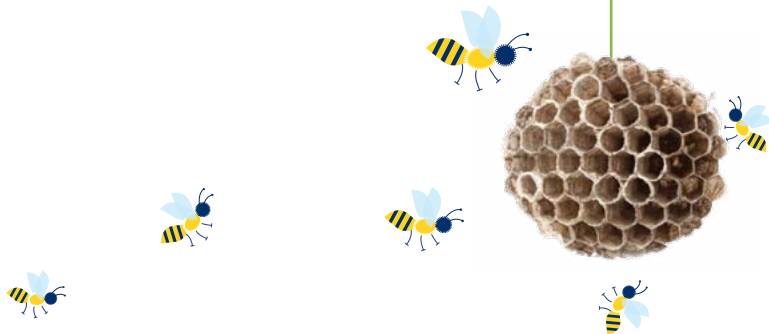
Top tip !

"Try to involve one or two well-known key stakeholders, because then you can say: This organisation is already part of the club – Why don't you join as well?"

– Austrian Covenant Club



"Alliance for Local Energy" of the French Covenant Club © photo Energy Cities



Existing Covenant Clubs

Austria
Baltic Sea Region
Bulgaria
Croatia
Flanders (Belgium)
France
Germany
Italy
The Netherlands
Poland
Romania
Slovakia
Serbia
Capital Cities of South East Europe
Sweden
Ukrainian Lviv Area



© photo Klimaatverbond



Top tip!

"Turn any ordinary event into a celebration by serving cake. It is simple but effective. It creates a festive atmosphere and has a high feel good factor!"

– Dutch Covenant Club

Tried & tested recipes

The synergy stew: 22

MAKE THE BEST OF SYNERGIES TO CONVEY KEY MESSAGES

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ORGANISE A HIGH LEVEL POLITICAL MEETING

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SECURE FUNDING FOR THE ELABORATION OF SUSTAINABLE ENERGY ACTION PLANS IN LOCAL AUTHORITIES



The synergy stew: MAKE THE BEST OF SYNERGIES TO CONVEY KEY MESSAGES

Tried and tested recipe from the Bulgarian Covenant Club



Ingredients

- 1 external event and/or an energy topic at the top of the public agenda
- 1 energy expert with political experience
- 1 elected representative with experience in the energy field
- National and EU policies and Covenant-related knowledge – as much as possible
- 2 good practices for presentation and dissemination
- Relevant partners – as many as possible



Cooking time 1 month

Serve it several times per year – check your diet (communication plan).



Process

1. Setting the table

- Get your information officer working. List the forthcoming events, talk to the organisers and follow the news. Contact journalists writing about energy issues.
- Choose and study your topic and prepare the stakeholders: make them learn something new that they will want to share. Use your communication channels and don't forget that if external channels convey your message, people will be more likely to follow it.
- Contact key energy actors and offer your cooperation. That is what synergy is all about!
- Develop strategic partnerships with other projects operating in the same area. Identify your common goals, compare your action plans and agree on concrete cooperation activities.

2. The pressure cooker

- Now you know your topic, your partners, your target audience and the external events taking place. The challenge is to bring them all together. Decide on your message, set up a slogan, test it with your partners and try it with the media via a press release.
- An event is a must. Plan it carefully, but remember that its outcome is what really matters. Decide if you will be the main organiser or if you will join your partners' initiative.
- The quality of the audience depends on the quality of the speakers. Attract them early enough and let them know what your final goal is. Think about high-level political representation or international speakers.
- Side dishes are important: add some practical sessions or items which provoke curiosity or bring on surprise. Use your partners' capacity.
- Be clear and precise about the expected results.

3. Start cooking

- Tell people what they will take away with them back home. Make them talk and share experience.
- Add the main ingredients. What are your solutions? What are those of your partners? Make it a win-win situation with respect to the opinions stated in the discussion.
- Agree upon a common solution, declare it in public and put it down in writing.

4. A good chef always cleans up the kitchen

- Follow up with an email to all participants including a summary with the sanctioned position (a declaration, official statement, etc.).
- Disseminate the results and monitor all communication channels for the coverage; don't overlook social media.
- Check if the event and the overall action covered the expectations of your partners and your speakers. Do not underestimate their feedback.
- Evaluate the results and analyse (honestly) your mistakes. Don't forget that the end of the current event is the beginning of the next one.



Taste

"Don't waste the energy of the protests!" That was the slogan of the meeting of the Bulgarian Covenant Club in March 2013, amidst the most intensive street protests against high energy bills. In all major Bulgarian cities in February-April 2013, the protests led to the resignation of the government and the dissolving of the National Assembly. At first glance, this situation seemed unhealthy for the organisation of large-scale conferences.

However, EcoEnergy and the Bulgarian Covenant Club organised a major event using the synergy effects from the initial cause for the protests and the activities of influential NGOs and research institutions. EcoEnergy found the right partners in order to convey the message that energy efficiency is the only sustainable method to reduce energy bills for the end consumers and to reach significant reductions. The event was coupled with other activities, providing practical input. A panel discussion of the keynote speakers provoked active response from the audience. Additionally, a common declaration was prepared in advance, discussed and approved.

After the meeting, the declaration was published in all accessible channels. A voluntary engagement by municipal experts for setting up a list of priority measures and sending it to the responsible ministries was declared. What is most important, the act of approving the declaration showed the firm determination of the local authorities to impose a bottom-up approach on energy issues.



Top tips

- Work according to your communication strategy but also use external events.
- Monitor the situation, attract the right keynote speakers and they will bring in the right audience.
- Your actual work starts after the event: its results are important, not the fact that it happened.



Cherry on the cake: GIVE YOUR CLUB AN AMBASSADOR

Tried and tested recipe from the Dutch & Romanian Covenant Clubs



Ingredients

- 1 to 3 dedicated, active, enthusiastic mayors/deputy mayors, willing to invest time in meetings and to act on behalf of the club and being aware of the energy context at local level
- Personal details: keep in touch with the mayors to keep them involved and updated all the time



Cooking time 1 month of intense preparation

afterwards: constant updating, improvement, activation and motivation.



Process

1. Identify a shortlist of up to 5 mayors who are already part of your club. They need to be willing to keep environment and energy on the political agenda, identify with the goals that the Covenant of Mayors is working towards, and want to invest their time in representing the national Covenant Club.
2. Contact the mayors of your shortlist, first through the civil servants. You then need to proceed by elimination, selecting the most suitable ones, or organise an election of the ambassador by the members of the Covenant Club.
3. Plan a meeting with your new ambassadors and your project team. Prepare a document that describes the strategy, activities and actions you have identified. This will serve as a lead for your meeting. Discuss their ideas. Encourage them to use their own network to recruit more signatories and by using social media such as Twitter and LinkedIn.
4. Gather at least all the key members of the club, so that the new ambassadors can introduce themselves, or combine with a bigger, maybe national event.
5. Then, make sure your ambassadors represent the club whenever there is an opportunity. Regularly provide the ambassadors with information regarding the important public events at European level they should participate in and represent the Covenant Signatories in your country. For each of their public participation prepare up-to-date and ready-to-be-used communication materials: a state-of-play of the Covenant of Mayors in your country, a presentation of the actions of the club, a list of national issues that Signatories have to address.
6. Finally, make sure you explore the possibilities using other networks your ambassadors are part of and use that relationship to work together. For each national/regional/local event where the Covenant of Mayors is involved, try to get the ambassadors to attend and represent the club.



Taste

Your ambassadors can contribute to the recruitment of new Covenant Signatories through their networks and their other positions within other organisations. They will also help to have a highly active and well-informed Covenant Club by bringing inputs to your meetings and events and can help identify interesting speakers and arrange their participation.

Your ambassadors can lobby on behalf of the Covenant Club within other relevant networks.

They can represent the club and its goals on a political level, in your own country and in Brussels. Getting in touch with all the linked European events, expressing points of view and raising issues in order to get the answer from other municipalities or strategic stakeholders at European level, helps the club get dynamic and work at its best, not only at national level, but on a larger scale.



Top tips

- Get several ambassadors to represent the club, as elected representatives have a really tight schedule. Create a strong connection among these ambassadors. If the ambassadors also come from different regions and can cover a broader territory, their inputs are even more valuable and varied.
- Make sure your ambassadors are charismatic, at ease with speaking in public and speak and understand English properly. Choose them carefully: they should be committed to representing the Covenant Signatories' common voice, points of view and interests, not only at national level, but also at European level. They should be highly involved; they should all have their Sustainable Energy Action Plans submitted, and be aware of all the easy and difficult aspects of being a Signatory.
- Act as the proxy between the ambassadors and the members, between the Covenant of Mayors Office and the ambassadors, between the Signatories and Non-Signatories.
- Keep in mind simple rules of institutional protocol and try not to break any.
- Make the story not about drawer-strategies and difficult-to-reach objectives, but about quality of life and the environment, long-term decisions and innovative choices that can lead the way.
- Adapt your communication tools and instruments to the topic you report. Whether it is a Non-Signatory, you need to seek for their general targets and highlight them in the context of the Covenant of Mayors, and so on.



Arnoud Rodenburg, Mayor of Midden-Delfland, Ambassador of the Dutch Covenant Club



Combine flavours: UNITE ALL STAKEHOLDERS IN A NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR LOCAL ENERGY

Tried and tested recipe from the French Covenant Club

Ingredients

- A management team *that will thoroughly organise the activities of the alliance and that has a neutral position towards its partners, with no political colour*
- An existing and developed network *not to start from the ground when looking for partners*
- A diversity of national energy actors
- A charter *to be signed by the partners of the alliance to formalise their commitment*
- Experts *to be invited to debates organised with and for the partners of the alliance*
- A dedicated webpage/website *where testimonies and logos of partners of the alliance are displayed*



Cooking time About 1 year

based on the experience of the “Alliance for Local Energy” of the French Covenant Club, with a partnership of 40 national energy stakeholders and for the development of a sense of belonging to this alliance among partners.

Process

1. Define a vision for your national alliance for local energy. How does it support the national Covenant Club? What are its objectives? The transition towards a new energy paradigm is supported by the Covenant of Mayors. While the decision-making process is in the hands of national governments and large energy companies, who have vested interest in privileging a centralised-supply approach, other stakeholders would benefit from a more decentralised-supply and demand-oriented paradigm. This means for consumers to pay less, for independent producers to increase their return on investment, for craftsmen and SMEs to develop refurbishment activities, for energy service companies to enlarge their market, for foresters and farmers to provide biomass, for housing and transport managers to control costs, for citizens to express their choices and for local authorities to boost local economy and collect income.
2. Unite all private, public and associative stakeholders who share this vision. Such an alliance provides stakeholders with the opportunity to formulate their expectations, to enlarge their visions and influence energy policies. It is a forum for discussion and an opportunity to make proposals. Use a charter that presents your vision and that needs to be signed by any joining stakeholder.
3. Sustain the involvement of partners in the alliance. Regular meetings and debates are as many occasions for partners from different backgrounds to share their ideas and experience. Besides, external experts can be keynote speakers at meetings of the alliance and chair a debate with partners.

4. Spread the word. You can consider that your initiative is successful when a sense of belonging to the alliance is proven among partners. Partners will share the vision of the alliance outside its framework.



Taste

In France, 40 organisations are partners of the Alliance for Local Energy of the French Covenant Club (www.energy-cities.eu/club-france): associations of local authorities, professional associations, the national federation of local energy agencies, NGOs and users' associations, training associations and clusters. This Alliance is a platform with key stakeholders that favours increasing importance of the local energy policy by valuing potential local renewable sources. It aims to :

- Highlight the importance of local energy policies in terms of economic development, reduction of fuel poverty and territorial and social cohesion;
- Act so that the territorial dimension of energy is taken into account in national energy policies and so that the role of local authorities within the national and European policy making is reinforced.
- Experience shows that convergent interests immediately emerge, regardless of the stakeholders' status. In an opinion paper, all partners have expressed their common interest towards demand-side oriented local policies and the use of renewable energy sources.

These partners have all been active in the national debate on the energy transition launched by the French Ministry for Ecology, Sustainable Development and Energy (January-July 2013). They build on a collective list of “12 good reasons to decentralise energy responsibilities” that they can use in debates.



Top tips

- Organise the process around the Covenant Signatories which will serve as catalysts.
- Establish the relation between energy, local development and employment at the centre of the initiative.
- Design the alliance as a vector for producing ideas and opinions.



© photo Energy Cities



Take-away learning: ORGANISE WEBINARS

Tried and tested recipe from the Baltic Sea Region Covenant Club

Ingredients

- 5 to 100 online participants/guests hungry for knowledge
- 1 moderator/host
- 1 to 5 speakers/waiters providing the knowledge
- 1 webinar service platform/the kitchen utensil (Adobe Connect, Megameeting, Cisco WebEx, etc.)



Cooking time Preparation time may vary

depending on the topic and your role in the webinar (presenting host or facilitating only).

Process

1. Shopping for ingredients & setting the table (Planning the event)

You can be the webinar host and only take care of the technical elements, e.g. choosing the platform, establishing the meeting link, advertising and inviting participants and speakers. Set the goal (what do you want your participants to achieve?) define the target audience clearly before inviting speakers and setting the format for the webinar similar to regular seminars.

2. The right kitchen utensils (Setting up the technology)

In order to host a webinar, one has to acquire the webinar service platform (Adobe Connect, etc.), where all participants log in with a link without needing to install the programme on their own computer. In order to participate as speaker and host of the webinar, a webcam and a quality headset is required for the audience to hear and see you properly. Most of the platforms have built-in applications such as chats, polls and various ways of raising the hand to speak, signal support or objections to the presentation, etc. The use of these applications should be balanced appropriately for creating the best interaction.

3. The Host's advice (Prepare the speakers)

Depending on the media literacy of the speakers, it may be necessary to have a test session before the actual webinar where all speakers can try the format. As the host, you have the responsibility for smooth execution by successful handling of technology, speakers and participant. The first two elements can be checked beforehand, whereas number of participants and their level of activities vary depending on the topics and mix of participants. However, this can be met to a certain extent by request to sign up beforehand, specifically invite active participants and ask them directly to prepare questions in order to keep a certain level of interaction.

4. When at the table (Executing the webinar)

Presentation tips and tricks are very similar to regular presentations. However, as the host it is possible to personally comment to the speaker during the presentation without showing this to the participants. As the host you can advise speakers on the timing or on some questions asked on the chat and in this way steer the speakers in the most relevant direction for the participants.



Taste

The Baltic Sea Region Covenant Club, faced the challenge of geographical distances causing long travel time and budget constraints for the members of the Covenant Club. These challenges are met with the opportunity to conduct meetings with the Baltic Sea Region Covenant Club as virtual meetings, which avoid travel costs and extensive time travel. Webinars provide an opportunity for all Covenant Signatories in the Baltic Sea Region to take part in knowledge and experience sharing in the context of the club. The webinar series from the club provides a combination of presentations from an expert on the topic as well as practical inputs from civil servants in Covenant signatory cities. Question and answer sessions throughout the webinar offer the opportunity to share web links and strengthen the network.

The webinars conducted by the Baltic Sea Region are done as a series of three short sessions with the Covenant implementation phase as the overall theme. It is therefore possible for participants to choose the most relevant of all three sessions and avoid repetitions or well-known topics if time is a restraint for the participant.

The webinar cannot replace traditional club meetings and does address a certain target audience with a rather high level of digital literacy. It is thus an important tool in order to establish the network and strengthen knowledge-sharing in spite of the distance.



Top tips

- Do not underestimate the preparation work: a webinar is not the easy way out of a seminar!
- Consider your level of participation according to the audience. It is important to motivate a crowd in order for them to contribute to a discussion.
- It is easy to register; nurture the interest of your participants from the beginning to the end.
- Ask specific participants to prepare questions for question & answer sessions.
- It is normal to see an attendance rate of 30-40% for open webinars (Source: Adobe).
- Connect a registration form to the calendar of the participant for a higher attendance rate.
- Send email reminders (no more than 2!): one the day before and the last one 1-3 hours before.



Cream of the crop: REWARD SUSTAINABLE ENERGY ACTION PLANS OF EXCELLENCE

Tried and tested recipe from the Italian Covenant Club

Ingredients

- A regulation for the Award *that details the conditions for participation*
- Partners, media partners, possibly a sponsor
- A technical committee *made of 3 to 4 experienced experts in the field of energy planning*
- A prestigious scientific committee *comprising 10 to 12 nationally known personalities in the field of energy and climate policies*
- A public campaign of 3 months
- A prestigious place for the Award Ceremony



Cooking time 7 months

Award Ceremony: half a day; Follow-up: 2 weeks.

Process

1. Draw up the regulation for the award by using the criteria for SEAPs of excellence. The "A+CoM" competition organised by Climate Alliance Italy takes up the criteria of the official Covenant Guidebook on "How to develop a Sustainable Energy Action Plan" dividing them into eligibility criteria and qualitative criteria. The qualitative criteria are: bottom-up data, adaptation of administrative structure, involvement of stakeholders, ambition of the city's commitment, embedding the SEAP in a learning process, communication and relation to existing plans.
2. Send it to the technical and scientific committee and ask for their points of view to reach an agreement.
3. Publish online the call for candidates and the regulation and ask your partners to relay this information. The eligible SEAPs are those that were submitted in the current year and uploaded on the Covenant of Mayors website.
4. In a campaign, all the cities that have handed in their SEAP in a given year shall be informed of the award.
5. From the applications that came in, the technical committee draws up a list of all the eligible SEAPs and writes a short evaluation of the most promising ones, as a basis for the scientific committee to select the award winners.
6. The awards are handed over to the winners during a solemn ceremony.



Taste

The campaign that invites cities and towns to apply for the award serves for the promotion of the Covenant of Mayors and directs the attention to the SEAPs as the central instrument that local governments have at their disposal to strive towards a sustainable territory. The guidelines of the Covenant of Mayors offer exhaustive instructions on how to elaborate the SEAP. The difference between the formal approval by the Commission and an award is that the latter can concentrate on qualitative elements and that SEAPs are assessed by a diverse technical committee. Besides evaluating the overall quality of the SEAP and its match with formal requirements (many candidates were asked to put the SEAP on their website in order to be eligible), A+CoM above all looks at whether the document gives indications of a process under way, instead of a product often elaborated exclusively by an external expert.

The action raises the visibility of the Covenant of Mayors and promotes Sustainable Energy Action Plans of Excellence in the hope that this will lead to a general improvement of the quality of these key documents. Indeed, they are supposed to direct the actions of the local authority and of the stakeholders in a process that will last many years, presumably decades, of stepping out of a fossil society and economy, reducing overall energy consumption and satisfying the diminishing demand with energy from renewable sources. A+CoM, by highlighting the merits of SEAPs produced in the preceding year, wants to encourage those that start elaborating their own plans.

Everybody loves awards. A+CoM proved to be a highly attractive initiative!



© photo Climate Alliance Italy



Top tips

If you follow this recipe, the action should come out fine. Of course, this only works in countries where there is a fair number of SEAPs handed in every year and the number of awards has to be commensurate with the foreseeable number of SEAPs that will be handed in.

A+COM



Food for thought:

DRAW ATTENTION THROUGH AN OPEN LETTER

Tried and tested recipe from the German Covenant Club

Ingredients

- Participants that define themselves as a group
- List of identified shortcomings of all members of the group
- Discussion forums: physical meetings and a virtual communication tool
- One contact point and responsible person ensuring the achievement of the goal



Cooking time **Several months**

For the German Covenant Club: 6 months from the first idea to the publication of the open letter.



Process

1. Identify shortcomings that affect the whole group and need to be channelled to the correct addressee(s) in order to get solved. Agree on the procedure within the group and identify a coordinator that keeps the objective of the group in view.
2. Within the group, collect and discuss shortcomings that should be addressed in the letter. Both “physical” group meetings and virtual communication are useful. A discussion list is particularly relevant since it creates a group feeling outside physical meetings and ensures that information sent via the list is shared by all participants.
3. Draw up a rough draft of the open letter to be used as a basis for discussion and agreement. Set deadlines to get the feedback and the approval from the participants for the final version of the open letter.
4. Send the public document signed by the participants to the suitable addressee and distribute it widely.



Taste

German Covenant Signatories were increasingly encountering difficulties when implementing the Covenant of Mayors' requirements. To ensure that the Covenant of Mayors remains a political initiative of prime importance and is not hindered by administrative obstacles, the German Covenant Club suggested some improvement in the form of an open letter. 34 German local authorities and 5 key stakeholders participating in the club signed the open letter.

This type of action was beneficial for the newly created Covenant Club itself, since concerted action can foster the group cohesion. The open letter made it possible to openly express concerns of the Club members and to send the message to the targeted addressee. Moreover,

the open letter was very useful in this regard, as it is often more fruitful for supporting common objectives than doing it on one's own.

A discussion list of members of the club turned out to be a useful instrument for that purpose. The list ensured that documents and comments were shared by all participants. It also contributed to building momentum for a common objective.

Through the open letter, the members of the German Covenant Club intended to draw attention to shortcomings and to contribute to improving conditions for Covenant Signatories. The reaction from the European Commission came a few months later, mentioning that a process to revise and enhance the Covenant procedures had been initiated, which was the very objective of the German Covenant Club's concerted action.



Top tips

Identify a coordinator who feels responsible and keeps the objective of the group in view during the whole process.





Share the recipe:

ONLINE PROCESS GUIDE FOR SEAP PREPARATION

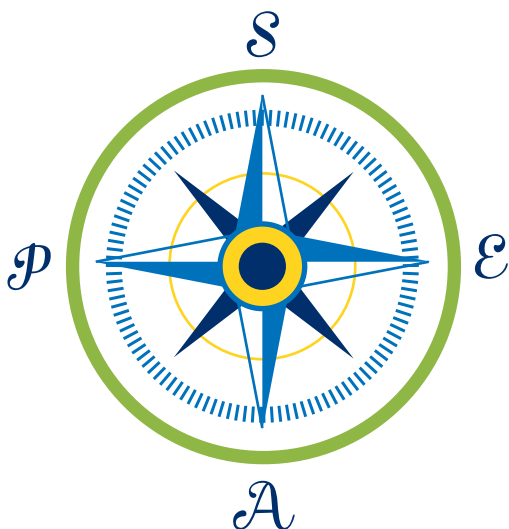
Tried and tested recipe from the Swedish Covenant Club

Ingredients

- A (preferably already well used) website that can host the process guide
- Experience of what factors usually make a successful SEAP (i.e. one that is implemented); the organisation of the work, getting commitment from elected representatives, time planning, how to set goals, how to plan actions, financing solutions, etc.
- An example of a climate strategy/SEAP, from which the users can copy paste generic information, for example the introduction about climate change and the structure of the document, if they want to
- Knowledge on the national situation and sources for gathering data for emission inventories. Link to templates for baseline emissions inventories (from the Covenant of Mayors library and other available sources)
- A template for planning actions (see example at http://www.networkingcovenantofmayors.eu/IMG/doc/seap_action_template.doc)
- Optional: a slideshare presentation explaining the SEAP process, with pictures and recorded speech
- Other useful material that you have come across



Cooking time 1 to 2 months, depending on the level of ambition.



Process

1. Read through the summary of Klimatkommunerna's process guide to get an idea of the content: http://www.networkingcovenantofmayors.eu/IMG/pdf/seap_process_guide.pdf
2. Gather a couple of wise colleagues or contacts and think together about which parts of Klimatkommunerna's example are applicable to your country and which parts need to be changed or added.
3. Make a rough sketch/chart that shows the different elements of the process guide (which are the main titles/headings, what do they contain and how do the parts fit together?).
4. Write short, clear, practical instructions and tips for each part of the guide. Try to put yourself in the user's shoes (technical staff preparing SEAPs). What would you need to know? What would save you time? For example, tips on where to find information or data are valuable and time-saving, as are tips for meeting facilitation methods and examples of what to write in emails.
5. If possible, prepare a detailed guide on where to find data for the baseline emissions inventory and monitoring. Finding out where the sources of data are for each cell in the template and providing the links there will save loads of time for the Signatories in your country.
6. Ask a few persons from the target group to test the guide and to give you feedback, and make changes accordingly.
7. Put the process guide online and spread the news! Take the chance to present it at seminars and meetings.



Taste

The online process guide saves valuable time for technical staff preparing SEAPs, by giving practical advice adapted to the situation in their country and by offering ready-made templates and text.

The methods and tips presented in the guide build upon experiences of other cities, thereby reducing the risk of "reinventing the wheel" and offering cities to learn from both good examples and mistakes that others have made before.

The guide prepares the users for difficulties that can arise along the way and how to best deal with these, which in turn increases the likelihood of getting the actions in the SEAP implemented.



Top tips

Keep it simple and practical! No one will want to use the guide if it is very lengthy, abstract or has a complicated language.



Cooking in progress: SET UP AN ONLINE ENERGY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM IN PUBLIC BUILDINGS FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Tried and tested recipe from the Romanian Covenant Club



Ingredients

- 1 city responsible for the management of the Energy Management System (data collection, training of users, data inspection, upgrading etc.)
- 1 specialist for data interpretation and technical analysis
- 1 computer expert for optimising the online Energy Management System
- 1 energy manager in each public buildings for collecting and introducing data into the Energy Management System



Cooking time 1 year

Process

1. Set up the online Energy Management System.
2. For each Covenant Signatory you will offer your support to collect the list of buildings to be introduced in the Energy Management System and the names of the energy managers (officially assigned).
3. Create user accounts.
4. Collect official technical data of the buildings (heated surface, number of users, working hours, installations, etc.).
5. Collect consumption data (energy and water bills for 12 months).
6. Train and support the energy manager to introduce the data into the online system.
7. Organise site visits to the buildings to analyse and understand the technical data.
8. Prepare a final report of the analysed year (12 months) that includes measures and recommendations for improvement of energy and water consumption in the analysed buildings.
9. Plan buildings' consumption and budget for the following year in the Energy Management System.



Taste

At local level in Romania, implementing the Energy Management System resulted in an overall understanding of energy efficiency, especially after seeing the energy savings potential allowed by rational use of energy and the long-term benefits of investing in eco-friendly solutions.

For each building, the Energy Management System stores information on total volume, energy and water consumption data from utility bills and meter reading, number of users, etc. The Energy Management System generates the following reports based on the stored data:

- Energy Consumption Index in kWh/m²/year,
- Water Consumption Index in cubic meter/person,
- Comparative reports between similar buildings,
- Ranking of buildings,
- Data for needs analysis, etc.

The Energy Management System enables the municipality to:

- Monitor energy consumption of public buildings,
- Make consumption and budget forecasts,
- Prioritise the investments towards the buildings in poor condition,
- Save money through energy efficiency,
- Raise citizens' awareness of the concept of rational energy use,
- Define its Sustainable Energy Action Plan.

Based on energy and water data in the Energy Management System, a municipal database was created. This database was the first of its kind in Romania. It now serves as a benchmarking tool and is a valuable source of technical information to improve energy and water consumption in public buildings. The Energy Management System made it easy for the municipality to define and approve its Sustainable Energy Action Plan.



Top tips

- The building manager's and the energy manager's commitment, as well as the availability of data, are critical to the successful implementation of the Energy Management System.
- An energy manager should be officially/formally appointed in each public building.
- The primary data entered into the Energy Management System should be double-checked (by the energy manager and by the person responsible for the current Energy Management System).
- The results of the buildings' analysis in the Energy Management System should be widely disseminated (towards local authorities, the managers, users of the buildings, citizens, etc.).



World Café: CHOOSE CREATIVE FACILITATION METHODS FOR YOUR CLUB MEETINGS

Tried and tested recipe from the Austrian Covenant Club

Ingredients

- 15 to 100 participants – 5-10 per World Café table
- A suitable room – with the necessary number of tables and a pleasant atmosphere!
- Paper and pens for each table
- A general topic (e.g. “How to reach energy autonomy in municipalities”) and a specific sub-topic for each table (e.g. “Sustainable mobility strategies for municipalities”)
- A moderator and time keeper for the World Café
- One host for each table – who is familiar with the topic or an expert in the field
- A flip chart – for the final presentation of the main results of each table
- One rapporteur per table – who presents the main results of each table in the final presentation (this person may be the host of the table, but has not to)
- A time frame of about 1 to 1,5 hours

Cooking time 2 to 3 months

Process

1. Preparation

Think about a general topic for the World Café. Considering the number of participants, think of some specific sub-topics to be discussed in small groups of 5 to a maximum of 10 people. These sub-topics should relate to the general topic of the World Café. Then, appoint a host for each table. This person should be familiar with the topics, because s/he has to start the discussion and has to keep the discussion lively. The room should allow for a convenient communication among the groups. Alternatively you can use several rooms which are close to each other. The rooms have to be equipped with enough tables and chairs, and each table has to be equipped with paper and pens. Each participant should have the possibility to write down his/her thoughts.

2. Implementation

The World Café itself is divided into several rounds (2 to 4, depending on the available time). At the beginning, the moderator explains the method, the general topic and aims, the specific sub-topic(s) as well as the time schedule. Moreover s/he introduces the hosts of the tables. Then, the participants can choose one topic they want to discuss first and they sit at the corresponding table. The hosts start the discussions in parallel within each table. It is the

host's duty to interrupt participants who talk too much and to motivate the quiet ones to talk. After a period of time of 20-30 minutes, the moderator asks participants to switch the tables. The host of the table welcomes the new “visitors” with a summary of the previous group's discussion. After each round, the moderator asks participants to change tables, and after the last round the hosts are asked to present the main results of the discussions in the plenary session.

3. Outputs

For the wrap-up of the World Café, the hosts should be asked to sum up the main results for uploading them online. The weblink should be sent out to all participants and other interested people.

Taste



Climate Alliance Austria has already organised several World Cafés, and they have always been well-rated parts in the evaluations of the participants who especially appreciate the possibility to discuss with others in a friendly atmosphere. A great advantage of the World Cafés, in comparison to workshops for example, is the fact that you have the possibility to discuss various topics with a lot of different people. The World Café is a very efficient tool to get new inputs and boost creativity as the host always starts the new round with a summary of the previous one. It is also important to have a final presentation so that the participants can be informed of the main results of the tables they have not been to.



The main target of World Cafés is to bring a specific group of people together and provide them with a platform for discussion and sharing. Our experience shows that participants appreciate the method and the atmosphere of World Cafés.

As a conclusion, World Cafés have proven to be an efficient tool for motivating municipal representatives and decision-makers to exchange on a specific topic and bring in their experience and know-how.

Top tips

Organise the World Café well in advance: for a successful World Café you need (a) suitable room(s), a professional facilitator, professional hosts for the tables, interesting topics and a good time management. If possible, organise a preparatory meeting with the facilitator and all table-hosts in order to tell them about the method of the World Café and the importance of keeping in the time frame. Last but not least: invite the potential attendees well ahead of the event. The same goes for all other methods: the success of a World Café depends on the quality and the number of participants!



Covenant Roundtable: ORGANISE A HIGH LEVEL POLITICAL MEETING

Tried and tested recipe from the Flemish Covenant Club

Ingredients

- 4 mayors of Covenant local authorities of different size
- The mayors should be preferably well-known at national level and they should surely belong to different major political parties.
- 20 to 100 participants, all exclusively mayors or deputy mayors
 - A moderator with knowledge of the Covenant of Mayors and of the different local authorities of the panel
 - A setting that emphasizes the roundtable character, preferably not the classical setting



Cooking time 10 to 15 hours

Process

1. Detect suitable members for the panel, contact them, clarify the objectives, get to know their experience in the Covenant of Mayors and explain how the session will be organised.
2. Prepare the content of the panel discussion.
3. Promote the event towards the target group: elected representatives from local authorities.



© photo VVSG



Taste

The roundtable organised by the Flemish Covenant Club brought together 60 mayors and elected representatives (out of the 308 local authorities of the Flemish region).

The impact in terms of new Covenant Signatories is not directly measurable, but the event was successful as part of a global strategy aimed at developing the initiative!

The session started with an inspiring speech on the Covenant of Mayors by the mayor of the city of Ghent, where the event took place. Then it continued with an interview by the moderator mixed with discussion among members of the panel. This gave the participants a good overview of the motivation for and positive advantages of the Covenant of Mayors and also on difficulties they may face and how to overcome them.

The whole communication on the roundtable (individual invitations for executive councils, articles in widespread and well-read digital magazines, etc.) was a good way to put the Covenant of Mayors in the spotlight and the minds of local elected representatives, so that it would reinforce subsequent actions (such as plans and actions of provinces or inter-municipal cooperation to get their local authorities sign the Covenant of Mayors).



Top tips

To convince suitable members to join the panel: first, have a nationally well-known mayor with a high-level position ready to take part as a speaker; it can help convince others.

To get enough participants:

- Embed the roundtable in a bigger event that is very relevant to local elected representatives interested in energy policy (in this case Energy Day for local authorities with more than 500 participants and about 30 sessions on local energy policy).

- Give participants a feeling of exclusiveness and advantage: the roundtable was exclusively open to executive local politicians (unlike the bigger event); they shall receive a personal invitation and pay no entrance fee. Prepare an attendance list to be signed.

- If possible, have other organisations help you with mobilising potential participants. For the Flemish Covenant Club, one major civil society organisation had some of its regional officials use their local political contacts to mobilise participants.

Interaction: Allocate more than one hour to the Covenant roundtable in order to have enough time to interact with the participants and to know their reactions and views on the Covenant of Mayors.



Invite national bodies to your table: SECURE FUNDING FOR THE ELABORATION OF SUSTAINABLE ENERGY ACTION PLANS IN LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Tried and tested recipe from the Polish and Slovak Covenant Clubs



Ingredients

- Clear rules and conditions for participation of different stakeholder groups in the club's activities
- Active national Covenant Supporters and partners with good contacts at national level and media partners
- Representatives of ministries and financial institutions participating in the events focused on Covenant Signatories' needs
- Events devoted to the development and implementation of Sustainable Energy Action Plans (SEAP) gathering both representatives of local authorities (current and potential Covenant Signatories) and representatives of other organisations that can support them in the process of sustainable energy planning and achieving Covenant goals
- Meetings and consultations with financial institutions
- Communication materials e.g. in for the Polish Covenant Club: CD-ROM containing information on the Covenant of Mayors, presentations from the meetings or workshops, guidebook: "Guidelines on how to develop a SEAP" translated into the national language, presentations prepared by the Covenant of Mayors Office, best practices and useful links.



Cooking time 1 year

from the date of the first meeting with the representatives from the Government Body / Managing Authority.

This action needs intense consultation with the board of experts, preparation and constant update of communication channels (direct communication, e-mail, participation in experts' group meetings at national level).



Process

1. Explore the needs and preferences of Covenant Signatories willing to join this initiative by conducting a survey among the participants in the conference focused on the national and European contexts of sustainable energy management and climate protection at local level.
2. Identify partners with good contacts at national level. For example, the Union of Towns and Cities of Slovakia (UTCS) became the promoter of the Covenant Club activities towards national and local authorities. The UTCS has a long experience of collaboration with the ministries and government bodies and also created a sustainable communication platform towards the state administration and local governments.

3. Identify the Government bodies / Managing Authorities which would be interested to participate in the Covenant Club activities taking into account their national agenda and responsibilities. These activities aim to increase their capacity in the field of Baseline Emissions Inventory and SEAPs as well as using existing opportunities to finance sustainable energy projects.



Collaboration and fruitful dialogue between your Covenant Club and the Managing Authorities can help:

- promote the Covenant of Mayors and its benefits at national level;
- promote the role of the Covenant Club with regard to sustainable energy and climate policy at national level;
- improve the perception of the Covenant of Mayors by civil servants at national level.

4. Send to selected Government Bodies / Managing Authorities a message focusing on the specific vision of the Covenant Club: it is a communication and cooperation platform for trans-sectoral collaboration supporting local authorities in reaching the Covenant of Mayors' objectives. Ask them to sign the Covenant Club charter.

The communication strategy with a focus on the Government Bodies / Managing Authorities could include:

- asking them about their expectations of the Covenant Club;
- helping them promote their activities at national level, especially among local authorities;
- giving them the floor to express their interests and opinions during the Covenant Club meetings.

5. Foster discussion at national level about the preparation of the Covenant Club action plan that is necessary to boost the Covenant of Mayors implementation. This step includes organising informal meetings of the Covenant Club that focus on synergy among activities carried out by government bodies, local authorities and other key stakeholders.

6. Participate in existing national events and present the Covenant of Mayors and consultations on the criteria and rules of the financing programmes.

... for the Polish Covenant Club

The most spectacular effect was the fruitful cooperation with the National Fund of Environmental Protection and Water Management which finally became the first Covenant Coordinator in Poland.

Special flavour: a specific programme financing the SEAP development was launched in Poland. This will support the Covenant Signatories in fulfilling their commitments and encourage other local authorities to join this initiative.

... for the Slovak Covenant Club

Thanks to wide communication on the Covenant of Mayors and roundtable discussions during the meetings of the Slovak Covenant Club, progress was made in the perception of the Covenant of Mayors at national level. The charter of the Slovak Covenant Club was signed by the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Transport, Construction and Regional Development and the Ministry of Environment. Thanks to the participation of government bodies in the Slovak Covenant Club and thanks to a strong cooperation with the Ministry of Economy and the Slovak Innovation Energy Agency, priorities supporting the Covenant of Mayors and the Sustainable Energy Action Plans have been included in the draft of the new Operational Programme "Quality of Environment" for the 2014-2020 programming period.

Top tips

➤ Involve representatives of national financial institutions and ministries as speakers or workshop participants. This will make them more aware of the local authorities' needs and the necessity to support them.

➤ Do not get discouraged even if it seems that the officials do not promptly reply to your invitations or suggestions. In order to be successful, it is essential to stay in touch, patiently and constantly inform about organised events and present the best examples of national leading local authorities. When Covenant Signatories achieve success or are awarded in the field of local energy policy, do not forget to widely communicate on it.

➤ For better dissemination, work with the office representing the local authorities of your country in Brussels. Your involvement and visibility are very important for convincing the financial institutions and ministries to support Covenant Signatories.

➤ Organise positive lobbying at national level to support Covenant Signatories through the creation of special financing schemes.

Feedback from the ground on the Covenant of Mayors implementation

in Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria,
France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands,
Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden,
the Baltic Sea Region



*European mayors highlight the bottom-up
dimension of the Covenant of Mayors*

Representatives of national Covenant Clubs, Brussels, 11 October 2012 © photo Energy Cities

Part 2

Foreword

This part provides a feedback from the ground on the progress of the Covenant implementation within the target countries and regions of the NET-COM project partners: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden, the Baltic Sea Region.

It is based on national observations describing the perception of the Covenant of Mayors and factors influencing its implementation. Project partners drew on their experiences with the implementation of the initiative and carried out a survey among Covenant Signatories, Covenant Coordinators and Supporters and Non-Signatories in their country.

The results show that the visibility of the Covenant has increased in all countries since 2012. However, the drivers and obstacles which influence the implementation of the Covenant of Mayors and the perceived negative and positive aspects are recurrent. The political impact of the Covenant of Mayors in the municipality and at European level is the initiative's uncontested positive aspect and driver. On the other hand, the technocratic image and high reporting workload is still perceived as an obstacle for the Covenant implementation. The willingness and vigour to work on these obstacles and drivers have to be kept up.

The last section encompasses recommendations from the local level to strengthen the implementation of the Covenant of Mayors. We hope that the feedback presented here will continue to improve the Covenant implementation and will contribute to the further success of the initiative.

Observations made by the Covenant actors

Positive aspects of the Covenant of Mayors

The **visibility of the Covenant of Mayors has increased** in all target countries and regions. This is, amongst others, related to the efforts of the Covenant Clubs. The Covenant Clubs have been active in forging new alliances with different kinds of partners (city networks, governmental bodies, etc.) and in providing space for dialogue and information exchange. More support to the signatories could be given, the national and European context for implementing the Covenant of Mayors improved and the awareness of the Covenant of Mayors increased. As a result, all target countries boast new signatories and many of them have additional Covenant Supporters and new Territorial Coordinators.

The **political impact of the Covenant of Mayors in the municipality** remains the uncontested positive aspect. The Covenant objectives provide a clear goal for local energy and climate policy and help to create awareness on the importance of integrated energy strategies and climate change mitigation. Municipal actors can refer to the commitments made in the framework of the Covenant of Mayors to push certain actions forward and to not lose track. Local authorities that are already well engaged in sustainable energy and climate issues use the signing of the Covenant to gain new momentum.



Launch of the German Covenant Club – Heidelberg, October 2011
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The **political impact of the Covenant of Mayors at European level** continues to be important for signatories as well. Through the Covenant of Mayors the crucial role of local authorities in creating sustainable local economies, shifting toward sustainable energy sources, energy sobriety and mitigating the effects of climate change is recognised. Additionally, the Covenant of Mayors is perceived as a prestigious European movement receiving a lot of attention, thus giving the local authorities' actions a European dimension and visibility. Finally some signatories consider the Covenant of Mayors an opportunity to help to shape the political framework conditions for local authorities at European level.

Using a **uniform method to develop a local Sustainable Energy Action Plan (SEAP)** is another uncontested positive aspect acknowledged by signatories. The SEAP methodology provides a common European framework and is guidance for those municipalities which have gathered little experience in planning and implementing local environmental policies. Additionally, the Baseline Emission Inventory (BEI), which is part of the SEAP, is regarded as making the need for improvements in energy efficiency evident. The technical support in the framework of the Covenant of Mayors is perceived by some signatories as an important help in implementing their commitments.

Many signatories continue to highlight the positive effect that the Covenant of Mayors has on **funding opportunities**. The fact that local authorities have a well-structured SEAP helps to prepare competitive project proposals in the framework of different programmes supported by the European Union. Furthermore, there are more and more signatories that have successfully obtained funding to effectively implement their municipal energy plans. Some signatories highlight that the EU funds in the new programming period starting in 2014 focus on energy aspects and expect that the Covenant of Mayors will help to benefit from these funds.

The **exchange of experience** at national and European level is again raised by signatories as a benefit of the Covenant of Mayors. The Covenant events give the opportunity to share best practices, to forge partnerships and to get informed.

In the feedback collected for this report, a main focus was set on the role of the Covenant of Mayors in **activating citizens and local stakeholders**. Municipalities increasingly recognise that the support and input from citizens is valuable for the Covenant implementation, last but not least in times of local authorities' limited financial resources.



Covenant Supporters and Coordinators share the feedback from the ground on the Covenant of Mayors implementation, October 2013
© photo Christian Vassie

Negative aspects of the Covenant of Mayors

The high workload associated with the SEAP development contributes to a **technocratic image of the initiative**. The perception comes up that the Covenant of Mayors is a matter of bureaucratic reporting rather than a strong, common, local initiative for change. The difficulties faced in gathering data for the BEI add on to this.

Furthermore, the Covenant of Mayors is perceived as **inflexible** and not adapted to everyday realities. An example for this is the necessity for a city council approval for the CO₂ reduction target of 2020, even if the municipality has a city council approval for a more ambitious long term CO₂ reduction target. This results in an administrative burden for the local authorities concerned. The revised SEAP template offers the possibility to include a longer term CO₂ reduction target, but the municipality still needs the 2020 target and the city council approval for it to receive approval of its SEAP by the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission (JRC).

Moreover some signatories wish for more **technical support and a more fluid communication with the Covenant of Mayors Office (CoMO) and JRC**. This is reflected in the fact that the JRC has faulted SEAP documents that have been submitted, and that signatories have even temporarily been excluded from the initiative without clear explanations. Long waiting periods for the feedback of the Joint Research Centre add on to this, although some Covenant actors feel that these periods have shortened.

Although the access to funding is perceived by many local authorities as a positive aspect of the Covenant of Mayors some local authorities are not satisfied with the existing funding opportunities, especially smaller towns. This and the above mentioned workload and requirements connected with the Covenant of Mayors and missing technical support, lead to signatories from small towns to believe that the initiative is only **fit for larger cities**, which have the appropriate staff and access to funding. Additionally, **the short term benefits of the Covenant of Mayors are often perceived as being too little**, making it difficult to convince cities, small or large, to join.

Finally, the compatibility of the Covenant of Mayors as well as synergies among the Covenant of Mayors and other existing initiatives and programmes at European level are not clear for several municipalities.

Factors influencing the Covenant implementation

Obstacles encountered

Despite the efforts of the Covenant Clubs, in some countries the **work on energy and climate related issues continues to play a minor role** on the political agenda. Some of the local authorities, experts and citizens continue to not see the advantages of tackling climate and energy related issues. In Bulgaria, for example, the focus is still on energy prices and energy supplies. In Poland, many local authorities are afraid that their citizens will not approve undertaking serious commitments in the field of energy consumption and CO₂ reduction (for example in the framework of the Covenant of Mayors) as a considerable part of the citizens believe that this will slow down local economy, reduce the comfort of living and generate unnecessary costs.

Some municipalities continue to be afraid that despite their efforts **they will not be able to meet the CO₂ target in 2020** and it is also unclear to them what will happen if they do not meet the target. This hinders some municipalities from joining the Covenant of Mayors.

For the elaboration of a BEI there is a **lack of experienced technical staff** and especially the problem with little **availability of data**. The strict privacy rules in Sweden continue being a barrier for the elaboration of the inventory. In some countries the Covenant Coordinators have managed to find solutions for the collection of data for the BEI. In Flanders, the regional administration has been convinced to support the municipalities in terms of data delivery. In Austria, the Covenant Coordinator is adapting its CO₂ assessment tool for Austrian municipalities

to automatically transfer the results into the BEI and is developing a guidebook on data acquisition. Also in the Netherlands, the Covenant Coordinator has made available an online tool to calculate CO₂ emissions.

The local authorities continue to **lack financial and human resources and support from the national and European level to elaborate and implement the SEAPs**. Generally there is a lack of EU and national funding possibilities especially for small municipalities. The lack of tools and opportunities for **small municipalities** has often been stated in the feedback collected for this report. Additionally, local authorities are discouraged to apply to the existing funds because of the extended procedures and the large competition.

Even though more and more documents are being translated, the **language barrier** continues to be perceived negatively by the signatories. Some Covenant Coordinators, as for example in Poland, have started to translate the Covenant information material themselves.

Some countries, like Slovakia and Italy, regard the **little involvement of the public** as an obstacle for making the Covenant of Mayors successful in the long term. It is not enough to sign the Covenant and elaborate SEAP, but one has to find a way to implement and elaborate this plan in cooperation with local actors.

Finally, an obstacle which has come up in the feedback is the **changing national political contexts** that influence the implementation of local energy action negatively but also positively. This was specifically mentioned by Slovakia, Poland, Flanders, Bulgaria and Sweden.

Drivers to join the Covenant of Mayors

Naturally the drivers to join the Covenant of Mayors reflect the perceived positive aspects of the initiative.

As stated before, in countries in which municipalities have little experience in developing and implementing sustainable energy policies, some local authorities perceive the Covenant of Mayors as important and useful. It gives the municipalities a **framework and roadmap** to plan and implement activities oriented at reducing CO₂ emissions.

In countries where many municipalities have already been active in energy and climate related issues, the Covenant of Mayors is not necessarily regarded as an additional workload. Quite the opposite, these municipalities can build on their experience and the Covenant of Mayors can be used to give **existing activities a further boost** and to initiate new activities.

The impact of the **signature of the Covenant of Mayors on the local authority's image** continues to be an important driver. Many municipalities are willing to be a part of the prestigious European movement and are happy that their actions gain visibility at national and international level.

Since the establishment of the Covenant Clubs, the Covenant of Mayors is increasingly seen as a good opportunity to **exchange experience** with other municipalities engaged in the Covenant and to become inspired by their actions.

The Covenant of Mayors is regarded by some local authorities and citizens as bearing the **possibility of achieving additional benefits while improving the energy situation** in a municipality e.g. improving quality of life of its citizens, creating new jobs, improving local economy, improving safety (e.g. by modernisation of public lighting), modernising local infrastructure, improving quality of the local environment which will make the city more attractive both to its citizens and potential investors.

Even though gaining access to EU funding is not considered that easy by the signatories, they expect that having signed the Covenant of Mayors and prepared a SEAP will help them to be **better prepared to access these funds**, especially in connection to the new EU Programming Period 2014 -2020, with a strong focus on energy related issues.



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Recommendations to enhance the Covenant implementation

The Covenant actors have been asked to formulate recommendations addressing the Covenant of Mayors Office and the JRC, recommendations directed to the European and the national level and finally strategic recommendations.

Simplify the elaboration and implementation of the SEAP and the reporting process

The elaboration of the SEAP has to be simplified. Hopefully the new template will bring considerable improvements. If the SEAP elaboration continues as it is, the signatories ask for more time.

Also, the evaluation process of the SEAPs has to be simplified. The reports submitted by the local authorities that are often associated with a high administrative and time burden should be consulted for further assessments besides the evaluation by the JRC. Furthermore, it should be made clearer what the Covenant commitments encompass. For example, a transparent checklist of all documents to submit is highly recommended. The JRC's many years of experience in the evaluation of SEAPs could enrich these checklists. The time needed to inform signatories about the result of the evaluation has been reduced and should be reduced further.

The reporting workload is regarded by the signatories as being too high. Hopefully the new monitoring template might reduce some of this workload. In general, a better communication between the CoMO and the Covenant Supporters should be aimed at.

Finally the signatories recommend tools and processes that can fit better smaller municipalities.

Improve funding opportunities at European level

This recommendation is important as gaining access to financing opportunities is a strong driver for cities to join the Covenant of Mayors. European financial instruments for municipalities should be linked directly to the Covenant of Mayors to better convey the advantages to join the Covenant of Mayors. Furthermore, there is a need for stronger financial support addressing especially signatories implementing their SEAP. The application process for funding programmes could be facilitated for municipalities who signed the Covenant of Mayors for instance by recognition of submitted and approved SEAPs and waiver of the requirement of additional data. Existing European funding opportunities need to be improved: municipal treasurers have to be involved in the development of financial programmes for municipalities to ensure the usability and manageability of future programmes. Longer deadlines for applications for funds are needed since project development takes a lot of time. Funding schemes that address small municipalities would be helpful. More information on other innovative ways of funding, for instance Energy Performance Contracting, is wished for by Covenant actors.

National support to the Covenant of Mayors initiative

Even though in some target countries Covenant Clubs managed to lobby the governmental institutions, there continues to be a big need for instruments, investments, supporting structures, new legislation from the national government, to enhance the implementation of the Covenant of Mayors. It is important that national authorities recognise Covenant Signatories as key partners in the implementation of national energy policies and actions.

More territorial actors in the Covenant of Mayors

Since the creation of the Covenant Clubs the networking with territorial actors has improved in many countries. More organisations and governmental institutions are part or cooperate with the network and intermunicipal cooperation, for example in Flanders, could be started. Cooperation with local stakeholders and other networks has proven to be fruitful. One lesson learnt is that providing sufficient support to the signatories contributes more to the extension of the initiative than inviting municipalities to sign. This development has to be kept up. The territorial actors should be given more visibility and encouraged to get engaged.

Promoting the Covenant of Mayors

There is a need for more active involvement of citizens in the development and implementation of local energy policies and actions. Energy-aware and committed citizens will encourage local authorities to join the CoM and support them in fulfilling their commitments. Therefore, it is important to promote the CoM as a way to improve quality of life. The signatories, on the other hand, are the living proof that the implementation of CO₂ reduction measures in order to reach ambitious CO₂ reduction goals can work. Their promotion of the Covenant of Mayors should be ongoing.

More synergy

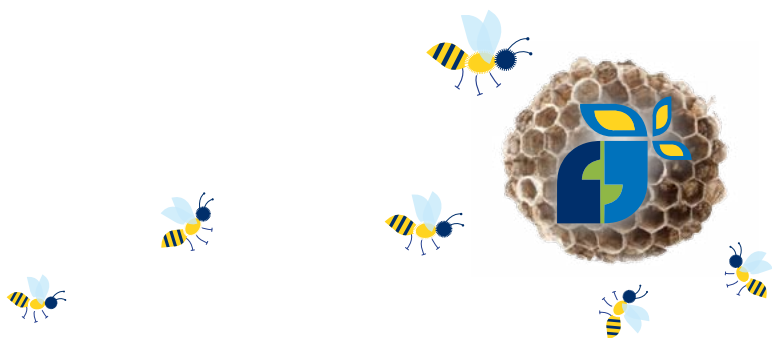
A better synergy of the different initiatives at national and European level is needed. This would unite efforts to reduce CO₂ emissions and open up new positive opportunities for all actors involved. Moreover, a better cooperation amongst initiatives could decrease the workload of municipalities that are involved in different initiatives.



Dialogue with national Covenant Club representatives, October 2013
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Networking the Covenant of Mayors

The experience from the Covenant Clubs has shown the importance of networking and bringing together different actors. These bring with them different capacities, expertise, contacts and can support the signatories and/ or the successful implementation of the Covenant of Mayors. Recommendations are to embed meetings in other events in order to attract new municipalities to the Covenant of Mayors. Another possibility is to embed the Covenant Club itself in existing clubs/organisations, as a strategy to attract new municipalities to the Covenant of Mayors and to benefit from the public awareness of the organisation.



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You want to create a Covenant Club? Benefit from the experience of existing Clubs!



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