

Renovating Europe: Mayors team up to better voice aspirations towards European and national institutions

The **Renovate Europe Day**, held yesterday in Brussels, was the occasion to explore the local economic and social benefits of investing in the renovation of Europe's building stock. It provided an excellent exchange opportunity for mayors, local elected representatives and private companies to seek synergies in this area, one of the major sectors in which local authorities have a key role to play. Speaking at the event, Heidelberg's Mayor Eckart Würzner highlighted the contribution of cities to overall sustainable development objectives: *"There have never been so many local initiatives aimed at breaking with the past and placing territories on a different trajectory. Many cities and villages have set themselves ambitious change objectives combining energy, climate and local economic development policies"*.

In this context, a group of **20 city leaders** engaged in the EU [Covenant of Mayors](#) initiative met to highlight the bottom-up dimension of this movement and represent the interests and aspirations of local authorities committed to the Covenant climate and energy objectives. They acted as national representatives of the "Covenant of Mayors Clubs", which – supported by the EU project [NET-COM](#) - bring together signatory cities within a same country.

Legislative and regulatory frameworks, including cohesion policy priorities, are mostly set by governing entities at national level. In this context, cities operating within the same country have a keen interest in joining forces and speaking with one voice towards national and EU institutions.

While member states are legally committed to EU climate and energy targets, local authorities involved in the Covenant of Mayors do so on a voluntary basis, and thus need to be given the means required to fulfil their ambitions. Commenting on this topic, Deputy Mayor of the Romanian city of Timisoara, Dan Diaconu said that these clubs and networking platforms would help *"influence the way in which funds are allocated to local sustainable energy projects and help us reach the national and European objectives of the Covenant of Mayors"*.

In addition, these platforms present genuine opportunities to create country-wide alliances of public, private and associative actors engaged in the so-called energy transition. Emphasizing the networking opportunities presented by the Clubs, Mayor of Växjö, Bo Frank, said that *"exchanging experience with other municipalities in Sweden helps us find solutions to transport issues, energy problems, etc. What works in Växjö will also work in Malmö"*.

Way ahead

To confirm this new trend and strengthen the bottom-up dimension of the Covenant of Mayors, **a group of 40 mayors** are expected to emerge as representatives of the Covenant in their countries. They are set to meet EU presidents and decision-makers on the occasion of the next Covenant of Mayors annual ceremony to be organised in the beginning of 2013.

Representing over 1,000 towns and cities in 30 countries, Energy Cities is the **European Association of local authorities** inventing their energy future. It is the leader of the Covenant of Mayors Office and coordinator of the NET-COM project.

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