Press release

Innovative governance models, long term financing and participative engagements:
The threefold solution to a successful low energy strategy

“Through the Covenant of Mayors, provinces, regions and city networks help local governments act as motors of the European economy” says Domènec Cucurull, Head of Environment Department from the Province of Barcelona. This topic will be further elaborated on the occasion of an event “Innovative and practical approaches on how to make the Covenant of Mayors a success” to be held in Brussels on the afternoon of 21 June 2012, in the context of the European Sustainable Energy Week.

Multi-level governance is indeed one of the key themes to be discussed together with participative engagement and the creation of genuine “local energy communities” and networking practices at national levels. Ahead of the Rio+20 Summit, the event will seek to showcase the benefits of local low energy and carbon strategies in terms of employment opportunities, improved quality of life and increased energy independence.

Co-organised by FEDARENE, Climate Alliance, ICLEI Europe and Energy Cities, this joint event is to shed light on some interesting European projects and the multi-sided roles of sub-national governments and associations involved in the Covenant of Mayors initiative. The main message is that all local governments can engage in climate and energy policy – and that signing the Covenant of Mayors makes sense: “together we are stronger!”

Innovative governance models are key to picking up the pace, ensuring cooperation and coordination on critical elements. But not only good governance is at stake. This session will also debate current and potential EU funding instruments to drive the transition to a green urban economy and for energy efficiency in particular. The EU Budget 2014-2020 will set the course for the next years and now is the time for local authorities to formulate concrete needs on how the funding instruments need to be shaped. “Securing long term financing is crucial to accelerate the shift towards a green economy. This is the only way to ensure that cities can implement their ambitious Sustainable Energy Action Plans (SEAPs)”, says Joachim Lorenz, permanent city councilor from Munich and the President of Climate Alliance.

The active participation of elected members, colleagues, citizens and stakeholders is essential to successfully achieve the above mentioned processes. ENGAGE, a pan-European communications initiative, will show how a city-wide poster campaign allows city inhabitants to make personal energy-saving pledges and contribute to the cities own energy and carbon objectives. This event will show that collaboration – at all levels and among different actors – can lead to multiple positive results, rewards and benefits.
In order to stimulate exchange and concrete proposals related to financing, Climate Alliance has launched a working group on financing on 24 May in the context of its annual Conference in St Gallen (CH). The objective of the working group is twofold: it will exchange on the local financing solutions and mechanisms which will allow cities and towns work on energy policy and continue investing in this field; and seek to influence the new EU budget 2014-2020 in particular showing the funding needs of local authorities in energy and climate related actions.

This is a moment when the new EU budget is widely discussed in Europe. Now is the time for local authorities to formulate concrete needs on how the funding instruments should be shaped. The new budget already has a strong focus on energy and climate related funding. However, it is crucial to demonstrate the strong need for energy and climate related funding, so that the high ambitions remain within the budget proposal also after the debates carried out within the European Parliament and the Council. It is also necessary to ensure that the funding mechanisms are accessible and feasible for local authorities.

The working group will:
- Collect and exchange on examples of innovative funding solutions;
- Provide regular briefings on open calls related to key energy and climate related funding schemes;
- Respond to consultations and actively promoting innovative funding solutions towards the European Commission; and
- Participate in discussions currently on-going at the European Parliament related to the different proposals for the EU budget 2014-2020.

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The “Climate Alliance of European Cities with the Indigenous Rainforest Peoples” is the largest European city network committed to climate protection and preservation of the tropical rainforests. Climate Alliance has over 1,600 members from 18 European countries and helps them to achieve their voluntary commitments to reduce CO₂ emissions by ten percent every five years. Climate Alliance advises local authorities on the implementation of climate protection strategies and develops tools for monitoring energy consumption and CO₂ emissions. To preserve the tropical rainforests, Climate Alliance cooperates with Indigenous rainforest peoples. Their partner in this endeavour is COICA, the umbrella organisation of the nine national Indigenous associations of the Amazon region.