



PRESS RELEASE

Energie-Cités
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500 M € support for « Covenant Cities »? Energie-Cités pleads for this indispensable human capital investment!

In the space of only a few months, almost 400 cities have made a voluntary, unilateral commitment to the Covenant of Mayors (www.eumayors.eu). The movement getting under way bears witness to the strong will for action on the part of local authorities and to their great capacity to react particularly when unambiguous and rousing appeals are made to them. That was the underlying sense of the Ceremony held in the European Parliament on 10th February 2009 (<http://www.energie-cites.eu/More-than-300-EU-Mayors-commit-to>).

At the same time, an Economic Recovery Plan is being discussed. A financial support of €500M was foreseen for the cities. Regrettably, though, this money was now removed from the list of planned measures for the benefit of actions aimed at the energy supply! Indeed, this is a very bad political signal for Mayors. Energie-Cités pleads that this sum shall be set on the list again. What can one usefully do with €500M? What lever effect will it have? Under which conditions?

€500M can be used to:

1. Build some 5 km of metro or 15 to 20 km of tramway (or with a subsidy rate of 25%, four times those lengths).
2. Allow the European Investment Bank to offer low interest rates or even negative amortization loans for projects from Covenant of Mayors' signatory Cities participating in the 3x20 scheme.
3. Co-finance the hiring of 4 persons for each of the 1000 local energy and climate agencies to provide guidance and technical support for Covenant of Mayors signatories and mobilize local citizens and players.

The first solution would produce no lever effect. Similar action involving a dozen towns only would even jeopardize the already gathering momentum of the Covenant of Mayors.

The second would offer support for the delivery of local authority infrastructure projects (roads and public transport, thermal rehabilitation, etc.) processed through the European Investment Bank. That would be of great utility.

The third solution would be based on inventive human capital focused on drafting action plans and implementing them. That would have the advantage of setting skills within a framework and provide a helping hand to local authorities with difficulty in finding the appropriate resources. The effect of its announcement would mobilize Cities and would clearly highlight the European Commission's message of «*We will back your commitment!*». 4000 people would be directly available on the ground. This measure would be processed through a special call for projects "Recovery Plan / Covenant of Mayors" focused on the translation of political commitments into concrete actions (under no circumstances whatsoever would the mere signing of the Covenant of Mayors confer any « right of withdrawal » to those funds). However, access procedures to those funds should be simplified to enable fast implementation. Naturally solutions 2 and 3 could be combined.

Energie-Cités is ready to offer its backing for more precise proposals to enable such an initiative to be rapidly launched. It will provide its energy to all the related initiatives that will emerge.

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