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# Multi-Level Governance and the Covenant of Mayors

Paving the Way for  
Sustainable Development  
in the Western Balkans

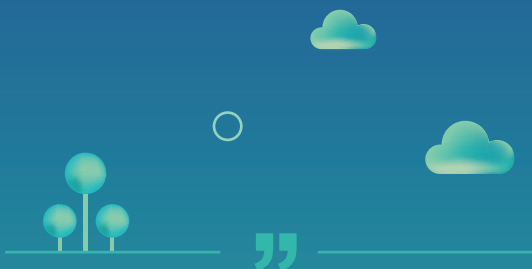
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In the pursuit of sustainable development, it is crucial to recognise and harness the power of collaboration and coordination among different levels of government, stakeholders, and communities. This brochure aims to shed light on the concept of multi-level governance within the context of the Covenant of Mayors, with a particular focus on its significance for the Western Balkans region.

## Multi-Level Governance

Multi-level governance refers to the cooperative approach where decision-making processes involve various tiers of government, including local, regional, national, and international levels. It recognises that in order to address complex challenges, such as climate change and sustainable development, the active participation and collaboration of all stakeholders is indispensable. By distributing power and sharing responsibilities, multi-level governance enables effective and inclusive policy-making processes, leading to longer-term frameworks, stronger relationships, and more successful initiatives.



*A well-implemented Multi-Level Governance contributes **multiple benefits to policy-making processes and implementation.***

# Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy

The Covenant of Mayors is a prominent global and European initiative that brings together local and regional authorities committed to promoting sustainable energy and mitigating climate change. Launched in 2008, it encourages signatories to exceed the European Union's climate and energy objectives. By joining the Covenant of Mayors, municipalities commit to developing and implementing ambitious sustainable energy and climate action plans.

## Multi-Level Governance and the Covenant of Mayors in the Western Balkans

The Western Balkans region, comprising Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo\*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia, faces unique challenges and opportunities in the context of sustainable development. Multi-level governance, coupled with the implementation of the Covenant of Mayors, can play a transformative role in this region, fostering cooperation, innovation, and sustainable growth.



<sup>1</sup>\*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

## Strengthening Local Capacities

At the heart of multi-level governance lies the empowerment of local authorities. Through the Covenant of Mayors, municipalities in the Western Balkans gain access to technical expertise, financial resources, and best practices. This support enables them to develop comprehensive sustainable energy and climate action plans that are tailored to their specific needs and aspirations.

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*“Through Multi-Level Governance, **legislation and policy instruments can be better aligned to achieve their full potential and optimise impact on the ground.**”*

## Enhancing Collaboration and Exchange

Multi-level governance thrives on collaboration and knowledge-sharing. The Covenant of Mayors facilitates networking and cooperation among local and regional authorities, fostering peer-to-peer learning and experience exchange. This cross-border collaboration strengthens regional ties and enables the Western Balkans municipalities to tap into a wealth of ideas, solutions, and support.

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*“**Common priorities at all levels facilitated by Multi-Level Governance can increase the speed of implementation through better frameworks and more efficient planning of available resources.**”*

## Aligning with EU Integration

The Western Balkans region aspires to join the European Union. Adopting the principles of multi-level governance and participating in the Covenant of Mayors demonstrate commitment to aligning with EU values and policies. This alignment opens doors to additional funding opportunities, technical assistance, and policy convergence, further accelerating sustainable development efforts.



## Achieving Sustainable Development

Multi-level governance, in conjunction with the Covenant of Mayors, offers a pathway to sustainable development for the Western Balkans. Fostering collaboration, empowering local authorities, and promoting knowledge exchange supports the region in tackling climate change, advancing renewable energy, and creating resilient communities. Through cooperation, the region can embrace the power of multi-level governance for a sustainable and prosperous future.

# EU4 Energy Transition: Covenant of Mayors in the Western Balkans and Türkiye

The “EU4 Energy Transition: Covenant of Mayors in the Western Balkans and Türkiye” project aims to deliver on the energy transition and tackle climate change in the Western Balkans through an increased uptake of the Covenant of Mayors. With this project the European Union and the German Federal Government support municipal authorities in the Western Balkans to translate their ambitions to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions into reality and enhance resilience to climate change impacts, while taking into account diversity on the ground.



# Promoting Multi-Level Governance in Energy and Climate Policies

The project supports and empowers municipalities to participate in a multi-level governance for the development and implementation of energy and climate policies aligned with the process of development and implementation of National Energy and Climate Plans. In doing so, dialogue between central governments and other sublevels as well as with regional organisations, such as the Energy Community Secretariat, is ensured.



*“**Dialogue** fostered by a well-established Multi-Level Governance usually **improves relations**, helps to save costs through reduced inefficiencies, and **avoids conflicts**.”*



# Supporting the Creation of a Multi-Level Governance Exchange Platform

The project also supports the creation of a Multi-Level Governance Exchange Platform, enabling municipalities to strengthen their presence in national planning. A link between the national level, which is responsible for developing and implementing National Energy and Climate Plans as well as national adaptation strategies and plans, where available, and the local level, which focuses on Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plans, is established through respective municipal associations or other suitable platforms. In addition to the role of the municipal associations as intermediaries for their members, the project strengthens their role as advocacy for the needs of local authorities at national level.



*“By bringing everyone to the table, Multi-Level Governance promotes shared responsibility for both the policy-making process and its subsequent implementation.”*

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