



THE HANNOVER CALL

of European Municipal Leaders at the Turn of the 21st Century

A. PREAMBLE

We, 250 municipal leaders from 36 European countries and neighbouring regions, have convened at the Hannover Conference 2000 (the Third European Conference on Sustainable Cities & Towns) from 9-12 February 2000 to take stock of our progress towards making our cities and towns sustainable and to agree on a direction of our efforts at the turn of the 21st Century.

By signing the Charter of European Cities & Towns Towards Sustainability (Aalborg Charter), we have committed our local authorities to engage in Local Agenda 21 or other sustainable development planning processes and have joined the European Sustainable Cities & Towns Campaign that until now has been jointly co-ordinated by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), Eurocities, the Healthy Cities network of the World Health Organisation, the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) and the United Towns Organisation (UTO) in co-operation with the European Commission and its Expert Group on the Urban Environment.

650 local and regional authorities from 32 countries across Europe have committed themselves to local sustainability and the Campaign by signing the Aalborg Charter. The population covered by all Campaign participants represents more than 130 Million European citizens.

We have taken the Lisbon Action Plan for orientation and expressed the need for action in the Declarations of Turku, Sofia, Seville and The Hague. The progress achieved since the launch of the Campaign is considerable and has led to many positive changes in our cities and towns. Our achievements encourage further action to meet the many challenges we are still facing.

B. PRINCIPLES AND VALUES FOR LOCAL ACTION TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY

B.1 We are united in the responsibility for the well-being of the present and future generations. Therefore, we work for more social equity and justice, against poverty and social exclusion, and for a liveable and healthy environment. We value and respect differences in cultures, gender, religion, race and ages, recognising that they contribute to the social wealth of our cities.

B.2 We believe that the economy – as the human activities that process natural resources into goods and services that satisfy human and societal needs – must become socially just and ecologically efficient, avoiding unnecessary consumption of non-renewable resources.

B.3 We accept shared responsibility for sustainable development. We want to involve citizens and work in partnership with all levels of government and local stakeholders including NGOs towards our global vision in a holistic, integrated way.

B.4 We are united in our common belief that a peaceful world is a pre-requisite for a sustainable society.

C. CITY LEADERSHIP

C.1 We, municipal leaders, are committed to local action with global responsibility. We want to be visionary in our leadership, brave in facing the challenges, and accountable in our actions. Only in this way can we manage the change that will take place at an unprecedented pace. With reference to the opportunities, barriers and challenges that we have identified in the annex to this Call we have agreed on the following commitments.

C.2 We support European integration to achieve social and economic cohesion whilst adhering to recognised social and environmental standards. This is a pre-condition for sustainable communities and a peaceful society. Therefore, we welcome the enlargement of the European Union and the Euro-Mediterranean partnership policy.

C.3 We face severe challenges: poverty and unemployment, inadequate housing and working conditions; air pollution, noise and congestion; degradation of land and habitats; and depletion of water resources. We recognise the double challenge facing Central and Eastern European cities which must also overcome overwhelming problems inherited from the past. The blind adoption of appealing but unsustainable patterns must be avoided. Unequal access to resources and power during the phase of transition has increased disparities within the societies.

C.4 At the same time we feel responsibility towards our counterparts in the South. We want to strengthen decentralised co-operation with cities in developing countries and in particular, in the Mediterranean region.

C.5 We want to pursue local policies that reduce the ecological footprint of our community. We do not want our standard of living to be dependent upon the exploitation of humans and nature elsewhere. We shall measure any action of our local government against our aim to avoid causing damage or shifting burden on future generations.

C.6 We have identified integrated town planning; compact city development; rehabilitation of deprived urban and industrial areas; reduced and more efficient use of land and other natural resources; local transport and energy management; and the fight against social exclusion, unemployment and poverty as key areas of urban management towards local sustainability that we are ready to address.

C.7 We shall look into the opportunities arising from new technologies and innovative concepts for services to make our cities more eco-efficient. We shall be conscious about our purchasing power on the market and use it to direct development towards socially and environmentally sound solutions.

C.8 We are committed to introducing indicators for local sustainability, according to which we would set targets, monitor progress, and report on achievements. A set of voluntarily agreed European Common Indicators may provide a tool to compare change across Europe in the progress being made towards sustainability.

C.9 We are committed to the establishment and further development of regional networks for the promotion of sustainable development.

C.10 We shall seek to assist cities and towns that find themselves in exceptional circumstances, such as natural disasters and after-effects of war.

C.11 We, municipal leaders, are ready to take on the challenges presented by sustainable development and consider the city or town to be the appropriate entity to tackle the problems in an integrated fashion. Therefore, local government needs to be strengthened in many countries and should be given appropriate responsibilities and powers as well as adequate sources of revenue. Local government, in return, should adopt new schemes of governance and work in a democratic, participatory and transparent way and fight any form of corruption.

D. OUR CALL

D.1 WE, MUNICIPAL LEADERS FROM EUROPE AND NEIGHBOURING REGIONS GATHERED IN HANNOVER, CALL UPON THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY:

- (a) to provide stronger support for the implementation of Agenda 21 (the key document of the Rio Earth Summit of 1992) and the Habitat Agenda (the key document of the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements held in Istanbul in 1997) in countries that have not yet engaged in sustainable development
- (b) to stop labour and environmental dumping by incorporating social and environmental standards in international and multilateral agreements on trade, thereby contributing to the alleviation of poverty
- (c) to eradicate debt through remission programmes
- (d) to encourage and not impede local self-government and to support the development of local environmental policies through multilateral agreements
- (e) to provide adequate funds to international financing facilities for sustainable development; in particular, establish an urban sustainable development fund within the Global Environmental Facility

D.2 WE, MUNICIPAL LEADERS FROM EUROPE AND NEIGHBOURING REGIONS GATHERED IN HANNOVER, CALL UPON EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS, IN PARTICULAR THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, AND THE COMMISSION:

- (a) to give a higher priority to local sustainable development as the basis for a sustainable European society, and to create a clear responsibility for urban sustainable development issues in the Commission's structure
- (b) to give priority to the adoption of the co-operation framework for the support to the European Sustainable Cities & Towns Campaign, to provide a more generous financial

framework than proposed by the Commission and to extend its applicability to more countries of neighbouring regions

- (c) to consistently incorporate social and environmental considerations in internal market policies, relevant legislation, programmes, and funding schemes
- (d) to encourage and ensure local self-government in all European countries, and to respect the principle of subsidiarity in all European Community actions
- (e) to develop, jointly with local government associations and networks, a culture of partnership between the European Commission on the one side, and local authorities and their associations on the other side, which reflects the principle of subsidiarity
- (f) to allocate subsidies and grants, in particular under the Structural Funds, to local and regional authorities only on the condition that sustainability criteria are being met
- (g) to support more effectively the efforts of local authorities in Central and Eastern European countries, and also those of Mediterranean countries outside the European Union, to comply with the European Union legislation; they should be encouraged by rewarding initiative, creativity, innovation, and substantial progress towards compliance
- (h) to co-operate with local, state/provincial and national governments on the establishment of a consistent management framework for environmental sustainability at all levels
- (i) to partner with and support the European Sustainable Cities & Towns Campaign, which is jointly co-ordinated by associations and networks of local authorities in co-operation with the European Commission and its Expert Group on the Urban Environment
- (j) to introduce an energy tax – and to stop subsidies for air traffic - as a key instrument for internalising social and environmental costs of energy use and providing an incentive for sustainable energy use and energy efficiency
- (k) to support municipal and regional international co-operation directed towards sustainability and the exchange of relevant practices
- (l) to support a high publicity media campaign on sustainability in co-operation with all appropriate stakeholders
- (m) to support the local level in their efforts to comply with and implement European Union legislation that has an impact on the sustainable development of cities and towns.

D.3 WE, MUNICIPAL LEADERS FROM EUROPE AND NEIGHBOURING REGIONS GATHERED IN HANNOVER, CALL UPON NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS:

- (a) to provide policy frameworks to support local sustainable development, and in particular, to support the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Habitat Agenda in countries that have not yet engaged in sustainable development
- (b) to support national Campaigns for sustainable development and Local Agenda 21
- (c) to allocate subsidies and grants to local and regional authorities, in particular in the fields of urban development and renewal, as well as transport, only on the condition that sustainability criteria are being met
- (d) to agree on a European-wide energy tax, exempting renewable energies and combined heat and power plants
- (e) to recognise cities and regions as valid partners for international development projects directed towards sustainability.

D.4 WE, MUNICIPAL LEADERS FROM EUROPE AND NEIGHBOURING REGIONS GATHERED IN HANNOVER, CALL UPON OTHER LOCAL LEADERS IN OUR REGIONS:

- (a) to sign the Charter of European Cities and Towns Towards Sustainability (the Aalborg Charter) and thereby join the European Sustainable Cities & Towns Campaign
- (b) to engage in the development and implementation of health action plans and sustainable development plans (Local Agenda 21) guided, among others, by the Lisbon Action Plan
- (c) to support this Hannover Call of European Municipal Leaders at the Turn of the 21st Century
- (d) to assume responsibility and accountability for the use of natural resources and environmental quality locally, and introduce management systems for local sustainability and environmental performance such as Environmental Budgeting and EMAS
- (e) to keep their own house in order by introducing policies for green purchasing of products and services

D.5 WE, MUNICIPAL LEADERS FROM EUROPE AND NEIGHBOURING REGIONS GATHERED IN HANNOVER, CALL UPON OTHER STAKEHOLDERS IN THE LOCAL AGENDA 21 PROCESS:

- (a) to support the European Sustainable Cities & Towns Campaign and the associations and networks co-ordinating it
- (b) to engage in local sustainability activities and the Campaign
- (c) to initiate the participation of their city, town or county in the Campaign if it has not yet signed the Aalborg Charter
- (d) such as educational/research institutions, to provide the necessary knowledge and methods to all actors in the Local Agenda 21 process

D.6 WE, MUNICIPAL LEADERS FROM EUROPE AND NEIGHBOURING REGIONS GATHERED IN HANNOVER, CALL UPON THE LEADERS AND DECISION MAKERS IN THE BUSINESS AND FINANCIAL SECTORS:

- (a) to understand that prospects for increasing profit and shareholder value may be severely jeopardised if the sustainable development of cities and the wellbeing of citizens as consumers are not guaranteed
- (b) to join in Local Agenda 21 processes as active participants and to thereby contribute to building sustainable communities
- (c) to integrate environmental, health, safety and risk considerations into their corporate strategies
- (d) to engage in the growing market of sustainable products and services, and to profit from first mover opportunities on these markets

Hannover, 11 February 2000

ANNEX: OUR CONSIDERATIONS

1 OPPORTUNITIES

- (a) The European integration, in particular, the enlargement of the European Union by countries of Central and Eastern Europe, and the EU-Mediterranean policy, present major opportunities for European cities. By re-defining their role in a wider Europe, moving towards compliance with the European Union legislation and becoming multi-cultural, cities will improve their competitiveness and become more sustainable and attractive places.
- (b) At the European and national levels, the integration of environmental concerns into all areas of policy-making is an important goal as recognised by the conclusions of the European Council in Cardiff (1998) and Helsinki (1999). The opportunity should be taken to ensure that this becomes reality at the local level, too.
- (c) The proposal by the European Commission for a community framework for co-operation to promote sustainable urban development (COM[1999]557 final) presents a good basis for continued Commission support to the European Sustainable Cities & Towns Campaign, which should continue to be co-ordinated by associations and networks of local authorities in co-operation and partnership with the Commission
- (d) In the dual economy with its trends of globalisation and localisation, cities will need to maximise their influence on how the local micro-economy can take sustainable development on board. They will have to more strongly reflect the global impact of local actions.
- (e) The unprecedented amount of knowledge, capacity for innovation, and new technologies can be a chance for cities as centres of innovation and solutions.
- (f) The shortage of financial resources, despite bitter impacts, can be seen as a chance for re-setting priorities and increasing efficiency.

2. BARRIERS

- (a) We are willing to address the challenges by taking advantage of opportunities. However, we recognise a number of unfavourable framework conditions that we see as barriers. In some European countries local government is weak and has insufficient power. Local government has been given responsibilities without allowing adequate resources of revenues.
- (b) The internal market was accomplished without prices being set that reflect true costs, including social and environmental costs. Perverse subsidies still provide the wrong incentives.
- (c) Progress and success are still measured in terms of economic growth rather than sustainability terms.
- (d) The financial markets, which govern capital flow and investment, are not democratically controlled.

3. CHALLENGES

- (a) Citizens expect the municipality to provide key conditions and services such as a liveable environment, air quality, water supply, waste and wastewater collection and treatment, public transport, housing, health-care services, and education.
- (b) We, municipal leaders from Europe and neighbouring regions, recognise that in spite of all efforts to improve the environment, most global and European environmental trends give rise to serious concern: while climate change, desertification, loss of water resources, and loss of biodiversity have and will continue to have a global impact, many of the causes of this deteriorating situation have their origins in air pollution, noise, and traffic congestion which are both caused by and affect citizens of cities and towns in their daily lives.
- (c) In the same way, we feel that economic trends present major challenges to our cities: the globalisation of the economy - with financial power overriding political power - lowers the influence citizens can exert on their living conditions via local, national and EU parliaments.
- (d) Social trends as a consequence of economic and technology change pose severe problems. The ageing society, chronic poverty, and growing unemployment are set against an increasingly consumer-driven society. Such circumstances could lead to increased disparities between the haves and have-nots and preventing them will be a formidable challenge to cities and towns working towards sustainability.
- (e) The unprecedented speed of technological development and the rapid changes brought about through information technology innovation will seriously change the way citizens live their lives and the way in which the city itself operates and citizens identify with their city.
- (f) We cannot ignore that the European standard of living is achieved in part through exploitation of the disadvantaged. The exploitation of cheap labour and of nature in developing countries needs to be an issue of importance for all European cities and towns if their „ecological footprints“, i.e. their demand for resources from other parts of the world, are to be reduced.
- (g) Economic distortion, land degradation, political persecution, wars, and civil conflicts cause migration towards European cities, which must have to provide services, infrastructure, and social integration to growing populations.