8th European Conference on Sustainable Cities & Towns
TRANSFORMATIVE ACTION: THE POTENTIAL FOR EUROPE
27-29 April 2016, Basque Country, Bilbao
The European Conference Series on Sustainable Cities & Towns is the biggest conference on urban sustainable development in Europe. Its mission is to support the exchange of experience between cities, collect information on the activities undertaken at the local level and serve as interface between the European Union and other relevant international institutions and the local sustainability movement. It has played a key role in defining what a sustainable European city should look like and in setting out a process for making this vision a reality through the Aalborg Charter, the Aalborg Commitments and the newly adopted Basque Declaration.

The conference series gathers every three years policy makers and practitioners from local and regional governments, representatives of European and international institutions, members of the research community, business leaders and civil society.

The 8th European Conference on Sustainable Cities & Towns (#Basque2016) took place in the Basque Country, 27-29 April 2016. Under the title 'Transformative action: the potential for Europe', the eighth edition explored the need for action by local governments to change unsustainable pathways and shape Europe’s future. More than 100 experts on urban sustainability scrutinised the current urban policies on a European and international level, such as the Sustainable Development Goals and the EU Urban Agenda. From a bottom up approach, participants had the opportunity to learn how strategies and solutions for sustainable urban development can be combined with new economic approaches and social innovation to generate local value, employment and to improve economic resilience.
Why the Basque Country?

The Basque Country is an example of success that other cities and regions can learn from. It’s a model of sustainable growth and social development that reflects the capacity of European regions to transform from an industrial into a modern, service-based economy. It’s a country which has learned to counteract a hard geographic setting with limited natural resources, with an economy based on knowledge and innovation.

Its newly adopted Environmental Programme for 2020 shows a firm commitment to improving the environment and aligns with current European and international strategies, aiming to contribute to wellbeing, job creation, as well as to develop an embracing and low carbon economy.

The Basque Country has made great progress in the environmental area in recent years thanks to the efforts of the general public, companies, civil society and the authorities. Given the dependency on the resources and the priorities set by the European Union, the Basque Country has established six main environmental challenges noted for their high degree of complexity, uncertainty and their interdependent nature: protecting its natural capital as a source of wellbeing and quality of life, combining climate change and energy models; public health and its interdependence with the environment; fostering a circular economy and a competitive territory; education that prioritises commitment to future generations; and governance based on co-responsibility.

The Environmental Framework Programme of the Basque Country for 2020 is a roadmap to a new stage setting the course and coordinating the actions in the environmental field for the coming years.

#Basque 2016

was organised by
ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability
Basque Government
Bizkaia County Council
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
Vitoria-Gasteiz City Council
We need to shift from measuring economic output to social outcomes, such as health, happiness, and social inclusivity. We have to get away from an urban economy model based on privatisation and the selling of land. We need experts that do not see themselves solely as land managers, but rather people who manage a social and economic system that produces social benefits.

Wolfgang Teubner
Regional Director for Europe
ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability
#Basque2016 in Numbers

+850 attendees
+200 speakers

40+ countries represented across Europe, the Americas, Africa and Asia

**OTHER PARTICIPANTS**
- 56%

**LOCAL GOVERNMENTS**
- 13%

**EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS**
- 12%

**BUSINESS**
- 11%

**RESEARCH**
- 8%

**OTHER**
- 53%

**FEMALE**
- 47%

+850 attendees
+200 speakers

+200 speakers
Press Play: Debating Urban Sustainability

How will the UN SDGs, the Paris Climate Agreement, and the EU Urban Agenda affect cities?

Hans Bruyninckx
Executive Director
European Environment Agency

How do the UN SDGs, the Paris Climate Agreement, and the EU Urban Agenda relate to one another?

Jeb Brugmann
Founder, ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, Managing Partner, The Next Practice Ltd.

What topics related to sustainable development is the City of Paris working on?

Arab Hoballah
Chief of Sustainable Lifestyles, Cities and Industry, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

What do you mean by "urban productivity" and how does this relate to the established urban agendas?

Célia Blauel
Deputy Mayor
City of Paris, France

What topics related to sustainable development is the City of Aalborg working on?

Thomas Kastrup-Larsen
Mayor
City of Aalborg, Denmark

What topics related to sustainable development is the City of Tirana working on?

Erion Veliaj
Mayor
City of Tirana, Albania

Click on the boxes below to watch interviews of a few of our featured speakers and hear more about their perspectives on urban sustainability.
"The best people to convince politicians [about making cities healthier] are the inhabitants. It's about being aware of the knowledge we actually have."
Torgeir Esig Soerensen, Head of Parks and Streets Department, City of Stavanger, Norway

"We should embrace that refugees one day will be consumers, a value for the economic growth."
João Afonso, Municipal Councillor of Social Rights, City of Lisbon, Portugal

"Public and private collaboration is not the only tool for innovation. A citizen perspective is needed."
Janet Sanz, Deputy Mayor for Environment, Urban Planning and Mobility, City of Barcelona Vice President of Environment Area, Barcelona Metropolitan Area, Spain

"The Sustainable Development Goals could provide a new moment for better management of water resources in Europe."
Pavel Misiga, Head of Unit, DG Environment, European Commission

"To address the various challenges our cities are facing we need to stop working in silos and start thinking in new ways."
Eleni Myrivili, City councilor appointed for the Urban Sustainability Portfolio and Chief Resilience Officer, City of Athens, Greece

"Citizens care about broken down wind turbines if they are investors."
Markus Lewe, Mayor, City of Münster, Germany
#Basque2016: A Platform for Knowledge, Networking and Innovative Solutions

7 Plenary Sessions
11 Breakout Sessions
9 Mobile Workshops
1 Mayors Session
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Innovation Market
+50 projects and initiatives presented through Speed Presentations, Roundtable Dialogues and a Poster Exhibition

Exhibition Area

A Cultural Experience

For more photos and details about the events held during #Basque2016, check out the conference website:

basquecountry2016.eu
Trending topic thanks to all Participants and Influencers

#Basque2016
New Generations at #Basque2016

Youth Forum
The Basque Agenda 21 School Programme, with approximately 90,000 students on board, shared its perspectives and expectations of local authorities in Europe throughout the 3-day conference programme.

Young Ambassadors
This year’s event had the honour to count on the support of local young people who guided participants through the conference, as well as informed them about the country’s activities in the field of urban sustainable development. This cooperation was facilitated by the Novia Salcedo Foundation, a platform that aims to support young people in the process of professional and social integration in a changing world. To achieve this, from a vocation of anticipation and collaboration, the Foundation invents, creates and provides social value, developing lines of thought and creative processes of transformation towards new modes of value exchange between individuals, companies, organisations and public institutions.
The Basque Declaration: New Pathways for European Cities and Towns

The Basque Declaration was acclaimed by local and regional leaders on the first day of the conference. It 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 pressing challenges.

The Basque Declaration outlines new pathways for European Cities and Towns to create productive, sustainable and resilient cities for a liveable and inclusive Europe. A total of 15 pathways across three categories – socio-cultural transformation, socio-economic transformation and technological transformation – are at the heart of the document.

How can the Basque Declaration support cities in taking action towards sustainable development?

Now it’s your turn!

Endorse the Basque Declaration and help build a more liveable and inclusive Europe!

If your city, organisation, or you as a citizen are interested in endorsing the Basque Declaration, click here.

We hope that many of you will add your voices and your efforts as we look towards the next European Conference on Sustainable Cities & Towns!