8TH EUROPEAN CONFERENCE ON
SUSTAINABLE CITIES & TOWNS

BASQUE COUNTRY | BILBAO | 27 – 29 APRIL 2016

basquecountry2016.eu

THE BASQUE DECLARATION

New Pathways for European Cities and Towns

to create productive, sustainable and resilient cities
for a liveable and inclusive Europe

Preamble

Where we come from

More than 20 years ago at the 1st European Sustainable Cities & Towns Conference, Mayors of European cities and towns approved the ground-breaking **Aalborg Charter** and kicked-off the European Sustainable Cities & Towns Campaign. Inspired by the results of the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro and the results of the EU Urban Environment Expert Group and with the support of the major Local Government Networks in Europe, the Campaign developed into the first large scale local government movement based on clear commitments and with a strong supporting structure receiving support from the European Commission. Thousands of Local Agenda 21 processes were developed across Europe, laying out visions and actions for a sustainable future of European cities. In some parts of Europe regional and national programmes have been supporting the Local Agenda 21 movement, both structurally and financially. In this first decade the focus was very much on participatory planning and environmental issues.

10 years later, in 2004, following the UN Rio+10 Summit in Johannesburg the need for a clear reference framework including the setting of goals and the measurement of progress was reflected in the **Aalborg Commitments**. Many cities were starting to develop their commitments and to discuss indicators and management systems for their implementation and monitoring. By that time the focus was rather on implementation mechanisms, resource efficiency and the processes that transfer resources into societal services and well-being.

The Covenant of Mayors and the European Urban Agenda

With the launch of the **Covenant of Mayors** in 2008 a new governance model was set up in Europe, directly connecting the local and EU political levels. Today, the initiative brings together thousands of local and regional authorities voluntarily committed to implementing EU climate and energy objectives in their territories. Whether this successful model of governance can and will be replicated for other thematic areas is yet to be discussed.

Finally, 2016 is the year of the launch of an **EU Urban Agenda**, aiming at a better integration of urban policies in the European Union, and establishing new forms of cooperation between local governments and the EU as well as the European Commission. This framework is supported by the Pact of Amsterdam launched at the end of May 2016.

The new UN framework

In September 2015 the United Nations General Assembly approved the 17 **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** including Goal 11, which refers to cities and urban areas. The SDGs take the logic and spirit of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) forward to the universal UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They apply to all UN member states and take a comprehensive perspective on international development and sustaining human life on our planet. The SDGs include new themes and take an approach that sees the environment, economy and society as embedded systems rather than separate and competing pillars, as for example in the field of Sustainable Consumption and Production.

In December 2015 at the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 21) in Paris a global climate agreement was achieved to limit global warming to between 1,5˚ and 2˚C. Together with other international reference agreements the **Paris Climate Agreement** forms the actual international framework for climate action across all levels of government.

At the UN Climate Summit in September 2014, the UN Secretary General together with his Special Envoy on Cities and Climate Change launched the **Global Compact of Mayors**. With the support of major global city networks, the Compact establishes a common platform to capture the impact of cities' collective actions through standardised measurement of emissions and climate risk, and consistent, public reporting of their efforts. Hundreds of cities worldwide have joined the Compact of Mayors since then.

Maybe more explicitly than ever before these agreements share the notion of global boundaries that need to be respected in order to protect the quality of life for the people in cities, countries, continents and on our planet. However, more importantly we have to recognise that the changes needed to achieve the goals outlined globally will ask for a comprehensive societal transformation including social, cultural, economic and technological challenges that will deeply affect urban societies.

Cities and Towns in Europe

City Leaders, urban decision makers, stakeholders and citizens are asked to design and shape this transformation while at the same time Europe has still not recovered from the financial and economic crisis and our countries are challenged by unemployment and a growing divide between the rich and the poor. In addition, our societies have to face regional conflicts in neighbouring regions, the economic and social divide that is one of their causes, as well as the increased migration towards Europe that is one of their consequences.

Today, in order to meet these challenges we will have to think outside of the box and find innovative ways to economically and socially engage our civil societies particularly on the local level. We will have to find sustainable solutions that increase the economic value that is captured in cities and regions for the benefit of the local population. We need inspiration, raised awareness and education, new ideas, technological and social innovation, and our active engagement as responsible politicians, entrepreneurs and citizens to jointly safeguard our future.

We have to define new pathways into the future!

We, the Mayors and representatives of European Cities and Towns

In light of our responsibility towards the well-being of our current and future citizens and the global dimension of our local development, lifestyles and resource consumption

Acknowledge the need for a technological, socio-economic, and socio-cultural transformation of our societies, in order to ensure a decent quality of life for our population whilst respecting the limits of our local and global ecosystems and available natural resources;

Agendas

We understand the need for transformation in order to:

1. decarbonise our energy systems and reduce total energy consumption,
2. create sustainable urban mobility patterns and accessibility for all,
3. protect and enhance biodiversity and ecosystem services,
4. reduce the use of greenfield land and natural space,
5. protect water resources, water and air quality,
6. adapt to climate change, and reduce the risk of disasters,
7. improve public space to create convivial, safe, and vibrant environments,
8. provide sufficient and adequate housing for all,
9. guarantee the social inclusion and integration of all parts of the society,
10. strengthen our local economies and local employment opportunities.

In order to support and accelerate...

...The Socio-Cultural Transformation:

We will develop a "culture of sustainability" based on equal access to municipal services for all citizens regardless of their age, religious affiliation, ethnic identity or gender, and reflect this particularly in our budgeting and educational systems;

We will actively involve our citizens and go beyond participatory planning into participatory implementation by supporting and using new approaches like co-production, co-design and co-innovation;

We will re-think the boundaries between public and private services, activities and tasks, and seek to encourage local private and civic engagement;

We will promote social innovation, social enterprises and civic engagement that support the education, training and social inclusion of marginalised groups and immigrants;

We will nurture the "sharing economy", "collaborative economy" or "civic economy" and other approaches that combine the ideas of entrepreneurship, civic engagement and societal transformation.

...The Socio-Economic Transformation:

We will turn the challenges in front of us into opportunities for our local economies in key areas such as decentralised renewable energy production, local food production, innovative transportation concepts, new approaches to social services and many other innovations;

We will create and close local value chains, facilitate innovative cooperation of businesses in order to capture local and regional value, create small scale local investment opportunities and jobs, and to increase the public income;

We will apply innovative approaches to financing including such as crowd-funding, cooperative financing or the blending of public and civic funding, or complimentary currencies;

We will purchase products and services with high environmental performance and take into account the social and economic impacts of a purchasing decision;

We will pursue the development towards a circular economy to reduce the need for natural resource consumption and the production of waste.

...The Technological Transformation:

We will wisely select and apply new and smart technologies that support the necessary socio-cultural and socio-economic transformations and serve the interest of the citizens and the public good;

We will use public procurement as an instrument to accelerate the market introduction of innovative and sustainable technologies, and will ensure that their application is demand driven, and enables decentralised local solutions to the challenges we face;

We will address the digital divide in our local societies and provide the appropriate infrastructure and support needed for all groups to have equal access to information and digital services;

We will support open data standards and take care that collected public data will not be controlled by private actors, but remain available for our local governments in order to improve our policies and services for the citizens;

We will prepare our policies, our public management and governance systems as well as our urban societies for the socio-cultural changes that are triggered by innovative and smart technologies in order to maximise the positive impacts.

In order to become active partners in this transformation...

...We call upon the national and regional governments, and the European Union:

To substantially increase the horizontal (across departments and ministries) and vertical (across all levels of governance) integration of the policies relating to urban development;

To provide common regulatory frameworks, incentives and taxation in order to create market conditions that encourage the necessary transformation and generate transparent and level playing grounds for all private and public actors engaged; and to repeal frameworks, incentives and taxation that impede this transition;

To encourage and support community-led initiatives and decentralised approaches based on common regulatory frameworks and market conditions in order to support local value chains and value capturing.

To align the political goals and targets with the financial programmes and support schemes available for urban development and infrastructure;

To advise public financial institutions and banks to move towards supporting small-scale investments below their current thresholds, and providing security schemes and guarantee funds for community based investments.

...We declare our readiness:

To support national and regional governments, and the European Union in implementing the UN SDGs and the Paris Climate Agreement, and in aligning the EU Urban Agenda with their goals;

To initiate and implement Transformative Actions locally along the 15 Pathways outlined above;

To monitor and document our Transformative Actions and make them available for replication through the European Sustainable Cities Platform **www.sustainablecities.eu**

I·C·L·E·I
Local
Governments
for Sustainability

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Bizkaia
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B
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udalsarea21
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red vasca de municipios hacia la sostenibilidad

Arabako Foru Aldundia
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Donostiako Udala
Ayuntamiento de San Sebastián

VITORIA
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We would like to invite you to endorse the Basque Declaration.
For more information, please contact **info@sustainablecities.eu**

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