

Mayors Adapt

The Covenant of Mayors Initiative on Adaptation to Climate Change

The impacts and knock-on effects of climate-related events are most acutely felt in cities, where critical infrastructure, valuable networks and the majority of populations are to be found. Therefore, cities and local authorities are crucial to successfully addressing climate change adaptation. It is at the local level that the effects of climate change will be most directly felt, given the unique vulnerabilities each city faces.

Mayors Adapt – the Covenant of Mayors Initiative on Adaptation to Climate Change has been set up to engage cities on climate change adaptation and to support them in taking action.

An Adaptation Initiative by Cities, for Cities

In the context of the EU Adaptation Strategy, a new EU Adaptation Initiative for cities is being launched in March 2014 “through which local authorities can make a voluntary commitment to adopt local adaptation strategies and awareness-raising activities”. It foresees the introduction of climate change adaptation within the framework of the [Covenant of Mayors](#), building upon the success of the previous Commission (DG CLIMA)’s pilot project, [EU Cities Adapt](#), and linking with the existing EEA online platform, [Climate-Adapt](#).

Whilst Member States play a crucial role in developing National Adaptation Plans, it is at the local level that impacts of climate change are felt. As such, local authorities are directly vulnerable to the various impacts of climate change, such as extreme weather events, like heat waves, storms, floods and droughts, as well as longer-term changes, like economic losses and public health problems – despite their emissions reduction efforts.

Local authorities are therefore ideally placed to be the key drivers in the implementation of adaptation measures, improving the overall resilience of local territories in policy fields – including spatial planning, public health, civil protection, risk management, energy, water supply and the environment; many initiatives are already in place to do so.

This initiative aims to increase support for local activities, provide a platform for further engagement and exchange, and raise public awareness not only about the issue, but about the necessary measures to be taken towards climate change adaptation.

New Focus for Consolidated Growth

Some local authorities are already 'trail blazers' in adaptation, leading the way in implementing planned adaptation action. Through the Mayors Adapt initiative, the European Commission can make available adaptation good practice across the EU to *all* local authorities.

Enhancing Communication

Through dedicated materials and events, the highly visible momentum that Mayors Adapt has created for local authorities on adaptation can be kept up.

Peer-to-peer Learning

Learning from leading cities and sharing best practice is essential to the success of the initiative. First-class technical and practical support through a dedicated Helpdesk will be provided.

Reporting for Local Authorities

A common reporting framework to monitor the actions implemented by local authorities will ensure the success of the initiative, enhance shared practice and pave the way for future local initiatives.

Strengthened Cooperation

Effective collaboration schemes through working with potential multipliers across the public, private and third sectors as Coordinators, Supporters and Associated Partners are the future of the initiative. Under the umbrella of the Covenant of Mayors, the initiative can build on the existing framework of partners, and establish links with other relevant initiatives.

The Initiative

Mayors Adapt - The Covenant of Mayors Initiative on Adaptation to Climate Change sits within the framework of the [Covenant of Mayors](#), the flagship European initiative for cities on taking action on climate change mitigation.

Mitigating greenhouse gas emissions, and adapting infrastructures and policies to climate impacts, are both crucial to building more sustainable cities. The Mayors Adapt initiative offers a framework for local authorities to take action. Its key objectives are to:

- **Inform** decision-makers, multipliers and other actor groups about the initiative and adaptation needs through the organisation of several dedicated awareness-raising events and tailored communications materials.
- **Mobilise** cities already leading in the field of climate protection and encourage others which are less engaged to commit to the initiative through a process similar to the Covenant of Mayors.
- **Support** cities in their process of setting up and implementing local adaptation plans by providing first-class support to participating cities (Helpdesk) and quick access to existing expertise.
- **Facilitate** networking and learning amongst cities on taking action through access to comprehensive city profiles and dedicated networking events.
- **Enable** signatory cities to showcase their activities and engagement in the initiative, raising the profile of climate change adaptation for the broader, general public, but supporting their communications and outreach activities.

Mayors Adapt picks up on experience and expertise developed in 2012/2013 within the framework of the "EU Cities Adapt" project. The project involved 21 cities focused on knowledge building who, through their activities, found that the most important prerequisite for action on climate adaptation is to secure political commitment. It also became clear that funding, as well as a rich array of tools, support and guidance to enhance and support adaptation planning, is readily available across Europe but can, and should, be built upon.

Providing coherent methodologies and creating and supporting political commitment, for example by means of Mayoral declaration, were clear roles that the project found the EU should play.

This learning, together with the consultation process with cities, fed directly into the development of the Mayors Adapt initiative, which was officially launched by EU Commissioner for Climate Action, Connie Hedegaard, in Brussels on the 19th of March 2014.

The Vision

Providing a long-term vision for the initiative from the outset is important for mobilising and motivating cities, giving them the outlook needed to set a long-term context to taking action on climate change adaptation.

By committing to Mayors Adapt, cities in every EU Member State will be proactively addressing the challenges and opportunities of climate change adaptation. Every year more cities will sign up to Mayors Adapt, increasing awareness of the need for adaptation on the political agenda, and with access to the EC's dedicated adaptation resources and support services through Mayors Adapt, cities will adapt proactively, preparing for the challenges and identifying opportunities through adaptation.

As a direct result of this initiative:

- Local authorities and mayors will be more aware of the importance of implementing sustainable adaptation policies and recognise their own capacities to act, despite –in some cases– limited means;
- Instead of implementing single and isolated actions, pilot local authorities will move towards the establishment of a long-term vision, a local adaptation strategy and/or action plan, an open dialogue with key stakeholders spanning the public, private and third sectors;
- Adaptive capacity will be created where it is needed most: at the local level. Municipal decision makers and officers give greater importance to networking activities, horizontal relations with their peers in order to learn from each other and create innovative solutions;

It is necessary for National and regional authorities to work more closely with local authorities in order to implement national and regional regulations and programmes more efficiently, and take advantage of their experience to design effective legislation and support for the implementation of local adaptation policies.

Participating Cities

The following cities have shown interest in the initiative and attended the consultation workshops in Brussels:

Albania	Tirana	Latvia	Riga
Austria	Ober-Grafendorf	Montenegro	Podgorica
Belgium	Ghent	Netherlands	Arnhem; Nijmegen; Rotterdam; Utrecht
Denmark	Albertslund	Portugal	Cascais
Finland	Tampere	Serbia	Belgrade
France	Lyon; Greater Lyon	Spain	Barcelona
Germany	Berlin; Hamburg; Munich	UK	Birmingham; London
Hungary	Budapest		
Ireland	Dublin		
Italy	Bologna; Venice		

Support for Cities

The Mayors Adapt initiative will provide local authorities with tailored resources for their adaptation activities, including:

- **Visibility and communication** on cities' commitment to adaptation,
- **Practical and technical support** in the form of a helpdesk for operational questions, information and engagement with the initiative,
- **Knowledge support** through guidance materials and tools for cities,
- **Synergies with the Covenant of Mayors** and other relevant initiatives.

The EU also provides funding for adaptation by integrating adaptation requirements into all relevant EU funding streams, whilst local authorities are also encouraged to mainstream adaptation into their policy planning and implementation.

Materials to support Cities

By communicating themselves about their commitment to take action, and about the local effects of climate change adaptation, cities can showcase their leadership and translate it to their local public. The initiative makes available a selection of materials to support cities and to help them in their outreach activities.

The Help Desk

The Consortium has set up a single contact point to give personalised support to interested and participating cities. Trained staff are available to assist them in the process of joining as well as accompanying them in their commitments. The Consortium will pay particular attention to the local context and specific local authorities' characteristics (including size, geography, level of progress in adaptation, local vulnerabilities, political context and technical experience), and tailor-made approaches will be proposed to tackle the different specificities. The different speeds/expertise of cities will be combined and accommodated.

Events and Networking

Networking opportunities will be organised for participating cities. The aim of these is to promote best practice sharing and peer-to-peer learning, fostering exchange and helping cities feel part of a community of practice. The first of these events will take place in Brussels in September 2014, when a signature ceremony with the Commissioner will also take place to showcase and acknowledge the leadership being shown by committed cities.

Information sharing

Following a coordinated and synergic cooperation strategy, each initiative, including the Covenant of Mayors and Climate-Adapt, will support the others, maximising the flow of information, strengthening activities and minimising overlap or even contradictions between them.

Workshops

Following on from the success of the two initial workshops in Brussels, further workshop sessions will be held in the summer of 2014. Participating and interested cities will be invited to discuss proposed local initiatives and share information, helping to further raise awareness amongst cities and other multipliers about the new initiative, its opportunities and the benefits of action.

Materials

The Mayors Adapt website will host a series of documents useful for cities and aimed at helping them to take action on a local level. These will include factsheets, talking points, information on initiatives and more. Additionally, cities can find communications materials for their use to support them in their local-level outreach, enabling them to showcase their commitment and action on adaptation.

The Consortium

The Mayors Adapt initiative is being implemented on behalf of the European Commission by a consortium, led by Ecofys, comprised of:

- **Climate Alliance:** A European network of local authorities committed to climate protection
- **Ecofys:** A European consultancy in energy & climate policy, energy & carbon efficiency and energy systems & markets
- **Fresh Thoughts:** A consultancy linking scientific research to policy in the area of sustainable development
- **IFOK GmbH:** An international strategy and communications consultancy on issues of sustainable development

With the support of DG CLIMA, the consortium has established cross-Commission involvement by creating a 'Steering Group', composed of EU institutions' representatives (DG ENER, DG ECHO, DG REGION, DG RTD, EEA, CoR) and recognised experts in the adaptation field at the European level. The group is responsible for providing strategic recommendations and outsider advice on the development of Mayors Adapt, its main objectives and activities. This has paved the way for the establishment of tight relations with key stakeholders, such as DG ENERGY and the EEA.

On the local level, a consultation process was conducted by the consortium to identify the needs and expectations of European cities towards an EU adaptation initiative for cities. Two consultation workshops took place in Brussels, gathering together diverse cities and city networks from across

Europe to give them the opportunity to help shape the new initiative. Initial elements of the planned adaptation initiative for cities were presented and discussed. Cities' ideas and input fed directly into the shaping of the initiative, helping ensure that it best meets their needs.

Climate Change Adaptation in Europe

The [EU Adaptation Strategy](#), adopted by the European Commission in April 2013, sets out the framework for contributing to a more climate resilient Europe. It focuses on the following three key objectives:

- **Promoting action by Member States:** by encouraging all Member States to adopt comprehensive adaptation strategies; providing funding to help them build up adaptive capacity and take action, and supporting adaptation action by cities within the framework of the Covenant of Mayors.
- **Better informed decision-making:** by addressing knowledge gaps.
- **'Climate proofing' action at EU level:** by further promoting adaptation in key vulnerable sectors (e.g. agriculture, fisheries and cohesion policy), ensuring that Europe's infrastructure is more resilient, and promoting the use of insurance against natural and man-made disasters.

Adapting to climate change is necessary in order to build resilience within our social and economic systems to both minimise the negative impacts of climate change and to realise the opportunities from planned adaptation. Effective adaptation actions can reduce overall damage costs, save natural and human assets as well as stimulate economic regeneration.

Integrating adaptation into urban development and planning policies can realise new opportunities to enhance the quality of life of the citizens, promote sustainable urban development, stimulate investment and innovation, reinforce stakeholder participation and multi-stakeholder cooperation.

By adopting resilient thinking and investing in climate preparedness, EU Mayors and political leaders make their cities more attractive, healthier and safer.

The Context of Adaptation for EU Cities

Cities are given a central role to enhance the resilience of the EU to the adverse impacts of climate change. Impacts of climate change will affect the full EU territory, with regional differences: impacts are realised at the local level, and therefore cities are ideally placed to prepare for the challenge and build resilience.

The EU also provides funding for adaptation by integrating adaptation requirements into all relevant EU funding streams, whilst local authorities are also encouraged to mainstream adaptation into their policy planning and implementation.

The Current Situation

Engaging with cities is key as they are the driving force for adaptation to climate change. There are some clear pioneers in Europe whose actions in adaptation put them at the forefront of the initiative despite the lack of an existing national adaptation framework. With increased awareness and knowledge sharing at local level, more climate data and the development of future projects, more cities can make the leap in adaptation.

Better access to technical expertise is needed as well as more extensive financial options to allow cities to implement adaptation actions.

Practical Information

How to Sign Up

Who can join?

The Mayors Adapt initiative is open to all local authorities democratically constituted with/by elected representatives whatever their size and whatever the stage of implementation of their climate policy. They must meet the following criteria:

- Official status of a “local authority” such as a “city” or an organised “agglomeration”;
- Democratically constituted with/by elected representatives;
- Have an elected, political leader who can act on its behalf;
- Must be located in the EU territory.

Why join?

By joining the initiative, participating local authorities experience multiple benefits. Mayors Adapt enables and facilitates the showcasing of local actions on adaptation, and profiles the city, nation, and the EU as a whole, as a pioneer in climate change adaptation.

The initiative also offers a platform for more extensive communication among cities and between local and European-level authorities, thus increasing the capacity for sharing best practice, learning from each other, sharing expertise and offering and finding support.

Mayors’ Commitment

When joining the initiative, local authorities commit to contributing to the overall aim of the EU Adaptation Strategy and creating a more climate-resilient Europe. They are free to choose between the following options:

- Developing a comprehensive local adaptation strategy for the local authority (1); **and/or***.
- Integrating adaptation to climate change into their existing relevant plans (2).

** Note: Sufficient flexibility is given to the participating municipalities to choose the best way to integrate adaptation into their local policies and activities. They are invited to specify their desired option(s) in their Commitment document.*

Step-by-step approach and reporting requirements

Regardless of the option(s) selected, Mayors Adapt Signatories commit to submit:

- A **local adaptation strategy** (1) or the **relevant adaptation documents** (2) within two years following the formal signing of the Commitment, including the results of the risk & vulnerability assessment, identifying the necessary (human/technical/financial) resources and outlining the adaptation actions, these documents within 2 years of signature ;
- An **Implementation Progress Report** every second year according to the framework of the initiative. This report will most likely be in the form of a simple self-assessment questionnaire, based on the guiding principles defined in the official Mayors Adapt Political Commitment. Signatories will also be invited to report on their best adaptation practices. The results will be used to feed the public city profiles visible on the initiative's website. This will facilitate networking between cities working on the same steps and encourage experience exchange.

In case of non-submission of the above-mentioned document(s) within the defined time frames, they accept to be suspended from the initiative – subject to prior notice in writing by the Mayors Adapt office.

How to join

To join the Mayors Adapt initiative, local authorities should undertake the following process:

Present the Mayors Adapt initiative and associated Political Commitment Document to the municipal council;

Once an official resolution has been adopted by the council, mandate the mayor - or equivalent representative of the council - to sign the Mayors' Commitment;

After signature, send the Political Commitment by email to: helpdesk@mayors-adapt.eu;

Once the adhesion is confirmed, fill in the registration form available on the website. It includes contact details as well as initial information on the adaptation action status.

What commitments do the Mayors Adapt Signatories have to fulfil?

Local authorities joining the initiative commit to contributing to the overall aim of the [EU Adaptation Strategy](#) and creating a more climate resilient Europe by:

- Developing a comprehensive local adaptation strategy for the local authority (1); and/or
- Integrating adaptation to climate change into their existing relevant plans (2).

Contact the Initiative

To find out more about the Mayors Adapt initiative, including how to sign up or for more information, please contact the dedicated helpdesk:

Tel.: +32.2. 808 44 92

E-Mail: helpdesk@mayors-adapt.eu

For all press and media enquiries, please contact

E-Mail: media@mayors-adapt.eu