

Conference of the Covenant of Mayors 2023

“Cities on the frontline of the energy crisis”

30 March 2023, from 9.00-13.00 (followed by a networking lunch until 14.30).

European Commission’s Charlemagne Building (Rue de la Loi 170), room Alcide de Gasperi.

Overarching objective: the event will be a unique opportunity to reflect on how local authorities are responding on different fronts to the ongoing energy crisis, by accelerating energy efficiency measures, investing more in green local power generation (such as rooftop solar PVs, heating solutions including heat pumps and storage technologies), and shielding citizens and local business from soaring energy prices, exacerbated by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. It will also be the occasion to envision mid- to long-term solutions for a deeper societal transformation - shifting away from mainstream consumption behaviour to more resource sufficiency - with representatives from the Covenant community and EU institutions.

The ongoing energy crisis, caused by Russia’s aggression against Ukraine, directly hits cities, people and local business across Europe. The heaviest burden is falling on European households suffering from increased energy poverty, as well as on owners of small and medium enterprises, affected by inflation and increasing energy prices, further aggravated by the war since early 2021 and now slowly stabilising. However, out of economic necessity, the crisis is also having an impact on our lifestyle behaviours, shifting us away from over-consumption behaviours to steer individual and collective actions towards practices that also fight against climate change.

Yet again on the frontline of the energy crisis, local authorities have shown readiness to respond. On top of delivering ambitious local climate solutions, they put in place immediate low-cost actions to reduce energy demand in public facilities and increased the share of renewables while supporting the most vulnerable households and local business.

Some of these examples were reflected in **the Cities Energy Saving Sprint**, a joint campaign launched by the Covenant of Mayors Europe, the European Commission and the Committee of the Regions in response to Russia’s aggression against Ukraine.

Addressing the common challenge, the campaign has had the double aim of encouraging local governments to immediately reduce energy consumption ahead of the winter season, while showing solidarity with Ukraine by cutting down Europe's dependency on Russian gas, in line with the REPowerEU Plan's overarching objectives.

Efforts to fill up Europe's gas storage reserves in 2022 have been largely successful. However, forecasts for upcoming winter seasons are unclear. Therefore, today's emergency actions should be enshrined into social norms to redirect our crisis responses into permanent structural consumer behaviours. Municipalities each manage a large portfolio of building stock (both public and commercial), and have competences in urban planning, built infrastructure, public lighting and transport. Being the closest level of government to citizens, they are well placed to enable behavioural changes and to rationalise energy consumption such as for household financial savings, while reducing costs in their territories.

Drawing from examples of measures tackling the energy crisis while protecting residents in their territories, this high-level event will be an opportunity to showcase what the current local response to the energy crisis is. It will also be the chance to reflect on what support European institutions and national governments can give to further strengthen these efforts in the mid-term. Local governments can expect to exchange with high-level representatives from European Institutions, - including Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans and EU Commissioner for Energy Kadri Simson- the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions. They will discuss how EU institutions and national authorities can further support local and regional efforts to reduce energy consumption and dependency on Russian gas in the years to come.

Draft agenda

Moderator: **Anna Gumbau**

09:00 – 09:30	<u>Welcome and registration</u>
9.30-9.55	<u>Introduction by the moderator Anna Gumbau</u> <u>Opening high-level speech</u> <i>Commissioner for Energy, Kadri Simson</i>
9.55-10.10	<u>How to ensure multi-level governance in an era of energy policy adjustments caused by the energy crisis?</u> <i>President of Committee of the Regions, Vasco Cordeiro</i>

Panel Discussions	
Elected representatives will take stock of the first winter season of the energy crisis, and present what the challenges and needs for local authorities, in the long run, are to save energy in the context of REPowerEU. How did local authorities react to the crisis and how did the measures have an impact on citizens? What can be done next?	
10.10-10.15	Paula Pinho , Director for Just Transition, Consumers, Energy Efficiency and Innovation, Directorate-General for Energy
10.15-11.20	Panel 1: Moderated by Paula Pinho ○ Dario Nardella (Mayor) Florence, Italy TBC ○ Zita Pels (Deputy Mayor) Amsterdam Netherlands ○ Hanna Zdanowska (Mayor) Lodz, Poland ○ Sergi Ferrus (Mayor) Pedreguer, Spain ○ Mathias De Clercq (Mayor) Ghent, Belgium
11.20-11.40	<u>Coffee break</u>
11.40-12.45	Panel 2: Discussion with Executive Vice President Frans Timmermans - Moderated by Elina Bardram Director for Adaptation and Resilience, Communication and Civil Society Relations, Directorate-General for Climate Action Opening the panel: Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans. ○ Åsa Lindhagen (Vice Mayor for Environment and Climate) Stockholm, Sweden ○ Mario Rajn (Mayor) Križevci, Croatia ○ Rafal Trzaskowski (Mayor) Warsaw, Poland TBC

	○ Anne-Laure Stanislas (Deputy Mayor) Clermont-Ferrand, France TBC ○ Jonas Nitschke (European Climate Pact Ambassador) ○ Nadia Paleari (European Climate Pact Ambassador)
12.45-13.00	<u>Closing remarks</u> Bart Somers Vice-Minister-President of the Government of Flanders, Flemish Minister for Home affairs, Administrative affairs, Civic integration and Equal opportunities, Belgium
13:00-14:30	<u>Networking lunch</u>