



# A+COM

## The 2012 Award for Italian Sustainable Energy Action Plans

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Report by Climate Alliance Italy

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A+CoM is promoted in the context of:



Author: Dr. Karl-Ludwig Schibel

With the collaboration of: Maria Guerrieri

Maurizio Zara

And thanks to the contributions from the Scientific  
Committee

## Premise

For local governments **to plan for an energy and climate policy** that aims at reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by a consistent and measurable amount of 20% within a time horizon of a decade in Italy largely is **a new field of activity**. Cities with more than 50.00 inhabitants are obliged by the law 10/91 to elaborate a Local Energy Plan, but few have done so. Some awareness on local energy and climate policy has been created in the last two decades by city networks like Climate Alliance, Kyoto Club, Energy Cities, Local Agenda 21 and by environmental associations like Legambiente.

The **Covenant of Mayors** has seen an **enthusiastic reception** in Italy. Of the 4082 signatories of the Covenant of Mayors 2056 are Italian local authorities (as of June 26). This offers an unprecedented opportunity to promote local climate protection. A first condition for filling the Covenant with life is a Sustainable Energy Action Plan.

With the large number of SEAPs to be elaborated in Italy, Climate Alliance has embarked together with Kyoto Club on **creating and managing the award A+CoM** to honour Plans of Excellence, promote the elements of what makes a good SEAP and start a healthy competition for delivering high quality products. The rules of the award were developed in the fall of 2011, the first call ended in March 9, 2012, the technical committee worked for two months and presented its findings to the scientific committee that met on April 21, 2012 to decide on the winners; the award ceremony was held on May 26 in Florence.

What follows is a report of the activities and some very preliminary general thoughts on the evaluation of SEAPs.

## The Award

The award takes up the criteria of the official Guidebook on “How to develop a Sustainable Energy Action Plan” dividing them in criteria of **eligibility** and criteria of **quality**. The criteria for eligibility are directly out of the guidebook and need no further explanation.

The **seven quality criteria** take their impulse from the guidebook putting emphasis on the **SEAP as a process** and not a product. They are:

1. Are **the data** used for the BEI simply broken down from regional or national data to the local level or has a substantial part been collected bottom-up? This is not only a question of the BEI reflecting correctly the local situation but also of creating the basis for monitoring. With data from the regional or national level projected on the local level it will be hard or impossible to update the inventory in four years. The bottom-up data base is also crucial for developing **financial strategies** for only if one has the data on energy consumption and costs, is there the possibility to estimate the return on capital for measures above all in the field of energy efficiency. Directly connected is the involvement of the municipal staff in the elaboration of the SEAP. As the **COMBAT report** correctly points out, there is nothing wrong with involving outside experts in the elaboration of the SEAP, if there is an active counterpart within the administration that first decides

on priorities and goals.<sup>1</sup>

2. Does the section on the **adaptation of the administrative structure** exist and does it give the impression of an adequate transformation that will help to integrate CO<sub>2</sub> reduction into the day-to-day activity of the public body? If the implementation of the SEAP is to move out of the corner of the environmental department and become transversally part of the activity of large parts if not the whole municipal administration there need to be clearly defined political and technical competences. The SEAP guidelines report the examples of Munich and Leicester. In our experience, looking at the small and medium-sized local authorities that make up 95% of Italian SEAP signatories these models are too fancy. The main purpose of incorporating the Covenant of Mayors into the administrative structure would be to create clear, enduring and substantive responsibilities attributed to staff members (headed by the staff person responsible for the Covenant) and political offices (headed by the mayor) that have the potential to last through more than one political mandate, i.e. that continue if not dismantled actively by a new city government.
3. Were there meetings in the phase of elaboration of the SEAP, are there actions as part of the SEAP carried out by actors outside the local administration? The guidelines dedicate for obvious reasons big attention to the **involvement of stakeholders**. In real life it rarely happens and then only under the form of events where the interested public is informed in a top-down approach. A+Com looked for a real involvement of the stakeholders, addressing the public sector beyond the local administration as well as the private sector.
4. **Quality and ambition of the commitment of the municipal administration** in the reduction of its own emissions. If the local administration is serious with its own actions there is a good chance for also reaching out into the community. The criteria the award looked at are directly taken from the SEAP guidelines and don't need further illustration. A+CoM dedicated particular attention to the question if the SEAP foresees **the setting-up of a structure for the collection of data** (energy and economic data) in the coming years and if there are **institutional arrangements and instruments for monitoring**, which were taken as indicators of the awareness of the local administration of the SEAP as a process.
5. In the same vein an A+CoM quality criteria is the **embedding of the SEAP in a learning process** that foresees the modification and adaptation of actions and measures according to the experiences made. There exists something like SEAPs that are too perfect, where one has to fear that the plan does not guide the actions but is the action. Periodic verifications and self-corrective

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1 "External experts and consultants are sometimes used by cities to help in the selection of measures and provide additional support where the city lacks human resources. The quality of such input is often dependent on the description of tasks given to the experts or consultants, which itself reflect the state of the process inside the city. Thus it may be problematic to assign work to experts or consultants at an early stage if the city's own internal processes and expectations are not clear. That said, external expertise can add value to the sustainable energy action plan process. It is important, however, that the city retains ownership of the sustainable energy action plan process and treats it as process, not a project." Combat Project: SEAP development guidelines, p. 30/31, download [http://www.pattodeisindaci.eu/support/library\\_it.html](http://www.pattodeisindaci.eu/support/library_it.html)

mechanisms as integral part of the plan raise the probability of an effective self-reflexive implementation.

6. **Communication** is a crucial subject for the Covenant of Mayors. The more people are involved in the process the more there is the danger that the technical language becomes incomprehensible to those outside the process and worse still, very unattractive and dull. “Reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions”, “Baseline emission inventory”, “energy efficiency” are formulas that do not lend themselves to effective communication. SEAPs sometimes seem to reflect more the pride of the professionals in showing off their specialized terminology than in trying to present the material in an accessible and understandable way.
7. Plans elaborated by public bodies in Italy (and presumably not only there) often are presented in a colourful conference and then – little or nothing. One important aspect of giving weight to a plan and improving its chances to have an effect on the fields of action it addresses is **to put it into relation with the existing plans** in neighbouring fields and plans that exist on other levels of government (provincial, regional, national), e.g. the local mobility plan or the urban zoning plan or the energy plan of the regional government. A+CoM considers it a criterion of quality if these complementary or parallel plans are being referred to in a substantive manner.

## The selection process for the first edition

### *The Technical committee*

The award competition was open for all SEAPs presented in the years 2010 and 2011 by Italian local administrations, approximately 250. The deadline was March 9 and 55 cities and towns applied for the award which the organizers considered a very good result.

The award was to be given in four categories: under 5,000, 20,000 and 90,000 inhabitants and over. The **Technical committee** (Stefania Grillo, Maria Guerrieri, Maurizio Zara from Climate Alliance and Piero Pelizzaro from Kyoto Club) selected 7 candidates among the towns with less than 5,000 inhabitants, 18 candidates from between 5,000 and 20,000 inhabitants, 11 from the cities between 20- and 90,000 inhabitants and 6 with more than 90,000 inhabitants, all in all **42 candidate were eligible**. In their report the committee underlines the overall high quality of the SEAPs which made it necessary to apply further criteria of excellence.

The committee was particularly impressed by Sustainable Energy Action Plans **that were elaborated exclusively or predominantly by the administration itself**. This effort was considered to compensate minor methodological shortcomings of the SEAPs under examination hoping that while the process goes ahead, these shortcomings will be dealt with in the phase of monitoring and implementation. Vice versa the technical committee considered most favourably, among the SEAPs produced on the assembly line by consultancies or other subjects outside the local administration in a serial manner, those most favourably that reflected a high degree of collaboration within of the local administration and which could be deduced by the specificity of the actions the administration intends to take in the next years.

Finally the Technical committee recommended to the Scientific committee to add to

the four awards foreseen others with a special mention for specific merits, even if the SEAP as a whole is not the best in its group.

### *The Scientific committee*

The Scientific Committee<sup>2</sup> essentially agreed with the recommendations of the Technical Committee and selected the following winners:

**Montaione**, in the Province of Florence, for towns under 5.000 inhabitants, for the fact that the town has integrated the SEAP with the ISO 14001 certification and with its activity in the context of the European Energy Award in which the town participates since 2007, having also appointed a specific Energy team. The territorial context is described very well, the figures for energy consumption of the public body are very articulated and with data bottom-up for many years. Montaione was selected for the concreteness of its actions, that in part are already under way, presented in a very straight way with a well-defined course. The town has adhered to the Covenant of Mayors and embraced its goals as an occasion for long term planning of improving the quality of the lives of the citizens and the tourists.

**Palena**, in the Province of Chieti, received a mention in the same category for a SEAP elaborated with the energy agency of the Province, ALESA, for its adaptation of the administrative structure, the detailed bottom-up data collection and the comprehensive description of the actions, the performance indicators and the monitoring.

**Castelnuovo del Garda**, in the Province of Verona, received the award for the towns of less than 20,000 inhabitants for the tenacity in collecting local data with a complete series of data for electric energy consumption for the last ten years, for elaborating its SEAP entirely within the municipal administration, for the incisiveness of the planned actions and the attention dedicated to sustainable mobility. There is a good relationship between the many actions the administration is planning in its own domain and the reaching out to stakeholders in the fields of CHP and energy efficiency in the residential sector.

**Villasanta**, in the Province of Monza, received a mention in the same category for a SEAP elaborated with Infoenergia as consultants and the Province of Milan as Supporting Structure, in the context of a program of the Cariplo Bank Foundation. The administrative adaptation foresees a control committee under the mayor and a technical committee made up from experts of the Province (Infoenergia) and the town. Worth mentioning are the detailed treatment of sustainable mobility and a detailed program of capacity building within the administration and reaching out to the stakeholders in the community.

**Castelfranco Emilia**, in the Province of Modena, received the award (ex aequo with Lodi for cities up to 90,000 inhabitants) for a synthetic and simple, but methodologically precise and complete SEAP, elaborated in collaboration with the

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<sup>2</sup> Mario Agostinelli (Contratto Mondiale per l'energia e il clima), Stefano Caserini (Politecnico of Milano), Annalisa Corrado (Azzero CO<sub>2</sub>), Antonio Lumicisi (Ministry of the Environment), Massimo Scalia (University III of Rome), Karl-Ludwig Schibel (Climate Alliance Italy), Gianni Silvestrini (Kyoto Club), Maria Rosa Vittadini (University of Venice), Silvia Zamboni (Journalist), Edoardo Zanchini (Legambiente)



Energy Agency of the Province AESS, showing an excellent reorganisation of the internal administrative structure and listing many interesting actions, including the enlargement of the CHP net and the introduction of tri-generation. The plan attributes a fair importance to thermal energy which often receives too little attention in relation to electric energy.

**Lodi** received the award (ex aequo with Castelfranco Emilia) for a SEAP elaborated completely in-house which reflects the will of the administration to take strong action within its own structure (reductions up to 40% in electricity and gas) and a detailed programme to work with other large consumers in the residential and service sectors (big offices, supermarkets, large residential units). The data are presented in a detailed manner that favours monitoring of high quality.

**Genova** received the award for cities with 90,000 plus inhabitants for the precise methodology of its SEAP and the ambitious, but not utopian, goals it has set. The data, though, as the authors themselves admit, still incomplete, and this demonstrates an agreeable sense of realism are elaborated in great depth. In addition to its methodological excellence the plan is innovative in its involvement of the stakeholders, the goals are specific and measurable, the Covenant of Mayors is obviously a starting point for the city administration that has already brought fruit and that is part of a wider policy of sustainability and environmental quality.

The two special mentions went to:

**Bari** for the strong link between the actions of the SEAP and the Green Economy, i.e. the effort to demonstrate the effects of the increase of energy efficiency and of renewables on the sustainable economic development of the city. The objectives of the plan are clearly defined and measurable and the plan intends to be a basis for a comprehensive smart energy planning of the city. The investments foreseen amount to 1.8 billion euros that should add 15,000 jobs.

**Florence** received a mentioning for a strongly communicative SEAP of overall excellent quality where the process of dissemination and participation is integral part and goes parallel with the various phases of implementation. The city has created a thematic “Covenant of Mayors” working group which comprises various departments headed by the one on urban development, where the part on communication is entrusted to the public relations office responding directly to the mayor.

## Conclusions

### *Results*

A+CoM promotes Sustainable Energy Action Plans of Excellence in the hope that this will lead to a **general improvement of the quality of these key documents**: they should direct the actions of the local administration and of the stakeholders in a process that will last many years, presumably decades, of stepping out of a fossil society and economy reducing overall energy consumption and satisfying the diminishing demand with energy from renewable sources. A+CoM, by highlighting the merits of SEAPs produced in the preceding year, wants to give impulses and encouragement to those that start with the elaboration of their own plan.

The guidelines of the CoM offer exhaustive instructions on how to elaborate the

SEAP. The formal approval of the SEAPs submitted is under way. The obvious difference between the formal approval by the Commission and an award is that the latter can concentrate on **qualitative elements** where the claim of the authority of the judgement resides in the qualification and diversity of the scientific committee. As became evident above, A+CoM - building on COMBAT - besides evaluating the overall quality of the SEAP and its congruence with formal requirements (many candidates were asked to put the SEAP on their internet site in order to be eligible) was looking above all at whether the document gives indications of **a process under way**, instead of a product often elaborated exclusively by an external expert.

The qualitative evaluation of a SEAP took the members of the technical committee on the average half a day and there was a very high degree of convergence, be it within the technical and the scientific committee, be it between them. In other words: **qualitative evaluations have their own objectivity** and can be a valuable complementary aspect to the formal check on the internal consistency of the Baseline Emission Inventory and the reduction goals. It might be worthwhile taking into consideration to elaborate a checklist / template for the qualitative evaluation of SEAPs which should also facilitate the evaluation of the first wave of two-year reports. The criteria used by A+CoM are a first approach to this subject that will see further refinement as the award becomes more mature.

### *Second edition*

A+CoM already in its first edition has had a **very high visibility** on the national level. 112 internet sites have given the news and more than a fifth of all the SEAPs produced in the period 2010/2011 asked to receive the award. Climate Alliance Italy and Kyoto Club hope to be able to build on this success with **the second edition** that will accept candidacies for SEAPs produced in 2012. In the first half of this year approximately 250 plans have been submitted and assuming that this trend continues it should be approximately 500 by the end of the year (leaving still approximately 1300 SEAPs to be elaborated in Italy).

### *Further perspectives*

Already with its first edition A+CoM seems to have shown its usefulness in promoting substantive standards for the elaboration of SEAPs. It will be up to Coordinating and Supporting Structures in other European countries to evaluate whether an award of this kind makes sense in their country and eventually one could imagine a European Award. Eventually also an award for the first reports could be taken into consideration to further strengthen the process character of the Covenant of Mayors.



# A+COM

## Award for Sustainable Energy Action Plan of excellence

City of \_\_\_\_\_

### Criteria for eligibility. The SEAP:

- has been uploaded on the web site of the Covenant of Mayors
- is present on the website of the city
- has been approved by the city council
- contains a clear reference to the goal of at least 20% reduction of CO2 by 2020
- is consistent with the formal commitments as defined in the SEAP guidelines
- contains a Baseline emission inventory
- contains concrete actions in the following 4 key areas: municipal, residential, tertiary and transport
- contains concrete actions in at least three of the following six fields of action: local energy production, urban planning, GPP, public campaigns, involvement of stakeholders, industry (excluding ETS)

### Criteria for the quality of the SEAP:

Detailed collection of local data bottom-up, in particular of the municipal administration itself and detailed elaboration of the Baseline emission inventory

Adequate adaptation of the administrative structure that offers a realistic chance for the SEAP's goals to enter into the day-to-day functioning of the administration.

In the phase of elaboration of the SEAP the public sector was involved also beyond the municipal administration as well as the private sector (stakeholders) and the plan foresees a role for them in the implementation.

Quality and ambition of the commitment of the municipal administration in the reduction of its own emissions

- Comprehensiveness of the fields of action
- Specific, measurable, realizable and realistic goals
- Institutional arrangements and instruments for monitoring
- Setting-up of a structure for the collection of data (energy and economic data) in the coming years

Procedures for the periodic revision of the SEAP and for reports on its implementation

The quality of the SEAP as an instrument of communication for the stakeholders. The text is precise and of immediate usefulness for the actors.

Internal coherence of the SEAP and with the plans and actions in other fields and other levels of government

A+CoM is promoted in the context of: