

# The Lisbon Action Plan: from Charter to Action

## Introduction

A thousand representatives of local and regional authorities from all over Europe convened at the Second European Conference on Sustainable Cities & Towns in Lisboa, Portugal from 6-8 October 1996. They learned about the status of Local Agenda 21 process in 35 European countries and assessed the progress made since the First Conference held in Aalborg, Denmark in May 1994. They exchanged ideas and experiences of local practice and explored opportunities to collaborate with other European communities on joint projects. They identified the needs of local authorities engaged in the Local Agenda processes and helped to shape the next phase of the Campaign.

The European Sustainable Cities & Towns Campaign, initiated at the Aalborg Conference by 80 European municipalities which signed the Charter of European Cities & Towns Towards Sustainability (Aalborg Charter), has meanwhile been joined by 250 local and regional authorities. By signing the Charter they committed themselves to engage in the process of developing and achieving a consensus among their local communities on a long-term action plan towards sustainability (Local Agenda 21).

The initial two-year phase of the Campaign was primarily devoted to spreading the word about local sustainability by promoting the Aalborg Charter, urging further local authorities to sign the Charter and join the Campaign, and providing guidance on the Local Agenda 21 process. The next phase launched at the Lisboa Conference will focus on implementing the principles set out in the Charter, starting and undertaking a Local Agenda 21 process, and implementing the local sustainability plan. By engaging in this phase, European local authorities shall contribute to the implementation of not only the Agenda 21 (Rio 1992), but also the Habitat Agenda (Istanbul 1996).

Therefore, the participants in the Lisboa Conference 1996 endorsed the following document entitled "From Charter to Action". It is based upon local experiences as reported and discussed at the 26 workshops at the Conference, and takes into consideration the principles and recommendations laid down in the Aalborg Charter, the "Step by Step Guide" from the UK Local Government Management Board, the Sustainable Cities Report from the European Commission's Expert Group on the Urban Environment, and the Local Agenda 21 Planning Guide from the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives.

By engaging in the next phase of the European Sustainable Cities & Towns Campaign, the participants in this first European local government conference following the United Nations Habitat II Conference (Istanbul, June 1996) wish to contribute to the implementation of the Habitat Agenda.

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### 1.

We believe that the adoption of the Charter of European Cities & Towns Towards Sustainability (Aalborg Charter) is one of the best starting points for a Local Agenda 21 process.

2.

We believe that the local authority should be the main facilitator of the Local Agenda 21 process.

3.

We believe that the Local Agenda 21 process requires the involvement of the entire local authority - whether city, town or rural community.

4.

We shall enter into consultation and partnerships with the various sectors of our community to create synergy through cooperation.

5.

We shall seek to get our own house in order by implementing the principle of negotiating outward.

6.

We shall carry out systematic action planning to move from analysis to action.

7.

We shall integrate environmental with social and economic development to improve health and quality of life for our citizens.

8.

We shall use advanced tools for sustainability management.

9.

We shall establish programmes to raise awareness among our citizens, interest groups, as well as politicians and local government officers of sustainable development issues.

10.

We shall gain strength through inter-authority alliances: associations, networks and campaigns.

11.

We shall build North-South and West-East alliances for sustainable development.

12.

We shall go ahead in concert with the European Sustainable Cities & Towns Campaign.

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### Preparing local government for the Local Agenda 21 process

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#### **1. We believe that the adoption of the Charter of European Cities & Towns Towards Sustainability (Aalborg Charter) is one of the best starting points for a Local Agenda 21 process.**

We need the definitive political will to engage in a Local Agenda 21 process. We will identify a group of motivated people to drive the initiative. We will use ideas, concepts and mandates such as Agenda 21, the European Union's Fifth Environmental Action Programme, the Aalborg Charter or the United Nations Habitat II Conference to refer to. We will establish a

work programme and time schedule for the process, defining phases with clear objectives. By signing the Aalborg Charter, we will join the European Sustainable Cities & Towns Campaign and consider joining any network of local authorities that we think can best provide advice and practical support on environmental management and sustainability.

## **2. We believe that the local authority should be the main facilitator of the Local Agenda 21 process.**

Our local authority should shed its sovereign attitude and adopt the facilitation role, provide the necessary thrust as long as it has not been developed by other actors, dedicate staff capacity and provide a budget, employ a professional facilitator and mediator, and show leadership but not dominate the process.

## **3. We believe that the Local Agenda 21 process requires the involvement of the entire local authority - whether city, town or rural community**

Internal networking is important to involve the Council and the administration, elected officials and officers, all departments and all levels of responsibility. Support from the municipal leader as well as training of elected representatives and officers on sustainability concepts are essential. As local sustainability is made up of social, economic and environmental sustainability, a cross-sectoral approach is indispensable.

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### **Establishing strategies for involving the community**

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## **4. We shall enter into consultation and partnerships with the various sectors of our community to create synergy through cooperation**

Achieving a consensus on a Local Agenda 21 among all sectors and actors of the community is not only required by Agenda 21 (Rio 1992), but gives the long-term action plan the robustness required to have the chance of being implemented. We recommend establishing a stakeholders group (Local Agenda 21 Forum). We will build partnerships for concrete projects with clear objectives, and form project working groups, tasks forces, advisory groups or round tables. We will outline the process and seek agreement on the procedure, the stages of the process, and the objectives. We will guide the participants with sensitivity, but purposefully through the process. We will define the particular interests of each party explicitly and maintain dialogue with them in order to build trust through openness and transparency.

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### **Local Agenda 21 approach and planning**

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## **5. We shall seek to get our own house in order by implementing the principle of negotiating outward**

Our community should not export its problems into the larger environment or to the future. The ethics of sustainable development require us to follow the principle of negotiating outward, which addresses the need to achieve a balance between local demand and supply in our city, and to the extent that this will not be possible, to enter into negotiations with our surrounding region, country, and continent about the share of opportunities, burdens, and responsibilities. We shall identify all options for the community to stop or reduce exporting problems and check if the conditions for using the larger environment and the future are equitable. We will undertake social, economic and eco-audits of our municipality in order to

investigate its impact on the environment and future generations, and report on the results.

## **6. We shall carry out systematic action planning to move from analysis to action**

Local Agenda 21 is a participatory process, which requires a systematic step by step procedure. First, the Local Agenda 21 Forum will discuss and agree a philosophy and vision, which the Council will adopt after consultation with the public. We shall identify problems, causes and effects; invite the Council to adopt objectives; prioritise the problems using the methodology of impact assessment; identify options for action and set targets; create programmes to address targets and formalise programmes into an action plan; implement the plan and monitor progress; evaluate results and provide feedback into the process.

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### **Sustainability management tools**

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## **7. We shall integrate environmental with social and economic development to improve health and quality of life for our citizens**

Social stability and equity must be based on sustainable economy, where the economy is based on the capacity of nature, i.e. environmental sustainability. Sustainable development planning needs to integrate environmental with social and economic aspects and therefore requires cross-sectoral approaches to planning and implementation. We shall coordinate environmental with other sectoral, in particular social and economic plan-making; introduce a sustainability impact assessment procedure into the negotiating procedures for authorising new businesses and plants; and encourage the application of environmental management and audit schemes (EMAS) by local businesses.

## **8. We shall use advanced tools for sustainability management**

We shall manage our local authority towards sustainability by applying a wide range of methods and tools for environmental, economic, social and health management. We shall take advantage of sustainability indicators for describing the present state and measuring development; introduce EMAS and Environmental Budgeting and other ecological balancing methods, use the methods of environmental impact assessment and strategic environmental assessment, and extend them to assess social, health and economic impacts as well.

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### **Awareness-raising and education**

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## **9. We shall establish programmes to raise awareness among our citizens, interest groups, as well as politicians and local government officers of sustainability issues.**

Awareness-raising and education is essential to achieve a thorough understanding of the interrelationship between social, economic and environmental aspects. Professional training is required so that our officials can learn about options for action, good practice, management methods and tools. We shall undertake awareness-raising activities addressed to all groups of the local community, and establish education and training programmes in kindergartens, schools, universities, vocational and adult training institutions.

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**10. We shall gain strength through inter-authority alliances: associations, networks and campaigns.**

We shall form associations with surrounding municipalities to solve imbalances according to the principle of negotiating outward. We shall involve the government or administrative levels one higher and one lower in all initiatives and programmes. We shall take advantage of the momentum we shall gain and the encouragement we shall receive by joining municipal networks and Local Agenda 21 campaigns.

**11. We shall build North-South and West-East alliances for sustainable development.**

As cities and towns are not islands, local sustainability cannot be achieved without caring for the global impacts of our local resource use, our emissions, and our export of impacts. We shall take on the responsibility for the negative impacts of our actions on the global environment and cooperate with local authorities in developing countries. We shall consider partnerships for sustainable development or similar municipal international cooperation arrangements, set up bilateral assistance schemes, and explore possibilities for the joint implementation of measures to protect the climate, the water, the soil, and to secure biodiversity.

**12. We shall go ahead in concert with the European Sustainable Cities & Towns Campaign.**

With the Lisboa Conference in October 1996, the European Sustainable Cities & Towns Campaign has entered into its second phase, "From Charter to Action". We shall continue to conduct our Local Agenda 21 processes in concert with other European local authorities. We shall ask the associations and networks of local authorities to continue to provide practical support, guidance and training.

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*Endorsed by the participants at the Second European Conference on Sustainable Cities & Towns, Lisboa, Portugal, 8 October 1996*

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