

AALBORG COMMITMENTS – THE ESSENTIALS

On 11 June 2004 the 1,000 participants at the Fourth European Conference on Sustainable Cities & Towns, Aalborg+10, adopted the 'Aalborg Commitments' as the conference declaration, and representatives of 110 local governments signed the document on stage at the closing plenary. This immediate positive response has fired our optimism that the Aalborg Commitments will generate strong energy for action towards sustainability. We expect that the Aalborg Commitments will play an even greater role over the next ten years than the Aalborg Charter has done over the last ten!

The Aalborg Commitments were developed by the City of Aalborg, CEMR and ICLEI, with support from a drafting group and our partners in the Sustainable Cities & Towns Campaign. In April 2004 the draft went online for open consultation, comments were analysed and incorporated, and the final version was presented to the conference.

This publication aims to introduce the Aalborg Commitments to a wider audience. It presents the Aalborg Commitments idea and briefly explains what the local governments signing the document should do. Further details are on www.aalborgplus10.dk.

We are wholeheartedly committed to promoting the signing and implementation of the Aalborg Commitments in local governments across Europe, and look forward to welcoming your local government to the European movement leading the way on local sustainability action!



Henning G. Jensen, Mayor of Aalborg



Jeremy Smith, Secretary General of CEMR



Gino Van Begin, Regional Director for Europe, ICLEI

Added value

The Aalborg Commitments are designed to strengthen ongoing local sustainability efforts and to revitalise Local Agenda 21. The Aalborg Commitments have two main objectives:

- They aim to raise awareness and highlight the need for local governments across Europe to act in an integrated way to meet the growing challenges of sustainability. They can, in this sense, be a valuable complementary document to the forthcoming EU Thematic Strategy on Urban Environment.
- The Aalborg Commitments are designed as a practical and flexible tool for local action and achievements. On signing the Aalborg Commitments, local governments enter a target-setting process in dialogue with local stakeholders and incorporating existing LA21 or other sustainability action plans. You can, of course, use existing targets or target setting systems, but you are asked to adapt and link them to the 10 themes and thus to the structure of the Aalborg Commitments document.

Signing

Any European local government may sign the Aalborg Commitments, irrespective of whether their country is a member of the European Union. The document must be signed by the Mayor or other authorised local government representative.

Practicalities of the signing procedure

To sign the Aalborg Commitments, please use the form in this publication or go to www.aalborgplus10.dk to download the document in your preferred language. You should also enter your details and announce your decision to sign the Aalborg Commitments document on the website. This will enable us to keep a record of signatories, list them on the website, and keep you informed of the follow-up process, future events and projects. Please post or fax a copy of the signed document to the Aalborg Commitments Secretariat at the address stated on the back of the signing form. As soon as we receive your data and the signed copy of the Aalborg Commitments document we will post your Certificate of Signature.

What signing commits you to

We see the Aalborg Commitments as an integrated framework, and each Commitment as a key component of local sustainability. The Commitments document recognises that all local governments have their own priorities. Nonetheless, we strongly recommend that you ensure that all ten Commitments are addressed when identifying your key priorities, tasks and targets.

By signing, you agree to:

- produce a baseline review of your local situation within 12 months of signing
- enter a local participatory target setting process
- prioritise your tasks, aiming to address all ten Commitments
- set individual local targets within 24 months of the date of your signature
- make a regular Aalborg Commitments monitoring review available to your citizens and
- provide information on your targets and progress for regular assessments.

The baseline review

When compiling the baseline review, you should use the ten themes

1. Governance
2. Local management towards sustainability
3. Natural common goods
4. Responsible consumption and lifestyle choices
5. Planning and design
6. Better mobility, less traffic
7. Local action for health
8. Vibrant and sustainable local economy
9. Social equity and justice
10. Local to global

of the Aalborg Commitments for its structure, drawing on the data that is already available at your local government. Taking the ten themes as the basis for your review structure allows you to identify issues that require particular action. Please incorporate existing targets and political commitments, and encourage all sections of your administration to contribute their most comprehensive and recent technical data to the baseline review.

Who to send the baseline review to

We invite you to send your baseline review to the Aalborg Commitments secretariat at aalborgplus10@aalborg.dk for publication on the Aalborg+10 website, where it will serve as an example for other local governments engaged in the same process.

Setting your targets

The target setting will be related to local situations and needs. If you would like some ideas and suggestions for your target setting process, the Aalborg Commitments Annex on www.aalborgplus10.dk can help. Nearly all the targets in the Annex are expressed as a percentage change within a timescale (by -- % by the year 20--), but other types of indicators or measurements are also possible.

The long term

The networks and cities working together in the framework of the Sustainable Cities & Towns Campaign, namely Association of Cities and Regions for Recycling (ACRR), Climate Alliance – Klima-Bündnis – Alianza del Clima e.V., Council of European Municipalities & Regions (CEMR), Energie-Cités, ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, Medcities, Union of Baltic Cities (UBC) and World Health Organisation (WHO) – Healthy Cities, the Cities of Barcelona, Hannover and Malmö, and the Italian Local Agenda 21 Association, are committed to the follow-up of the Aalborg Commitments, to serving as a contact and information point and to organising monitoring and review processes.

A first European assessment is scheduled for the year 2010, with subsequent reviews at five-year cycles. This will help shape the future activities on the European Sustainable Cities & Towns Campaign and support monitoring and benchmarking between participating local governments.

AALBORG+10 INSPIRING FUTURES

OUR COMMON VISION

We, European local governments united in the European Sustainable Cities & Towns Campaign, assembled at the Aalborg+10 Conference, confirm our shared vision of a sustainable future for our communities. Our vision is of cities and towns that are inclusive, prosperous, creative and sustainable, and that provide a good quality of life for all citizens and enable their participation in all aspects of urban life. Since the Rio Summit in 1992 and the adoption in 1994 of the sustainability principles embodied in the Charter of European Cities & Towns Towards Sustainability – Aalborg Charter, our vision has grown through the 1996 Lisbon Action Plan 'From Charter to Action', the 2000 'Hannover Call of European Municipal Leaders at the Turn of the 21st Century', and the 2002 'Johannesburg Call'. We consider the 2004 'Inspiring Futures – Aalborg+10' Conference a milestone in this ongoing process.

OUR CHALLENGES

In carrying out our responsibilities of local government and management, we are increasingly subject to the combined pressures of economic globalisation and technological development. We are confronted with fundamental economic change as well as with man-made and natural threats to our communities and resources.

We face daunting challenges: creating employment in a knowledge-based economy, combating poverty and social exclusion, securing effective protection for our environment, reducing our ecological footprint, responding to demographic changes and managing cultural diversity, as well as averting conflict and sustaining peace in formerly war-torn communities.

OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

We have a central role in ensuring sustainable development whilst meeting our challenges in cooperation with all other spheres of government. This central role demands that we take a more energetic and integrated approach to local policy making, harmonising environmental, social, cultural and economic objectives. At the same time we must ensure that our efforts to improve our local quality of life do not jeopardise that of people in other parts of the world or of future generations.

We are the level of government closest to European citizens on a day-to-day basis, and have unique opportunities to influence individual behaviour towards sustainability through education and awareness raising.

We can provide local support in implementing European strategies and policies such as the Lisbon Strategy, the European Sustainable Development Strategy, the Sixth Environment Action Programme, the forthcoming EU Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment, and European initiatives on climate change, on health, on governance, and in implementing the UN Millennium Development Goals and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

OUR RESPONSE: THE AALBORG COMMITMENTS

We, European local governments, take up these challenges and accept our responsibilities. We adopt 'The Aalborg Commitments' as a significant step forward, from Agenda to strategic and co-ordinated Action.

We will accelerate our efforts towards local sustainable development, drawing inspiration from the sustainability principles set out in the Aalborg Charter. We aim to translate our common vision for sustainable urban futures into tangible sustainability targets and action at local level.

We adopt the Aalborg Commitments as a resource from which we will select priorities appropriate to our local situations and needs, which also take into account the global impact of our activities. We will initiate a local, participatory process to identify specific targets and time frames to monitor progress towards achieving them.

OUR PARTNERS

We urge all European local and regional governments to join us in signing the Aalborg Commitments, and to inform the European Sustainable Cities & Towns Campaign of their decision.

We urge our national associations of regional and local authorities, our national governments, the European Commission, and other European Institutions to recognise the Aalborg Commitments as a significant contribution to Europe's efforts towards sustainability, and to support our work with the Aalborg Commitments.

We urge local government networks, including the Association of Cities and Regions for Recycling (ACRR), Climate Alliance – Klima-Bündnis – Alianza del Clima e.V., Council of European Municipalities & Regions (CEMR), Energie-Cités, EUROCITIES, ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, Medcities, Union of Baltic Cities (UBC) and World Health Organisation (WHO) – Healthy Cities, to support our work with the Aalborg Commitments, to assist us in achieving and monitoring our progress and to make available their respective fields of expertise.

THE AALBORG COMMITMENTS

1

GOVERNANCE

We are committed to energising our decision-making processes through increased participatory democracy.

We will therefore work to:

1. further develop a commonly shared long-term vision for a sustainable city or a town.
2. build participation and sustainable development capacity in the local community and municipal administration.
3. invite all sectors of local society to participate effectively in decision-making.
4. make our decisions open, accountable and transparent.
5. cooperate effectively and in partnership with adjoining municipalities, other cities and towns, and other spheres of government.

2

LOCAL MANAGEMENT TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY

We are committed to implementing effective management cycles, from formulation through implementation to evaluation.

We will therefore work to:

1. strengthen Local Agenda 21 or other local sustainability processes and mainstream them into the heart of local government.
2. deliver integrated management towards sustainability, based on the precautionary principle and with regard to the forthcoming EU Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment.
3. set targets and time schemes in the framework of the Aalborg Commitments and create and follow the Aalborg Commitments monitoring review.
4. ensure that sustainability issues are central to urban decision-making processes and that resource allocation is based on strong and broad sustainability criteria.
5. cooperate with the European Sustainable Cities & Towns Campaign and its networks to monitor and evaluate our progress towards meeting our sustainability targets.

3

NATURAL COMMON GOODS

We are committed to fully assuming our responsibility to protect, to preserve, and to ensure equitable access to natural common goods.

We will therefore work, throughout our community, to:

1. reduce primary energy consumption, and increase the share of renewable energies.
2. improve water quality, save water, and use water more efficiently.
3. promote and increase biodiversity, and extend and care for designated nature areas and green spaces.
4. improve soil quality, preserve ecologically productive land and promote sustainable agriculture and forestry.
5. improve air quality.

4

RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND LIFESTYLE CHOICES

We are committed to adopting and facilitating the prudent and efficient use of resources and to encouraging sustainable consumption and production.

We will therefore work, throughout our community, to:

1. avoid and reduce waste, and increase re-use and recycling.
2. manage and treat waste in accordance with best practice standards.
3. avoid unnecessary energy consumption, and improve end-use energy efficiency.
4. undertake sustainable procurement.
5. actively promote sustainable production and consumption, in particular of eco-labelled, organic, ethical and fair trade products.

5

PLANNING AND DESIGN

We are committed to a strategic role for urban planning and design in addressing environmental, social, economic, health and cultural issues for the benefit of all.

We will therefore work to:

1. re-use and regenerate derelict or disadvantaged areas.
2. avoid urban sprawl by achieving appropriate urban densities and prioritising brownfield site over greenfield site development.
3. ensure the mixed use of buildings and developments with a good balance of jobs, housing and services, giving priority to residential use in city centres.
4. ensure appropriate conservation, renovation and use/re-use of our urban cultural heritage.
5. apply requirements for sustainable design and construction and promote high quality architecture and building technologies.