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Number of signatories to Covenant of Mayors reaches 1000!

As the COP15 United Nations Climate Change Conference (UNCCC) starts today in Copenhagen, the European Union is again showing its leadership in tackling climate change with the European Commission announcement that the number of signatories to the Covenant of Mayors on sustainable energy has reached 1000. The German city of Rostock today became the 1000th signatory and is now fully committed to going beyond the EU 20% reduction target for CO₂ emissions.

This milestone marks ten months of exceptional growth for the Covenant of Mayors' initiative, as the number of local authorities participating has almost trebled since the first signing ceremony in February 2009. "I welcome the commitment to local sustainable energy demonstrated by Rostock today as the 1000th signatory of the Covenant," says Energy Commissioner Andris Piebalgs. "The number of communities now involved is a clear indication of the strong belief in tackling climate in a coherent way at local level."

"Our participation in the Covenant of Mayors is a good occasion for the local authority voice to be heard more strongly at European level," adds Karina Jens, President of the Rostock City Council. "It is in the cities and municipalities that daily life is organised on a local democratic basis. We understand the opportunities and risks on the spot and know our competences. Seen from Rostock, the sustainable use of natural resources is definitely one of those capabilities. This includes the management of forests and green spaces in the city as well as the efforts deployed in all the fields of environment protection and the greater use of renewable energies."

City targets climate protection

Rostock lies on the Baltic Sea coast and with a population of 200,000 is a university city and the largest city in the north German state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. Since 2006, the city has systematically applied a framework concept of climate protection that has already reduced CO₂ emissions from 7.5tonnes/capita per year in 1990 to 4.1tonnes today. The average figure for Germany is now at 10tonnes/capita and for the EU-27 at 9tonnes/capita. The city's long-term goal is a reduction to 2tonnes/capita.

Key actions include:

- Targeting a completely fossil-free energy supply with energy supplied from the region;
- Extending use of combined heat and power (CHP) for district heating through a system that already covers 70% of the households;
- Doubling of the tram network from 21 to 38km over the past decade, ensuring 80% of the population is within 300m of services;
- Improving the bicycle friendliness of the city; and

- Encouraging sustainability in the 6000ha of Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified forest within the city boundaries – the largest single wooded area along the Baltic coast.

Rapid growth highlights interest

As the first signatories of the Covenant of Mayors begin to submit their Sustainable Energy Action Plans (SEAPs), interest in the Covenant continues to grow. Day-by-day, local authorities are taking the first step towards a more sustainable Europe by joining the Covenant of Mayors.

The rapid growth of the Covenant highlights the fact that interest has not waned since the first signatories pledged to reduce CO₂ emissions in their localities. There were 372 Covenant signatories at the time of the February signing ceremony. The number rose sharply in the following months, passing 500 by mid May. This high growth was maintained over the Summer and signatories reached the 1000 mark in early December.

Large and small communities involved

The Covenant of Mayors has been embraced across Europe and further afield. Today no less than 21 capitals participate in the Covenant. In addition to the capitals, many of the world's major cities are already members of the Covenant. Barcelona, Lyon and Munich are just some of the leading European urban authorities involved in the initiative. However, the Covenant is by no means solely for large cities. While signatories include cities with populations in the millions, such as London and Paris, they also incorporate much smaller municipalities – such as Sufli in Spain with its population of just 288.

Interest in the Covenant of Mayors has not been limited to the European Union. As the number of signatories has continued to rise, cities from outside Europe have also joined the Initiative. Today, in addition to the four non-EU capitals already signed up to the Covenant, there are a range of other signatories from Argentina, Armenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, New Zealand, Switzerland, Turkey and Ukraine.

For more information about how to become the newest signatory to the Covenant of Mayors, please visit: <http://www.eumayors.eu/>

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