

The Covenant of Mayors

Sustainable Energy Action Plans Guidance elements

The towns and cities signing up to the Covenant of Mayors commit to submit within the year following adhesion a Sustainable Energy Action Plan (SEAP), explaining how they intend to reach the objectives in terms of reduction of CO2 emissions for 2020.

The present document intends to provide basic guidance elements on Sustainable Energy Action Plans.

Is there any template to use for preparing the Sustainable Energy Action Plan?

No, the Commission is aware of the various systems and methodologies available to the local decision makers. There is no intention whatsoever of favouring a methodology over the others. The Commission intends anyway launching a comprehensive initiative of collecting all available methodologies and facilitating contact between methodology developers and cities. An independent scientific evaluation exercise can also take place during 2009, in order to provide further support to the cities.

Which is the scope of the Sustainable Energy Action Plan?

Since the Covenant's commitments concern the whole geographical area of the city/town/region, the Sustainable Energy Action Plan should include actions concerning both the public and private sectors in the city. In principle, it is anticipated that most Sustainable Energy Action Plan will include actions in the following sectors:

- Built environment, including new buildings and major refurbishment
- Urban equipment
- Transport and urban mobility
- Citizen and, in general, civil society participation
- Intelligent energy behaviour, by citizens, consumers and businesses
- Land planning

Industrial policy, not being normally the competence of municipalities, is not included in most cases. Reductions of GHG emissions due to industry delocalisation are explicitly excluded.

The local government has limited responsibility/competence....

The Covenant of Mayors concerns the action at local level within the competence of the local governments. As mentioned in the appendix to the Covenant, it is expected that the local governments will take action in several or all their possible roles:

- consumer and service provider
- planner, developer and regulator
- advisor, motivator and a model
- producer and supplier

Then it is of the utmost interest that the Sustainable Energy Action Plan is presented and debated by the civil society. Sustainable Energy Action Plans with high degree of citizen participation are the most likely to get continuity in the long-term and to succeed in getting the objectives.

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The concept of 'Supporting Structures' is an open invitation for regional and national authorities to provide support to the Covenant of Mayors

Which is the baseline year for calculating the CO2 emissions?

The one decided by the local government. The reason for this lays on the fact that there are three possible cases for cities/regions willing to sign up to the Covenant:

- cities having prepared an action plan with concrete commitments in the past. We need to respect their own baselines; otherwise we'd require an extraordinary effort to the pioneers!
- cities interested to commit, but not disposing of an inventory of emissions. The baseline year needs to be the inventory's year, for obvious reasons
- cities having an inventory of emissions, willing to sign up but not having yet prepared the action plan. In this case the most logic thing would be to refer to 2005 as baseline year, but since it is the same than for the EU as a whole in the energy package

We hope with this approach to provide more flexibility and less barriers to the cities, while enhancing the Covenant's key point: the adoption of concrete measures to reduce our footprint

What if the EU commitments are modified as a consequence of the IPCC negotiations at Copenhagen?

The EU committed to reduce unilaterally and unconditionally its emissions by 20%, and stated that, if our major partners in the world commit to limit their emissions, we could go for a 30% reduction. In this case a revision of the objectives of the Covenant of Mayors could be analysed and decided by the local governments.

Population changes are relevant in many cities, is it possible to estimate CO2 emissions on a per capita basis?

Yes

How are the emissions calculated on a primary energy basis or referred to final energy demand?

Given the nature and objective of the Covenant of Mayors, it would not be consistent to calculate emissions on a primary energy basis. Citizens and cities cannot act on their centralised energy supply but have the power to modify their energy demand patterns. Emissions should then be calculated as part of the city's environmental footprint.

Each Member State has different national objectives concerning reduction of GHG emissions. Why all cities have a common 20% objective?

Because the scope of the action is different. Differences in endogenous energy potentials, energy sources or economic wealth are less relevant to fix objectives in terms of improving the built environment or the energy behaviour at local level.



European Commission