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Barroso comes empty-handed: MEPs welcome city initiative but regret lack of financial support from Barroso Commission

Cross-party press release - Covenant of Mayors

The Covenant of Mayors is a big step forward on the "greening" of the EU's transport and energy policy, says a cross-party group of MEPs. (1)

The EP had called for a strategic alliance between the EU institutions and the cities and regions of Europe – notably in the Hall report on energy efficiency.

Speaking ahead of the Covenant of Mayors ceremony on Tuesday, 10 February, the MEPs said:

"The EU needs committed cities and regions to turn EU targets and legislation into concrete investments for climate change mitigation and energy security.

"Cities determine urban mobility patterns, are key in the renovation of buildings and can act as clusters of excellence for the development of renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies.

"We are delighted to see so many EU cities committed to gearing up investment in climate-friendly infrastructure."

But as to the funding of the initiative, the MEPs complained that Commission President Barroso was coming to meet the major city leaders empty-handed. The Commission had promised to earmark € 500 million from the EU budget. They said:

"We were taken aback that the € 500 million earmarked for smart energy cities in the framework of the economic recovery plan was dropped last week by Commission President Barroso and his cabinet. Fortunately it is not President Barroso who has the last say on this – it will be a co-decision procedure with full decision powers for the EP. We therefore call on the cities represented at the Covenant to speak up and help us get majority support in the EP and the Council for an innovative financial instrument that could help finance committed cities' climate investments."

Further information:

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The MEPs argue that € 500 million placed in a dedicated "climate scheme" at the European Investment Bank, matched by a corresponding amount from EIB reserves, could help to raise a multibillion euro fund and significantly increase the volume of cheap loans targeted to climate investments by cities.

"EU cities already have projects in the pipeline worth several billion euros and funding could be easily available with regular calls for proposals and short deadlines. Making these happen by facilitating access to cheap loans would deliver much faster relief in the current crisis situation than the measures proposed in the Barroso plan."

Notes to Editors:

(1) MEPs involved include: Claude Turmes (Greens/EFA), Umberto Guidoni (GUE) Fiona Hall (ALDE), Mechtild Rothe (PSE) and Anders Wijkman (EPP)