

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

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“Zero fossil fuel cities”, “positive energy territories”, “passive” 100% renewable districts: local authorities are on the move, setting long-term objectives and shaping a future that is both sustainable and desirable, and acting practically through various initiatives.

The failures of the International Climate Conferences have shown the limits of inter-state multilateralism in a complex world where the balance of power is undergoing deep changes. The problems that humankind has to jointly solve in order to ensure its long-term survival in a peaceful world are more prominent than ever. We know what the solutions are but the decisions are always postponed to a later date. Any negative signal is rapidly interpreted by those who prefer the status quo to risking their short-term interests.

And yet, there have never been so many local initiatives aimed at breaking with the past and placing territories on a different trajectory. Many cities and towns have set themselves ambitious change objectives combining energy, climate and local economic development policies.

Today, more than 4,300 mayors representing over 170 million inhabitants and a CO₂ emission saving potential of 150 million tonnes have signed the Covenant of Mayors. Such a collection of large cities (including 30 capital cities), smaller towns and even villages as well as provinces, regions, associations, agencies and ministries supporting the Covenant of Mayors is totally unprecedented.

A unique and dynamic multi-level movement is born showing Europe can also be built from the ground.

In November 2011, during the 3rd Covenant of Mayors Ceremony, Evelyne Huytebroek, Minister for Energy and Environment of Brussels-Capital, backed by mayors from numerous countries, proposed the Assembly to vote a declaration to the UN Climate Change Conference in Durban. Beyond its content, this symbolic vote of Mayors in the Hemicycle of the European Parliament opened a new way to investigate.

Today in Brussels, we, 20 mayors representing 20 countries, come together to highlight the role of local authorities in the successful achievement of the European “3x20” objectives by 2020.

We strongly believe that this initiative proves essential to entirely give to the Covenant of Mayors its ground up political dimension and empower local authorities to lead the way in community sustainable energy development and local climate protection.

We call on other mayors representing fellow signatories in their countries to join our group and actively represent the Covenant of Mayors at national and European levels.