

Covenant Supporters 'User Guide'

An overview of the key roles and responsibilities undertaken by networks of local and regional authorities

September 2012

COMMITTED AS SUPPORTER OF THE COVENANT OF MAYORS, WHAT'S NEXT?

You are officially part of the “Covenant family” as Covenant Supporter. If you wonder where to start from, how to support your members, how to use the Extranet or find useful information, we invite you to go through these pages. We hope you will find in this manual relevant guidance and tips to better support to your signatories members.

How to implement my commitments as Covenant Supporter?

The [role of Covenant Supporter](#) is described on the Covenant of Mayors website and in details in the agreement signed with the European Commission. We advise you to consider the different tasks within **an overall and coherent strategy**, instead of implementing one-off actions which are not linked to each other. The list of actions provided below is non exhaustive and aims at giving you inspiration for your future activities.

a) Provide visibility to your commitments

Objective: publicly acknowledge your commitment to the Covenant of Mayors vis-à-vis your members and the “outside world”.

Integrate the Covenant into the political strategy of your organisation

A Covenant Supporter commits to “publicly recognise the Covenant as a key element of its policy”, which means that the Covenant should be integrated into the overall strategy of the association/network and used to support its political objectives.

- The Covenant of Mayors is a concrete demonstration of what local and regional authorities can do in the field of climate and energy, and a successful example of multi-level governance, so why not using it to help your organisation achieving its political goals?

In its position papers related to [climate](#) and [energy](#) issues, aimed at influencing the EU decision-making process, the [Council of European Municipalities and Regions](#) is systematically referring to the Covenant as a shining example of the contribution of local and regional authorities to the EU policy on energy, thus raising awareness about the Covenant achievements and justifying the need for greater support for local authorities' efforts towards sustainable energy.

Appoint a “Covenant main contact”

The “Covenant main contact” is the person within your organisation who is responsible for the coordination of your activities as Supporter, and the main point of contact on the Covenant vis-à-vis its colleagues, your members and the Covenant of Mayors Office. She/he is the guarantor of the consistency of your strategy and the visibility of your commitments.

- It is essential that the contact details of the Covenant main contact are specified on the profile of your organisation on the Covenant website. Without this information, the Covenant of Mayors Office will not be able to contact you and send you relevant information.

Complete your profile on the Covenant website

In conformity with the agreement signed with the European Commission, a profile has been created on the Covenant website. Your organisation is invited to fill it in and regularly update it. Your profile is crucial as it is the main tool for exchanging information about your activities and those of your members, providing visibility to the commitment of your organisation and showcasing your efforts. The website of the Covenant will be nicer with your input, and the initiative stronger if you are contributing to feeding the Covenant website!



Make the Covenant visible on your website

Your website is the best place to display information about your commitment as Covenant Supporter, and to promote the initiative towards your members and other visitors.

- You can for example put the **logo of the Covenant on your homepage**, with a link to the Covenant website. The [logo is available in all EU languages](#) and can be uploaded from the website, together with graphical guidelines for its use.
- Another option is to **create a section dedicated to the Covenant** on your own website, providing relevant information about the initiative but also your activities as Supporter. This solution is very valuable as it allows for a tailored communication in your own language and adapted to your own situation.



The [Union of Italian Provinces](#) (UPI) launched a dedicated [website](#) on the Covenant of Mayors in Italy, providing extensive and up-to-date information about the Covenant, including regular news and information about administrative requirements, technical and financial support, and relevant events.

- Do not forget to include this link on your Covenant profile!

b) Promote the Covenant of Mayors

Objective: make the Covenant of Mayors known in your country/region, inform your members about the initiative and encourage them to join.

In order to achieve greater adhesion to the Covenant, you could ponder the following questions: which actions can I undertake to make the Covenant attractive to my members? How can I target the ones which are reluctant? Where are the barriers? How can I promote the Covenant in a such a way that it is complying with the national context and the priorities of my members?

Improve your knowledge of the Covenant

In order to efficiently promote the Covenant and be a strong ally of the Covenant of Mayors Office in this task, it is important that you understand well the objectives and functioning of the initiative. In particular, you should be able to explain to your members what the commitments of a Covenant Signatory are, how they can join the initiative and where they can find general or technical information.

- This information is provided in details and partly in your own language on the website of the Covenant. In particular, you can find there a general presentation of the [initiative and its added value](#), the different [commitments of a signatory](#), information about the [adhesion process](#), a section on [frequently asked questions](#) and a library with [general and technical documents](#).
- For more complex or technical questions you are not able to answer, you can direct the enquiries to the [Covenant of Mayors Office](#).
- Please regularly visit the Covenant website to keep abreast of the latest developments of the initiative. Useful information is also provided in the monthly newsletter for signatories and the **newsletter for Coordinators and Supporters**, and through **RSS feeds**, **Facebook** and **Twitter**.

Twitter

To exchange
via your mobile

Facebook

To become fan
of the Covenant page

Newsletters

To subscribe to the
monthly newsletter

Rss feeds

To receive news
in real-time

Make use of the Covenant promotional material and mobilise your own communication tools

The Covenant of Mayors Office regularly develops [documentation](#) which you can use for the promotion of the Covenant. In particular, the **brochure of the Covenant of Mayors** provides a general overview of the initiative and is soon to be available in all 23 EU languages. **Thematic leaflets** focus on specific issues, such as “baseline emission inventories and sustainable energy actions plans” or “innovative financial schemes”. Depending on the topic, they are only available in English or translated into several or all EU languages. For example, a thematic [leaflet focusing on the role of Supporting Structures](#) was published in 2010, featuring a range of examples of the kind of support regions, provinces, energy agencies, networks of local and regional authorities provide to Covenant Signatories.

- These documents could be made **available on your website and disseminated** to your members. They could also be **translated** into your own language in order to be

accessible to more municipalities. You could consider **adapting** some of the documents to your national/regional context, so that your members better understand how the Covenant can be integrated with the national / regional policy or legislative framework.

- In order to share your initiatives with other Covenant stakeholders, you are invited to send translated or adapted documents to support@eumayors.eu. They will be added to the Library section of the Covenant website.
- In addition to the promotional materials developed by the Covenant of Mayors Office, your various communication tools can serve as a support to promote the Covenant: website, newsletters, Extranet, blogs, brochures, posters, etc.



The [Romanian Energy-Cities Network](#) (OER) developed a [brochure](#) presenting the Covenant of Mayors in Romanian, which also explains which role the network plays in the initiative.

The [Local Council's Association Malta](#) uses not only its [website](#), but also its monthly e-newsletter and mailing lists to mobilise Maltese Councils. The Secretary General of the association describes the strategy of his association in the [September 2011 issue of the Covenant Newsletter](#).

Organise and/or identify relevant events

In order to directly reach your members, you could consider organising events where the Covenant can be presented and discussed. This would be the opportunity to provide relevant information, attract new signatories, foster an exchange of experiences and/or provide concrete support to your members. Such events can have a political or a technical dimension (e.g.: general assemblies; workshops; working groups; etc.).

- Please inform the Covenant of Mayors Office if you wish to publish your event on the online agenda or seek additional contribution. Your events can be **announced on the Covenant website on the [Agenda section](#)**, you just have to send all information to events@eumayors.eu. The Covenant of Mayors Office is also very interested in relevant outcomes of such events.
- You could also help the Covenant of Mayors Office in identifying events where the Covenant could be promoted, and consider participating yourself in such events.



In 2009, the [National association of Portuguese Municipalities](#) and the [Coordinamento Agende 21 Locali Italiane](#) dedicated a relevant part of their General Assembly to the Covenant of Mayors. Since such events generally gather a majority of their members, both elected representatives and technical staff, and attracting media attention at national level, the two Covenant Supporters were guaranteed to provide significant visibility to the Covenant. Both events have been promoted on the Covenant of Mayors website.

c) Support your members in the implementation of the Covenant

Objective: help your members fulfilling their commitments by providing active support and relevant advice, and potentially coordinating their actions.

Provide administrative support

The level of administrative support that you can provide to your members depends of your own competences and capacities, but it is in any case a **crucial dimension of the contribution of Covenant Supporters**. You can be the interface between your members and the Covenant of Mayors Office (CoMO), thus assisting the CoMO with managing individual requests that could be better dealt with at national/regional level. This is also a way for you to be better involved in the activities of your members, thus strengthening your cooperation with them.

- This administrative support can take **various forms**: support your members in the adhesion process to the Covenant; in the creation of their profile; in the completion of the Sustainable Energy Action Plans (SEAP) templates, etc. You can also be very helpful in reminding them about the deadlines they have to respect to avoid being suspended from the Covenant.

The [Polish Network Energie-Cités](#) (PNEC) regularly contacts the CoMO to keep it informed of the state of implementation of the Covenant by its members. The association, with the agreement of its members, has also access to their profile on the Covenant website, in order to help them filling in their online SEAP template.

Provide technical support

Here again, the technical support you can provide is **essential to the successful implementation of the Covenant** by your members. This support can be direct or indirect, depending on your own competences and capacities. For instance, you could:

- **Help mobilise financial support**: information about potential financing sources (national financing programmes, structural funds, etc.), negotiation with the national government to receive financial support for sustainable energy projects, etc.
- **Develop methodologies and technical tools or inform about such tools**: involvement in national projects; information about existing tools; signature of a cooperation agreement with specialised organisation (e.g.: national or regional energy agency, consultants, etc.).
- **Organise technical meetings and working groups**: events addressing specific issues to improve your signatories' capacities and knowledge (e.g. in the fields of public buildings, street lighting, transport, public procurement, energy contracting, etc.), in presence of relevant experts.
- **Facilitate the flow of information, good practices** and initiatives implemented by your members, etc.

Please note that scientific and methodological tools and documents (e.g.: SEAP guidebook; report on existing methodology and tools; SEAP template; report on financing energy efficiency, etc.) have been jointly developed by the CoMO and the Joint Research Centre of

the European Commission and are available in several EU languages on the [Covenant website](#).

The [Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities](#) (KS) and the [Union of Bulgarian Black Sea Local Authorities](#) (UBBSLA), two Covenant Supporters, have initiated a [collaboration project](#) aiming at developing capacity for energy and climate planning in municipalities on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast, based on experience from Norwegian municipalities. The project includes the refurbishment of pilot buildings, energy audits, the installation of energy monitoring systems and a computer programme for local energy planning in the Bulgarian cities. In addition, the Norwegian Guidelines for Energy and Climate Planning have been translated into Bulgarian to help support the Bulgarian municipalities in their development of energy and climate plans.

The three Bulgarian municipalities involved, Varna, Dobrich and Bourgas, are Covenant Signatories, as well as the five municipalities in Sør-Østerdal in Norway. Therefore, this project, with a €900,000 funding envelope from the Norwegian Cooperation Programme with Bulgaria, supports the Bulgarian municipalities' implementation of the Covenant.

Inform about potential synergies with the national context

As a European, national or regional association of local and regional authorities, you are well aware of the legislative, regulatory and financial context in which your members operate. You are thus able to identify how the Covenant could fit in this context, and how it could complement existing national initiatives.

- The Covenant of Mayors should not appear as a new obligation coming “from Brussels” but as a way to launch or reinforce initiatives on sustainable energy at regional, national or international levels.

The [Association of Local Authorities in Lithuania](#) organised, together with ManagEnergy, the Kaunas Regional Energy Agency (KREA) and the Covenant of Mayors Office, a [workshop](#) aimed at building the capacities of Lithuanian mayors and their staff in energy planning, including the preparation of SEAPs and their links with the Lithuanian renewable energy action plan. The [workshop](#) was also the opportunity to inform participants about existing financing schemes for sustainable energy projects, in Lithuania and in other EU Member States. In addition, the Association signed a cooperation agreement with KREA, which will provide technical support to their members engaged in the Covenant.

[Energy Cities](#) launched the European Project “[Networking the Covenant of Mayors](#)” (NETCOM) aimed at facilitating **networking** processes at local, national and European levels so as to ensure a smooth and successful implementation of Covenant of Mayors commitments. The project also addresses a strong need to benchmark, innovate and boost networking and communication activities among European and national/regional networks of local authorities. The capacities of networks to communicate and network in more effective and innovative ways will be improved through networks' benchmarking & peer review and training sessions, testing of innovative tools and methods and their wide dissemination to other networks and local authorities. Led by Energy Cities, this project involves 10 other official Covenant Supporters.


Provide information about European projects and get involved

The [section “Funding instruments”](#) of the Covenant website presents a non-exhaustive list of financial programmes and initiatives available for Covenant signatories. These programmes and initiatives offer unique opportunities to finance SEAPs’ implementation. As Covenant Supporter, you can inform your members about such opportunities. You can also get involved in European projects related to the Covenant of Mayors, to offer a better support to your members.




[ICLEI, Local Governments for sustainability](#), is a Covenant Supporter involved in the “[Energy for Mayors](#)” project, which is financed by the Intelligent Energy Europe Programme of the EU. The project aimed to build Covenant Coordinators and Supporters’ capacities through the organisation of specific trainings, development and dissemination of a toolbox, exchange of experience and networking.

The project “Young Energies for Europe” has been launched in the framework of the ‘Leonardo da Vinci’ Lifelong Learning Programme by a Covenant Supporter from Italy, the « [Patto Territoriale per l’Occupazione Nord Barese Ofantino](#) ». This project offers students the opportunity to be trained abroad in the energy sector. 71 young citizens from 11 Italian cities will get the opportunity to follow a training programme in one of the three hosting countries: Spain, Ireland and Belgium.

 *Covenant signatories are on the lookout for funding opportunities, crucial to develop their SEAPs and finance the actions featured in it. To find out how they develop innovative financing schemes by tapping into different resources, from local, national or European level, read the collection of case studies listed in the [Covenant Thematic leaflet on financing](#).*

Organise exchanges of experience on the implementation of the Covenant

Several thousands of municipalities, provinces and regions are involved in the Covenant and interested in getting in touch with their counter-parts in their country or in other countries to exchange and learn from each other (peer review). As Covenant Supporter, you can trigger synergies and common initiatives among municipalities involved in the Covenant, but also with the ones which are not yet part of the initiative. The role of facilitating contacts and exchanges of knowledge between municipalities is certainly very close to the role your association is already playing.

-  This exchange of experience could take place within your own working groups, during specific events you may organise, or in the context of dedicated projects. Inviting Covenant Signatories to present their own experience may be a good idea to inspire your members: mayors or local technicians are more likely to understand the presentation of colleagues operating in the same environment!

- The Covenant of Mayors Office regularly organises events aimed at fostering exchanges of experience on the implementation of the Covenant (thematic discussion groups, webinars, etc.). As Covenant Supporter, you can disseminate the information about these events to your members and encourage them to participate.

Promote the Covenant in national / European fora

A project co-funded by the German Ministry for Environment enables two Covenant Supporters to twin for the transfer of experience in preparing SEAP. [Climate Alliance](#) and the [Association of Energy-Efficient Cities of Ukraine](#) have joined forces to adapt and translate several tools, used among members of the Climate Alliance, such as the ECORegion and CLIMATE COMPASS, for the Ukrainian environment. They also offer regional capacity building workshops and trainings for Ukrainian municipalities. One key element of this project is that it brings Covenant Signatories in Germany and Ukraine together: during workshops, study tours and internships Ukrainian cities exchange knowledge with their German counterparts.

A Covenant Supporter should think of promoting the Covenant as a supporting framework for local and regional action on energy and climate, thus worth receiving tangible support, when representing the interests of its members at national and/or European levels.

- You can for instance try to **obtain more technical and financial support** from the national government, the national energy agency or other key stakeholders (e.g.: banks, enterprises, etc.).
- **National and regional media** could be relevant allies to consider and to involve.

Help Signatories organise awareness-raising events (local energy days)

One of the commitments of a Covenant Supporter is to support its members in the organisation of local energy days, which are events organised by Covenant Signatories as part of their official commitments, with the aim of raising public awareness of the opportunities offered by a more intelligent use of energy.

- Please remind your members that they can upload information about their local energy days on the website of the Covenant and/or inform the Covenant of Mayors Office (events@eumayors.eu) about them.

d) Liaise with the Covenant of Mayors Office

Objective: play an intermediary role between your members and the Covenant of Mayors Office.

Your organisation has indeed a direct and personal link with its members, so is able to reach them more effectively. You are an important ally of the CoMO to overcome the language, administrative or cultural barriers and to facilitate its work, considering the high number of signatories and limited staff resources.

Play an intermediary role between the Covenant of Mayors Office and your members

The CoMO is particularly interested in receiving feedback on the implementation of the Covenant in your country and among your members, in order to better assess difficulties, needs and successes. This would help the CoMO come up with adequate solutions and make the Covenant evolve in a way which is more in line with signatories' expectations. The CoMO is also interested in the best practices of your members, which could be promoted as Benchmarks of Excellence on the Covenant website, in the Covenant publications or events.

- In order to share information with the CoMO, you can either use the Newsfeed forum available from your profile or send an e-mail to support@eumayors.eu.
- The CoMO also expects your support for administrative tasks (e.g.: reminding your members about the deadlines for fulfilling their commitments or asking them to fill-in their one-line profile)

Provide feedback on the implementation of your commitments within the Covenant

The last commitment listed in the Covenant Supporter agreement refers to the regular reporting about the activities undertaken by your organisation.

- This frequent reporting should mainly be organised through your profile, and in particular the **Newsfeed**, or through direct contacts with the Covenant Supporters helpdesk of the CoMO (support@eumayors.eu).
- Besides, the CoMO will send you each year a **monitoring report** which you will be invited to complete in order to inform us about your achievements. The results will be carefully examined by the CoMO and communicated to the European Commission.

🔔 In case of repeated inaction and non-compliance with your commitments, the European Commission can decide to terminate its cooperation agreement with you.

Participate in events dedicated to Covenant Supporters

The CoMO regularly organises events targeting Covenant Coordinators and Supporters, addressing issues of particular interest to them and/or providing them with the opportunity to share their experience with the Covenant community. These events are called "**discussion groups**" and can be organised either in Brussels or through the Internet ("**webinars**").

- Participating in such events is useful to get in touch with other Covenant Supporters, and receive guidance on the Covenant from the CoMO. The events are announced on the Covenant website and in the Covenant newsletter for Coordinators and Supporters.