

CoMCase Story

SEMISE AHEF task GEO-29: “Preparation of the Municipality of Tbilisi for its membership in the Covenant of Mayors”

SEMISE Capacity Building: “Covenant of Mayors going East International Conference on the Covenant of Mayors”

Small-scale technical assistance and capacity building

1. The idea

SEMISE found the greatest interest in reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in requests to help prepare for membership in the Covenant of Mayors (CoM), also an EC funded program. Municipalities in the CoM commit to reducing their GHG emissions 20 percent by 2020 compared to a baseline chosen at project start.

In 2009, before INOGATE launched its own, separate Covenant of Mayors project, several cities in the Partner Countries applied for technical assistance (TA) to begin participation in the EC CoM program. SEMISE responded by providing TA to three cities:

- Sumgayit, Azerbaijan
- Yerevan, Armenia
- Tbilisi, Georgia

First came the application for AHEF TA from Tbilisi, submitted by Mr. Zviad Archuadze, Head of Municipal Economic Policy Agency. Then, after TA implementation was well underway, INOGATE decided to conduct an international conference in Tbilisi as Capacity Building. The conference was an effort to attract 50 new cities to the Covenant. The venue gave Georgia international status. CoM became both an AHEF and a Capacity Building activity under SEMISE.

The idea follows the Astana Road Map’s 3rd area of cooperation: “Participating in international activities related to sustainable energy development.”

2. Implementation

Of the three cities that applied, only the mayor of Tbilisi had already signed the Covenant before SEMISE started implementing TA. Therefore, the clock was ticking on the 1-year deadline for signatories to create their obligatory Sustainable

Energy Action Plan (SEAP). SEMISE had to deliver its recommendation fast, and the municipality had to work fast to create its SEAP.

SEMISE experts a) conducted a workshop to present the task's findings and conduct a practical exercise with participants, and b) gathered potential donors at a round table with Tbilisi and other Georgian municipalities. It was attended by representatives of the German Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the World Bank and others. SEMISE experts explained that it would cost hundreds of thousands of euro to create the SEAP for Tbilisi and almost a hundred million euro more to achieve its 20 percent GHG reduction, according to the SEMISE pre-screening spreadsheet.



Japanese Ambassador (l.) at Donors' Conference

SEMISE's training and report (with tools as appendices) helped the Municipality of Tbilisi get started, especially in the first critical year of CoM membership. One report appendix was the terms of reference (ToR) for retaining a GHG specialist. This is a firm requirement for GHG accounting.



SEMISE Team (l), Tbilisi City Hall Team (r.) at Project Presentation

In the course of the work, SEMISE helped move thinking forward on two issues concerning cities in the Eastern Partnership.

1. In order to **prevent further growth of emissions** until 2020, Tbilisi must invest in soft measures at a cost of several million euros. This is in addition to the efforts to **reduce emissions** by 20% from the chosen baseline year.

SEMISE engaged the CoM Office and the Joint Research Centre (JRC) in a dialog to clarify this point, not addressed in the beginning.

2. There was much debate about the baseline year. Some in Tbilisi wanted to choose 1990 with all of its industrial pollution as a baseline, making 20 percent reduction an easy target, in fact already achieved. SEMISE acted between the CoM Office and the Municipality to emphasize an obscure point in the CoM Guidelines. It says that emissions from defunct industries may not be counted in the baseline. Since most of the old heavy Soviet industries had closed after 1990, the 1990 emissions acceptable to CoM were much lower than the actual 1990 emissions, so Tbilisi eventually chose a recent year as its baseline.

As follow-up to AHEF TA, SEMISE organized and conducted a Capacity Building conference, called the “Covenant of Mayors going East,” with Tbilisi as the host city. Mayor Gigi Ugulava gave the keynote address, confirming that Tbilisi was serious about its CoM commitment.

Covenant of Mayors going East International Conference on the Covenant of Mayors 21-22 October 2010 – Tbilisi, Georgia



Hosted by the City of Tbilisi



*Presentations &
panel discussions*



Participants



Mayors & Vice-mayors

After more presentations by Tbilisi City Hall, other municipalities, ministries, UNDP and EU programs, the SEMISE Key Expert for Sustainable Energy finished the event with “Key recommendations for cities considering joining the Covenant of Mayors based on SEMISE experience with cities in the Caucasus.” It was a series of observations to point out the realities of what may or may not be possible under CoM, so that new members could join with realistic expectations.

3. Results achieved

The conference achieved its objectives:

- Presented experience of EU cities already committed to CoM with developed SEAPs.
- Supported Tbilisi’s CoM commitment as a recent, new CoM member.
- Supported EE/RES networking on a municipal level.
- Raised interest among potential municipal members east of the EU.

The AHEF TA achieved and exceeded its objectives:

Per ToR:

- Prepared ToR for creation of a GHG Emissions Inventory.
- Adapted existing Covenant of Mayors guidelines for Municipal SEAP.
- Assisted in finding donors to help finance GHG inventory and SEAP development.

Extra:

- Prepared ToR for development of SEAP in the Buildings Sector.
- Prepared ToR for development of SEAP in the Transportation Sector.
- Prepared screening spreadsheet for life cycle evaluation of SEAP measures.

Just in time, donors from the SEMISE round table stepped forward and offered further TA after SEMISE finished. In the end, the beneficiary reported that it was USAID that came through with the SEAP, and the municipality submitted it right *on the day of the deadline!* Many other CoM signatories have not been able to meet this first critical deadline. It is to Tbilisi’s credit that City Hall managed the process and took advantage of available assistance to meet its first major CoM commitment.

4. The future

Tbilisi is foremost among cities east of the EU in implementing CoM objectives. Tbilisi sets an example for other cities. It stands alone among SEMISE beneficiaries by signing the CoM and delivering a SEAP. Based on success to date, INOGATE expects the Municipality of Tbilisi to meet its commitment to reduce greenhouse gases by 20% on time by 2020.