

Report on the collaboration with the Covenant of Mayors

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1 Introduction / Objective of the Green Digital Charter - Covenant of Mayors cooperation

The Green Digital Charter and the Covenant of Mayors are two mainstream initiatives both engaging European cities to increase energy efficiency across their territories. Although differentiating in many aspects, the two initiatives are clearly linked offering the potential for synergies and collaboration.

Focusing on one specific aspect of the broader energy efficiency spectrum, the Green Digital Charter actions in the field of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and energy efficiency are fully compatible (even as a subset) with those under the Covenant of Mayors. Moreover, all of the Green Digital Charter signatories have also committed to the Covenant of Mayors.

One of the objectives of outreach & engagement activities of the NiCE project was to enable the close collaboration between the GDC and the Covenant of Mayors on visibility events and dissemination activities. This would have been accomplished mainly through high-level events, such as the annual CoM event, which takes place in cooperation with the European Parliament. It would also involve coordination with the relevant EC services and the CoM Office (CoMO) to agree on and prepare contributions from GDC signatory cities or the NiCE partners.

Given the different sizes of the two initiatives as well as of their supporting mechanisms ("offices" or "contact points"), it was foreseen that the cooperation between GDC and CoM will mainly depend on the CoM priorities and calendar of events.

2 Timeline of the cooperation

2.1 Annual CoM events

One of the main targets of the GDC-CoM cooperation was to ensure the participation of GDC in the annual CoM events. During the NiCE project lifetime, GDC participated in both CoM events that were organised, the first in Autumn 2011 and the second in Summer 2013.

2.1.1 November 2011 CoM event

NiCE successfully contributed to the Covenant of Mayors Annual Ceremony held in the European Parliament on 29 November 2011. After having discussed the possible cooperation opportunities with DG ENER, NiCE identified Sir Richard Leese (MCC) to speak in the name of all GDC signatories during the ceremony. The leaders of two more GDC signatories, Malmo and Genoa, delivered presentations during the ceremony. Seven GDC signatories attended the ceremony and were officially presented to the over 1100 participants after the presentation of Manchester, which was concluded by a group photo.

On the same day, NiCE also organised a roundtable and networking event in the European Parliament (hosted by MEP Oldrich Vlasak) to promote the Charter and present examples how GDC cities implement their commitment. This event has been added to the official programme to take advantage to the large affluence to the 2011 Covenant of Mayors ceremony and thus facilitate wider cities networking.

Eindhoven and Zagreb signed the GDC at this event that was attended by DG INSFO officers Paul Timmers, Merce Griera-i-Fisa, Sonia Marconi and Marion Ansel and representatives from 15 European cities.

2.1.2 June 2013 CoM event

NiCE also contributed to the Covenant of Mayors Annual Ceremony held in the European Parliament on 24 June 2013. The Mayor of Ghent (GDC signatory and chair of the EUROCITIES Knowledge Society forum), Daniël Termont, and the Mayor of Zagreb (GDC signatory), Milan Bandić, participated in the session 1 panel under the topic “Achieving Covenant objectives thanks to technological and social innovation”.

The Green Digital Charter and NiCE were also offered a stand and a poster area outside the ceremony hall where dissemination material of the GDC and NiCe were distributed and city representatives were informed about the GDC and NiCE project.

2.1.3 Further cooperation

The implementation of the task has continued beyond the two annual events and the NiCE team has closely exchanged with the CoM Office - in which EUROCITIES is engaged as a partner - to continue a mutual exchange and update in order to exploit any possibility of cooperation.

Some examples are the support NiCE has provided for the organisation of the European Commission's conference "Smart Energy & Sustainable ICT Conference" held in Brussels on 03-04/05/2012, a two-day conference opened by Commissioners Günther Oettinger and Neelie Kroes. The event focused on smart grids, smart services and sustainable ICT with one of the key messages delivered by Colette Maloney (Head of Smart Cities Unit of DG CONNECT). In particular, NiCE has actively contributed to the panel "Reducing the ICT Footprint in Cities" by identifying the speakers, moderating the event and by contribute to the agenda development. In addition a support has been provided to the "How green are Europe's cities?" panel, by identifying two Charter signatory cities. In total, three Charter signatories presented their experiences on integrated urban solutions in smart cities and communities and on reducing the ICT footprint in cities.

Another practical example of collaboration between GDC and CoM is the signing ceremony of the 1st July 2013 when Vilnius signed at the same day both initiatives. The ceremony took place in EUROCITIES offices and apart from GDC and CoM project teams, Jan Panek (Head of Unit in DG ENER), Colette Maloney (Head of Unit in DG CNECT) and Merce Griera I Fisa (Project Officer in DG CNECT) participated and spoke about the EU policies on sustainable development.

NiCE and CoMO teams have also had an extensive cooperation for the creation of the GDC-CoM reporting tool, as this is described in Deliverable 3.7.

The possibility for the joint organisation of events like webinars was also explored. Nevertheless, the agendas or the availability of the two teams didn't coincide for the successful organisation of such an event to happen. This is however planned for the series of webinars to be implemented under the new CoMO contract.

Under the new CoMO contract EUROCITIES is also responsible for the liaison and for ensuring synergies between GDC and the CoM. EUROCITIES also regularly reports on the new GDC development to the CoM Steering Committee, which meets every two months.

3 Results and challenges / Next steps

Measured against the objectives of Task 4.2 description, the cooperation between the CoM Office and the NiCE team is considered as successful:

- GDC participated and was mentioned in both CoM ceremonies that were organised after September 2011;
- CoM Office is well aware of the GDC and the NiCE activities, as well as of the NiCE team supporting the GDC;
- Collaboration has been extended to other topics of common interest: e.g. a meeting between CoMO and NiCE took place in 5 March 2014 to explore how SCC2 call (and the projects that will come from this call) expect to benefit from the CoM and GDC databases and toolkits.

Nevertheless, it is recognised that some options for cooperation were not explored as they could be, mainly due to different priorities or different timing in the same priorities between GDC and CoM. For example, it didn't prove feasible to organise joint webinars or trainings activities, but we will do our best to organise such joint webinars/training activities in 2014 or 2015 under the new CoMO contract.

There are a number of challenges with regard to the cooperation of the two initiatives that have to be taken into account when the follow-up of NiCE and the new CoMO3 projects start designing their next phase of cooperation. Indicatively:

- CoM is a much bigger initiative, receiving constantly invitations for cooperation from initiatives, projects and organisations which obviously cannot all be accommodated;
- CoM is a much broader initiative, which means that its typical promotion events, trainings, etc. might be very broad compared to GDC's scope;
- Vice versa, GDC is a very focused initiative, which means that CoM cannot afford organising a large number of joint activities with GDC, especially given the fact that CoM consortium partners relate to many and various energy and climate initiatives;
- Different eligibility criteria for the potential signatories of the two initiatives can result in difficulties when identifying the target groups and audience of joint events and promotion activities.

In any case, for both GDC and CoM, cooperation between the two initiatives is a priority and this is something that is already explicitly stated in the cooperation strategy of CoMO3, strategy produced during the project's inception phase during the first half of 2014. From the GDC's side, as mentioned in the NiCE exploitation plan, EURO CITIES will continue supporting GDC-CoM synergies after the end of the NiCE project as well as in the frame of a NiCE project follow-up.