

THE ROLE OF REGIONS AND PROVINCES TO SUPPORT THE PARTICIPATION OF SMALL LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN THE COVENANT OF MAYORS

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Overview

The European Commission's Covenant of Mayors (CoM) is the mainstream European movement involving voluntary local authorities (LAs) in the development and implementation of sustainable energy policies. This bottom-up EU initiative, initially meant to cover "20 – 30 of European largest and most pioneering cities", today counts more than 5500 signatory local authorities, which have committed to reduce the levels of CO₂ emissions in their territories by at least 20% by 2020, through the implementation of a Sustainable Energy Action Plan (SEAP). More than 3600 signatories have already submitted their SEAP to the European Commission.

Around 65% of these 3600 SEAPs have been submitted by local authorities below 10 000 inhabitants.

In order to comply with the commitments foreseen by the adhesion to the Covenant of Mayors, local authorities can also benefit from the support offered by other decentralised authorities (such as regions and provinces), which can sign up as Covenant Territorial Coordinators (CTCs). CTCs offer strategic guidance, financial and technical support to those CoM signatories which lack necessary skills or resources to fulfil their requirements.

Methods

Based on the data gathered from submitted Baseline Emission Inventories (BEIs) and SEAPs, this paper aims at analysing the share of energy consumption and CO₂ emissions represented by signatories below 10 000 inhabitants on total submitted BEIs and SEAPs.

The analysis will then seek to make a comparison between SEAPs developed with the support of CTCs and those without, to identify possible differences (e.g. in terms of organisational aspects, sectors addressed by the plan, etc...): some case studies from Italy, Spain and Belgium will be analysed in greater details, to see whether and in which ways the support from a CTC has helped local authorities to deliver more promising SEAPs.

The paper will also identify how many small local authorities have signed up to the initiative but have not yet submitted a SEAP, aiming at establishing in which geographical areas a participation of new CTCs could boost a successful implementation of the initiative.

Results

The efforts and resources required to a small local authority to comply with the CoM requirements are very high if compared to the share it represents in terms of energy consumption and CO₂ emissions. This paper shows that climate change has to be fought at different levels of governance: small local

authorities (< 10 000 inhabitants) can give their contribution in the most efficient way if they are supported by other bodies such as regions and provinces acting as CTCs. CTCs can help to create economies of scale both when drafting SEAPs and when implementing the actions.

Conclusions

To make the most of the contribution of small local authorities to the Covenant of Mayors' target in a more efficient way, the European Commission should adopt strategies to reach and foster an active participation of an increasing number of CTCs. The role of CTCs is essential in spreading the culture of sustainable energy planning and designing tailor made solutions for small local authorities.

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