



**8<sup>TH</sup> EUROPEAN CONFERENCE ON  
SUSTAINABLE CITIES & TOWNS**

**BASQUE COUNTRY | BILBAO | 27 - 29 APRIL 2016**

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## **European cities and towns acclaim the Basque Declaration, the new roadmap to address challenges facing urban societies**

- **Leaders at the 8<sup>th</sup> European Conference on Sustainable Cities & Towns show their support for the Basque Declaration, a document that outlines new pathways for European cities to create productive, sustainable and resilient cities for a liveable and inclusive Europe.**
- **The Basque Declaration includes a total of 15 ways to support and accelerate social-cultural, socio-economic and technological transformations to ensure a decent quality of life for citizens while respecting local and global ecosystems and available natural resources.**

**The Basque Declaration has been adopted by local and regional leaders taking part in the 8<sup>th</sup> European Conference on Sustainable Cities & Towns, providing urban societies with pathways to become productive, sustainable and resilient.**

*Bilbao, Basque Country, 27 April 2016.* - At a time when Europe and the European Union are facing severe financial and social challenges, such as widespread resistance to the EU's response to the economic crisis and disagreement between EU Member States on how best to deal with the massive influx of refugees, city leaders are taking a firm step to ensure a good quality of life for their citizens and create stable and productive regions.

The [Basque Declaration](#) highlights the necessity and desire of local leaders to think outside the box and find innovative ways to economically and socially engage with civil society in order to meet economic, environmental and social challenges, and at the same time marks the importance of finding sustainable solutions that increase economic value for the benefit of the local population.

This declaration acknowledges the need for transformation in order to decarbonise energy systems, create sustainable urban mobility patterns, protect and enhance biodiversity and ecosystem services, reduce the use of greenfield land and natural space, protect water resources and air quality, adapt to climate change, improve public space, provide adequate housing, guarantee social inclusion, and strengthen local economies.

To achieve these goals, the Basque Declaration outlines a total of 15 pathways to progress to a liveable and inclusive Europe. The pathways lead to a socio-cultural, socio-economic and technological transformation. It is a call to re-think the boundaries between the public and private



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sectors, and to involve citizens. It suggests boosting local value chains, applying innovative approaches to financing and moving towards a circular economy. Regarding the technological transformation, the Basque Declaration notes the importance of using smart technologies, integrating public procurement as a powerful tool and opening data standards.

The Basque Declaration aims to inspire cities and towns to develop and create their own local transformative actions.

The document is a significant outcome of the 8<sup>th</sup> European Conference on Sustainable Cities & Towns, held in Bilbao from 27-29 April, and is an important step following the Aalborg Charter (1994) and the Aalborg Commitments (2004).

### European Conferences on Sustainable Cities & Towns

Over 800 representatives from local and regional governments, European and international institutions, multilateral organisations, members of the research community, private sector and civil society are taking part in the 8<sup>th</sup> European Conference on Sustainable Cities & Towns, to exchange experiences and discuss ideas.

Following the UN Summit Meeting for adopting the Sustainable Development Goals and the COP21 Paris Climate Summit, this conference is the flagship event in Europe in 2016 for discussion and knowledge exchange on urban local sustainability.

The 8<sup>th</sup> European Conference on Sustainable Towns & Cities is co-organised by ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, the Basque Government, Bizkaia County Council and Bilbao City Council, with the involvement of Udalsarea 21 - Basque Network of Municipalities for Sustainability, and the support of Araba County Council, Gipuzkoa County Council, Donostia/San Sebastián City Council and Vitoria-Gasteiz City Council.

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