Covenant of Mayors
www.eumayors.eu

Covenant Supporters are levers for action!

Report on the activities of Covenant Supporters
2011 – 2012

Covenant Supporters are European, national or regional networks and associations of local and regional authorities which engage in the Covenant of Mayors to promote the initiative and support the commitments of their participating members. One of the commitments in the agreement signed between Covenant Supporters and the European Commission is "to report to the Covenant of Mayors' Office on the actions undertaken in the framework of the Covenant".

For the year 2011-2012, this reporting exercise was launched in the spring 2012 and targeted the 59 Covenant Supporters which had been involved in the Covenant for more than one year[1]. In total, **51 responses** to the questionnaire developed by the Covenant of Mayors' Office have been received (i.e. **participation rate of 86%)**[2].

This reports provides an overview of the implementation of the commitments made by Covenant Supporters (I) and some proposals for future activities of the Covenant of Mayors' Office (II).

I – Implementation of the Covenant Supporters' commitments

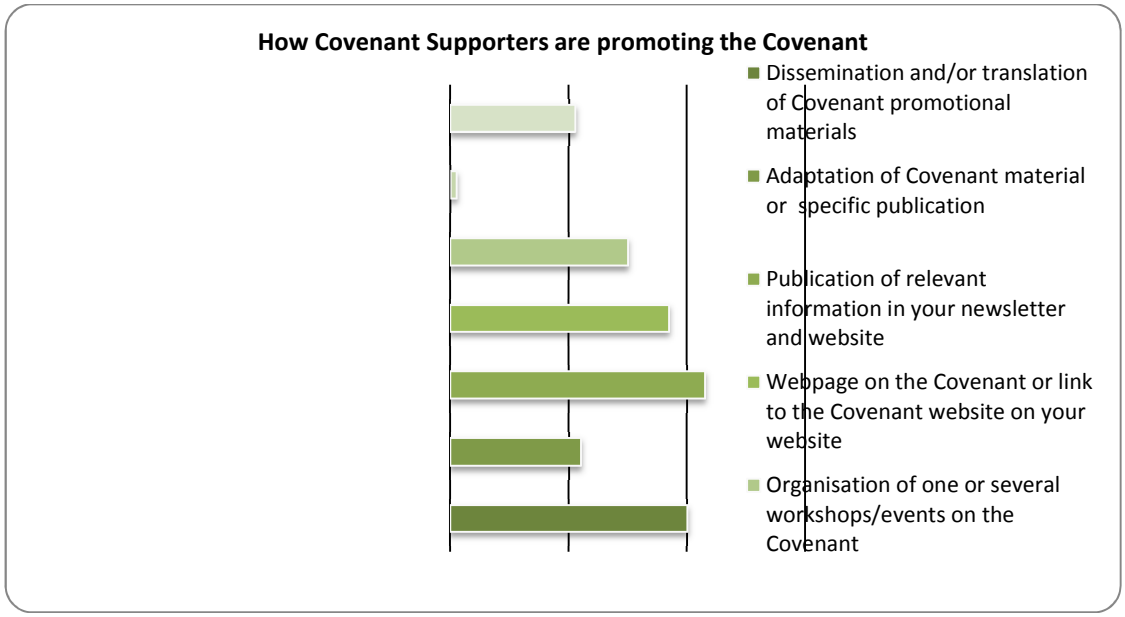
This section outlines the main results of the questionnaire, according to the various commitments of Covenant Supporters. The majority of respondents is taking actions, mainly corresponding to their own specificities (having a European dimension, strong political activities, being a technical association, etc.).

1. Promotion of the Covenant: strong potential to leverage the information and gather municipalities

The wide majority of the Covenant Supporters is actively promoting the initiative. More than three quarters of the respondents are publishing information about the Covenant, or disseminating it, via their website or their own communication means – using traditional or innovative ways of communication.

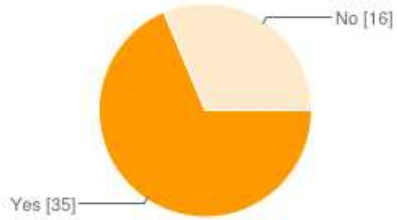
[1] As of December 2012, 77 Supporters are participating in the Covenant.

[2] The following Covenant Supporters did not respond to the Covenant of Mayors' Office's requests to participate: POLIS, Association of Polish Cities, Association of French Urban Communities, Cittaslow international, Regional Association of Municipalities of Bulgaria, Forum of Local Authorities of the Community of Portuguese speaking Countries, E.G.T.C. AMPHICTYONY; LEGAUTONOMIE - Associazione autonomie locale. In some cases, the language barrier or a change of staff explains a lack of response, even if this is not a justification for not participating. No exclusion was decided for the non-compliance with this commitment.



69% of the respondents have already organised one or several events on the Covenant. According to the figures provided, this represented **more than 220 events gathering in total between 13000 and 15000 participants!**

Have you already organised one or several events on the Covenant?

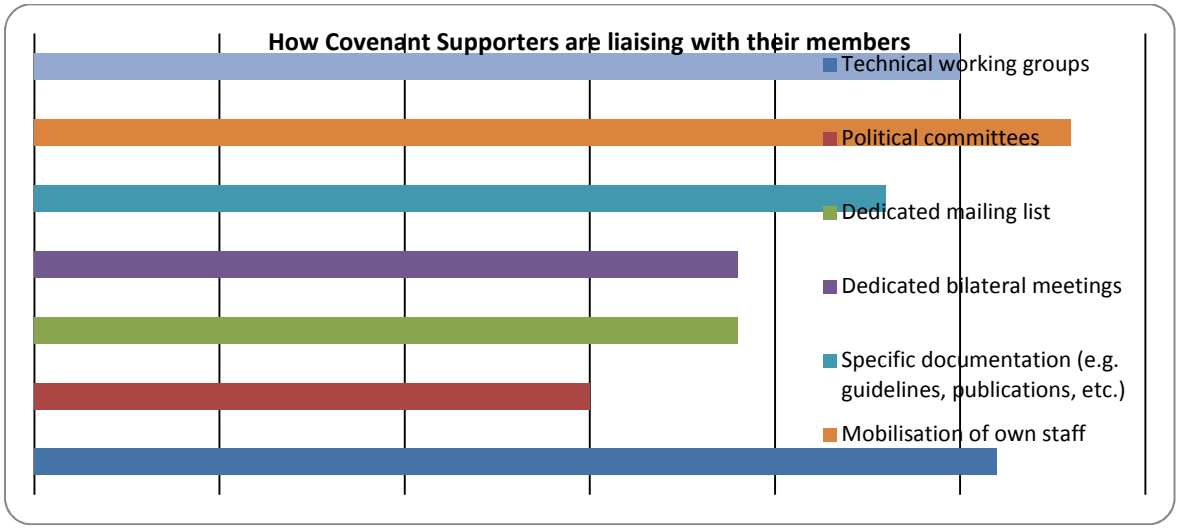


Such events aimed at providing information about the Covenant and attracting new signatories (32 respondents), fostering an exchange of experience between members (28 respondents) and provide technical support to their members (22 respondents).

Making the Covenant known by local and regional authorities is the strength of Covenant Supporters. As networks, they can reach out a high number of municipalities and regions, and amplify the information and knowledge about the initiative.

2. Support to the implementation of the Covenant and the experience-sharing between municipalities

Putting their members in contact is another asset of Covenant Supporters and a raison d'être of networks of local and regional authorities. Covenant Supporters deploy a **vast array of options** to support the exchange of experiences and resources between their members and help them implementing their commitments.



The most relevant outcome is **the technical support** that some Covenant Supporters are providing to their members. More than half of the respondents mentioned that they were providing such support through capacity-building, training, study visits, development of methodologies or guidelines (e.g. for the development of SEAPs, for mitigating greenhouse gas emissions, development of SEAP, etc). This happens **mainly in the framework of national or EU-funded projects.**

The precious role of projects

61% of the respondents reported participating in projects, at national or EU level. This involvement allows them supporting more effectively their members engaged in the Covenant. In general, such projects aim at attracting new signatories, supporting the exchange of good practices, providing technical support, including methodologies and tools, and addressing issues covered by the Covenant (ex. awareness raising of citizens, reduction of energy consumption, innovation, data availability, etc.). **These projects are greatly contributing to the improvement of the quality of the Sustainable energy action plans and raising the chances of signatories to fulfill their commitments.**

Moreover, responses provided by Covenant Supporters prove that **the Covenant is often an impulse to start projects at national, European or international level, and increase activities in the field of energy. Projects are thus a powerful tool for the Covenant and a great help to Covenant Supporters.**

In addition, and considering that most of the Covenant Supporters are not specialised in energy or climate issues, another way of providing this support is to facilitate **contacts with stakeholders acting as source of technical know-how** (universities, consultants, ministries, energy agencies, experts, more advanced cities, etc.) or **trying to convince intermediate levels to become Covenant Coordinators**, since the latter commit to provide technical and financial support to signatories. Such initiatives have been taken by 59% of the respondents.

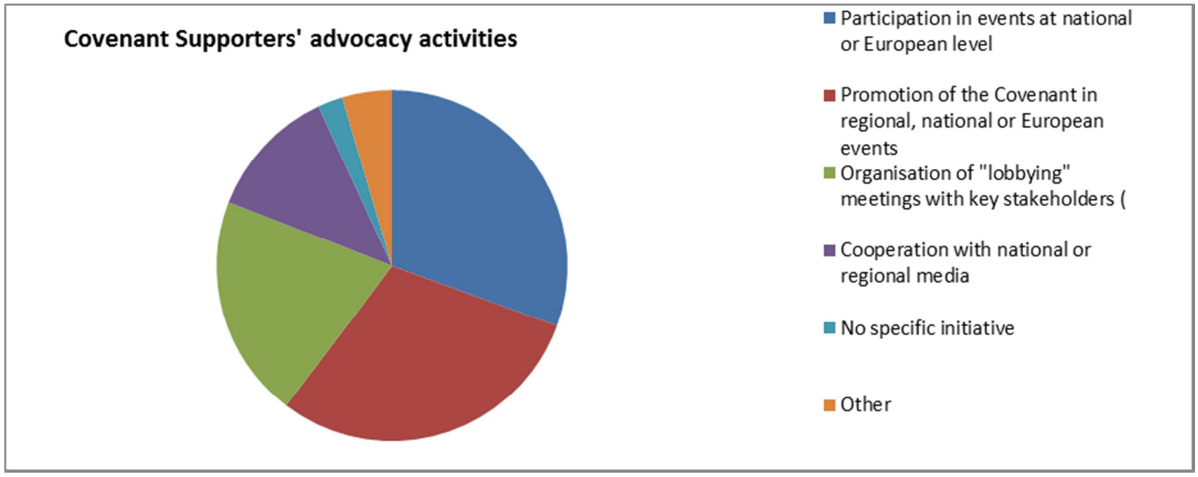
Besides, half of the respondents is supporting their members to **mobilise financing** which would help them implementing their commitment or securing a technical support(e.g. helping with the preparation of financial application, providing information about financial opportunities, helping with tendering procedures, etc.).

Providing technical support is not an explicit commitment in the agreement signed with the European Commission since all Covenant Supporters do not have the

capacity to provide such a support. Nevertheless, it is a very efficient way to help municipalities implementing the Covenant and the majority of Covenant Supporters is taking initiatives in this direction.

3. Support in providing visibility and advocacy for the initiative

Most respondents included the Covenant in the political strategy of their organisation, their annual work programme, their main political campaigns, declarations or positions. Some of them have organised political debates at meetings of their highest political statutory body. Covenant Supporters represent public authorities and are led by politicians, so they are **well placed to use the Covenant "politically",** foremost for their advocacy and lobbying work. In addition, more than three quarters of the respondents participated in events at regional, national or European level to advocate for the Covenant.

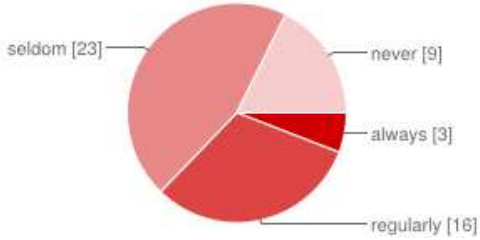


European networks of local authorities are particularly focusing on the political dimension of the Covenant and are addressing it within the broader picture of European policies.

4. Relations with the Covenant of Mayors' Office

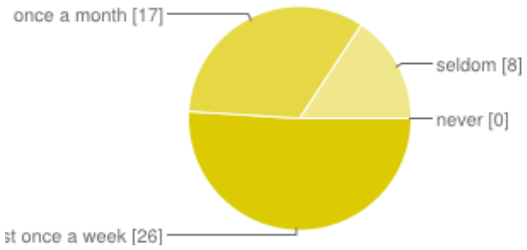
69% of the respondents reported playing the role of intermediary between their members and the Covenant of Mayors' Office. This is a good solution to overcome obstacles such as the language barrier, to avoid the Covenant Office to be too much solicited, and to facilitate a timely exchange of information.

Do you send regular information to the Covenant of Mayors Office for the promotion of your activities?



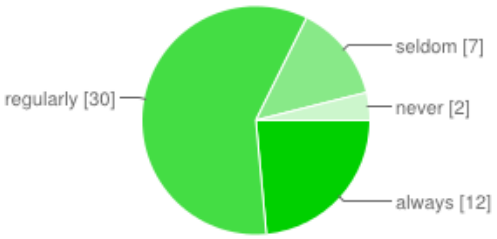
However, only one third of the Covenant Supporters regularly sends information to the Covenant of Mayors' Office for the promotion of its activities. So there is still progress to be made in the communication to the Covenant of Mayors' Office and the retrieving of information. On a more positive note, **half of the Covenant Supporters does consult the Covenant website every week and one third at least once a month.**

Do you consult the Covenant website regularly?



83% of the Covenant Supporters read the newsletter either regularly or always. The newsletter is therefore a powerful tool to pass messages!

Do you read the Covenant of Mayors monthly newsletter?



Covenant Supporters all identified **the same issues as the most relevant in the newsletter:**

- Best practices cases, both from municipalities and Covenant Supporters, and highlights on innovative approaches or initiatives taken by more advanced signatories.
- Technical and methodological information (concrete examples and guidance for SEAP development and implementation, monitoring and reporting, procedure if a SEAP is rejected, SEAP from more advanced municipalities, examples of SEAP, etc.).
- Upcoming events.
- Information about financing tools and funding opportunities.

The Covenant website and newsletters are well consulted by Covenant Supporters and prove to be an efficient way of sharing information. Nevertheless, the flow of information from the ground to the Covenant of Mayors' Office is still to be improved.

II – Proposals for future events and newsletters

Events

Half of the respondents has already attended the annual ceremony or thematic workshops organised by the Covenant of Mayors' Office. In their report, they expressed **expectations of future events**.

On **issues** to be addressed:

- **Technical issues**, including better know-how of SEAP (content and quality level of good BEI and SEAP, practical information and examples on the development and implementation of SEAP, presentation of good SEAP, etc.).
- Featuring of relevant actions and projects which can benefit to Covenant Supporters and promotion of available relevant **tools and support.**
- Strong wish to exchange **best practices,** such as examples of frontrunners signatories (e.g. in terms of SEAP preparation and implementation), promotion of relevant actions which can benefit to Covenant signatories, etc.
- **Financing schemes,** such as Structural Funds for the next period (including the new tools such as integrated territorial investments and community-led local development), innovative financing schemes for SEAP development and implementation, successful existing financing schemes, how to mobilize and find funding, etc.
- **Strategic issues** (links with the EU 2020 strategy, extension of the Covenant to other fields of activity).
- Events regarding needs and challenges of **small municipalities.**
- **National and regional cooperation** between signatories.

On the **format:**

- More **interaction is expected**, more opportunities for exchanges between participants, maybe in smaller groups. Support for match-making to connect those who are more advanced and those who could provide support would be appreciated.
- More **problem-solving approach**.
- More **thematic and technical events**, i.e. dedicated to one very specific issue.
- **Training and educational workshops.**
- More events at **national level**, in a national context with national dimension, with the support of Covenant Supporters, Territorial Coordinators and/or Covenant national Clubs.

Other comments related to events:

- Proposals for organising events in the UK, Poland, Bosnia and in the Alps region.
- Positive comments on the use of **webinars** to avoid travels and save costs.
- Regarding the **annual ceremony**: more interactivity is needed, as mayors are too passive. The ceremony should keep a high level political dimension and a high media visibility. Distinct programmes for technicians and for politicians could be considered.

As for the **Newsletters**, the following topics were proposed:

- More success stories of **small municipalities**, which would bring some inspiration to many Covenant signatories.

- Examples of actions related to the **participation of citizens**.
- **Reporting** which is often seen as complex and time-consuming.
- Examples of **cooperation** between signatories or between signatories and Supporting structures.
- **Creative initiatives** which can be replicated.
- Information about other **national Covenant Clubs**.