

# The Aalborg Commitments Implementation Guide

## A 5-step approach



REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER



# Aalborg Commitments Implementation Guide

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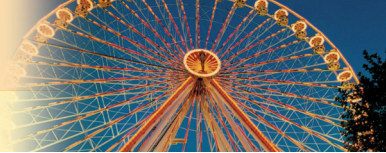
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# PART I

## Framework and Preparation

### Purpose of this Guide

The main objective of this *Implementation Guide* is to support signatory Local Governments in responding to the requirements of the Aalborg Commitments. It provides a mechanism to enable Local Governments to get easy access to knowledge, resources and other tools they may need.

This Guide works in parallel with what already exists, and thus creates synergies and links with existing guidance and tools, and covers any gaps. As a result, the Guide sets out the five steps of the Sustainability Cycle and provides support for implementing and setting appropriate targets for the Aalborg Commitments.

The *Implementation Guide* is one of the outcomes of the ACTOR project (*Aalborg Commitments Tools and Resources*) funded under the Sixth Framework Research Programme.

Resources to support the implementation of the Aalborg Commitments, including links to tools, policies, knowledge centres, good practice examples are available from the ACTOR project web-site: [www.localresources21.org](http://www.localresources21.org)

#### ● Integration in cities. One dimension or many?

Over a long and difficult history the departments and sectors of Local Governments have been isolated in their initiatives and dispersed to many offices.

Today there is no alternative but to negotiate solutions to cultural clashes, different interests and needs.

Still the latest debates highlight an underlying tension between different practices and cultures. “Better to live well alone rather than going through a wrenching process of opening and re-opening debates”.

Nevertheless this Guide still subscribes to integration as not just a worthwhile aspiration but as the only way of effectively implementing local sustainability.

#### ● What is new? The link with integrated management

A basis for this implementation guide is the framework model for an integrated management system developed under the EU-funded project “Managing Urban Europe-25”. The framework model was explicitly developed basing on experiences with existing environmental management systems. The model acts as a support for implementing the Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment and the Aalborg Commitments. Each individual step of the framework model is described briefly in this implementation guide. Case studies and a more elaborate description of each step can be found on the Managing Urban Europe-25 website:

[www.mue25.net](http://www.mue25.net)

# 1. The Aalborg Commitments implementation and the policies at European level

## ● In which fields can we improve? The 10 Aalborg Commitments

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 local sustainable economy
9. Social equity and justice
10. Local to global

## ● Economics focus. What matters?

Under the Lisbon Strategy, the human concerns are separated into three main categories:

- innovation, as the motor for economic change
- the learning economy
- social and environmental renewal

## ● Sustainability focus. What matters?

The key objectives outlined in the European Sustainable Development Strategy are:

- environmental protection
- social equity and cohesion
- economic prosperity
- international responsibilities

The Aalborg Commitments were adopted by delegates to the June 2004 Aalborg+10 Conference and have been signed by hundreds of Local Governments. They support European Local Governments in their implementation of the Aalborg Charter agreed at the 1994 Aalborg Conference and set important policy guidelines for local sustainability. They are regarded as voluntary commitments and describe ten fields of action (see figure) and 50 key activities and concrete actions for local sustainable development.

The evolution of the Aalborg process has been taking place at the same time as the European Union has been preparing the Urban Thematic Strategy<sup>1</sup> and the Sustainable Development Strategy<sup>2</sup>.

Furthermore, the Aalborg Commitments implementation is addressing solutions in response to the Lisbon Strategy<sup>3</sup>. They can be instrumental in providing inputs to ensure sustainable development and social inclusion, which will themselves drive economic growth.

1 Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment COM(2005) 718 final

2 Review of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy 10117/06

3 European Council, Lisbon, March 2000



## 2. The Aalborg Commitments and the Sustainability Cycle

For Local Governments to respond to the demands of the European Strategies and Aalborg Commitments there is a need for appropriate support, guidance, and training.

The Aalborg Commitments are a set of shared commitments to be jointly implemented by Local Governments across Europe. They are primarily seeking to reinforce existing Local Agenda 21 processes and to generate the energy to move from agenda to action over the next 10 years. At the same time they are designed as a flexible tool that must be adjusted to local context as well as to existing and future planned actions.

The Aalborg Commitments offer a specific framework or Sustainability Cycle (see figure), which assists Local Governments in moving into a target setting process that includes local stakeholders and existing Local Agenda 21 or other sustainability plans. Within this process, an Aalborg Commitments baseline review will be prepared. On that basis, the signing Local Government will then discuss, agree and set individual local targets for the various Aalborg Commitments. The timeframes related to these targets provide for a future monitoring review of the process achieved.



Aalborg Commitment Implementation Process	Time schedule	The Sustainability Cycle Product
<p><b>Baseline Review</b>  <i>We agree to produce an integrated Aalborg Commitments baseline review as a starting point for our target setting process within 12 months following the date of our signature. This review will include a policy context, refer to existing political commitments and describe current challenges.</i></p>	<p>Within 12 months after signature</p>	<p>Sustainability Report</p>
<p><b>Target Setting</b>  <i>We agree to enter into a local participatory target setting process that incorporates existing Local Agenda 21 or other local sustainability action planning and takes into consideration the results of the local baseline review and to prioritise our tasks, aiming to address the ten Commitments. We agree to set individual local targets within 24 months following the date of our signature, and to set time frames related to the targets that are suitable to demonstrate progress on our Commitments.</i></p>	<p>Within 24 months after signature</p>	<p>Sustainability Targets</p>
<p><b>Political Commitment</b></p>	<p>Within 24 months after signature</p>	<p>Council Approval</p>
<p><b>Implementation &amp; monitoring</b>  <i>We agree to make a regular Aalborg Commitments monitoring review of our achievements available to our citizens. We agree to regularly provide information on our targets and our progress to the European Sustainable Cities &amp; Towns Campaign and, through this co-operation, to review progress and learn from each other.</i></p>	<p>1<sup>st</sup> Monitoring review by 2010</p>	<p>Sustainability Programme</p>
<p><b>Evaluation &amp; Reporting</b></p>	<p>Subsequent monitoring reviews scheduled in 5-year cycle</p>	<p>Evaluation Report</p>



### ● From problem faced to problem solved

The Sustainability Cycle is a five-step model for carrying out a change. Just as a cycle has no end, the Sustainability Cycle should be repeated again and again for continuous improvement.

- **Baseline Review:** analyse the local situation.
- **Target Setting:** recognise an opportunity and plan a change by setting targets with a participatory process.
- **Political Commitment:** bring it in the Council.
- **Implementation and Monitoring:** Carry out and test the change, review the test, analyse the results and identify what you've learned.
- **Evaluation and Reporting:** Take action based on what you learned in the implementation. If the change did not work, go through the cycle again with a different plan. If you were successful, incorporate what you learned into wider changes. Use what you learned to plan new improvements, beginning the cycle again.

The five steps of the Sustainability Cycle are fully repeated in 3 – 5 years cycles and partially every year. However, the time taken for each of the steps varies, according to local circumstances.



### 3. A good start

*Mezzogiorno Town is still sleeping while the world is changing around it. The old political model is dying and the paralysis is near. It is time to wake up before slipping back into internecine conflict, introversion and fear of failure. The old ways no longer work, but new ways based on consensus, consultation and the exercise of democratic authority have yet to be implemented ...*

#### Facing the organisational change

The implementation of the Aalborg Commitments requires the identification or establishment of appropriate conditions within Local Government. This concerns primarily an organisational change. The change involves three different layers:

- the **political layer**, that deals mainly with the awareness, interest and understanding of politicians of the aims of the Aalborg Commitments process,
- the **administrative layer**, that refers to transparent and functioning routines, links and responsibilities in Local Government,
- the **technical layer**, which is related to all steps in place and their interrelation, the environmental, social and economic linkages, and the connection of the Aalborg Commitments to other local approaches.

#### ● To go North, first head South

The Guidelines of the South EU Urban ENVIPLANS project, co-financed by the Environment Directorate General give a big emphasis to the starting or relaunch of the planning process. In particular, it should contribute to:

- defining what constitutes the planning cycle (themes, type and level, scale and time-frames),
- defining the relationship with other existing plans, regulations and statutes (existing and pending plans and tools, level of binding commitment and institutional power of the plans),
- setting organisational procedures (launch of the process, internal and external resources, motivation of technical staff, financial resources)
- activating participative processes (actors identification, decision-making procedures, organisation and management of participation, raise of citizens awareness)

Web-site: <http://www.enviplans.net>

From a **political perspective**, there are several aspects concerning how the Aalborg Commitments can be initiated. Firstly, it is important that the Council decision legitimates the Commitments in an official Council meeting as the support of the Council is key to a smooth implementation of all steps of the system.

Furthermore, it is recommended to not have a Council decision on the Aalborg Commitments together with the ratification of the local participatory targets. The political decision may be initiated by City councillor or a senior manager who spots problems or opportunities that others don't see. Secondly, new leadership, the launch of a new director or senior management Unit, new elections with consequent restructuring of the administrative organisation can lead to the ability to recognise problems and opportunities in a proactive manner.



From an **administrative perspective**, in case there is new leadership, it is essential to make a number of strategic moves, including redefining the mission, reorganising the work, and developing new strategic visions.

It is obvious that the implementation of the Aalborg Commitments costs money, but the costs of this process should not be viewed as a no-return investment.

From a **technical perspective**, there should be the possibility to draw upon the skills of specialists in the environmental, physical, cultural behavioural, social, economic and life sciences to support the Commitments implementation.

Economies in time and money can be achieved by co-ordinated scheduling within the working team, for example through setting up a Co-ordination Unit.

This Unit requires cross-departmental staff who will be working in a multifunctional approach and will be responsible for drawing up and following up on the implementation of the Aalborg Commitments. It is beneficial to select appropriate persons and part of the “art” is knowing which of the structures to use and involve and when. It could be either created specially for the scope or be formed by existing groups including representatives from all departments relevant for the management of the Aalborg Commitments.

#### ● **Administrative organisation in Freiburg, Germany**

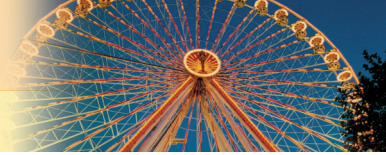
After signing the Aalborg Commitments in December 2006, the Co-ordination Unit responsible for following up on the implementation of the Commitments was placed in the Urban Development and Building Department directly under the Lord Mayor. The ,Freiburg Sustainability Council‘, an advisory board of the City Council meeting twice a year, is responsible for the implementation and gives critical suggestions to the local government on how to improve the process and the targets. The Sustainability Council consists of 10 local experts in the fields of the 10 Aalborg Commitments, 8 representatives of local sustainability initiatives, 6 senior officers forming the cross-departmental steering group within the local administration, and 6 councillors representing all political parties of the Council. The sessions are organised and managed by the Co-ordinator and led by the Lord Mayor.

The organisational set up requires special attention and effort but clarifying and accomplishing procedures and characteristics in the first cycle will not involve additional efforts every year.

## Involving and participating

Involvement and participation should occur continuously and vary in form over the life cycle of the Aalborg Commitments. Participatory decision-making is not only desired and demanded by citizens who wish to play a more active role in the governance of their society. Regional, National and Local Governments, agencies and NGOs, scientists and companies are also increasingly eager to reap the benefits of actively engaging in decision-making processes. Rather than “first making and then fixing”, it is most efficient to involve end-users in the initial design and planning phase, as this improves the chances that the local targets will succeed and be maintained in the long term. Therefore, the interaction of the following public, private, community, non governmental groups of actors should be considered:

- those who have a co-ordination role in the Aalborg Commitments implementation (employees of the administration and staff from service companies)
- those whose interests and needs are affected by the effective implementation of the Aalborg Commitments (citizens and public stakeholders)
- those who have the influence and the power to make the final decisions (local politicians)
- those who possess relevant information and expertise (agencies, service companies, experts, scientific community)
- those who report and disseminate the cities' conditions and progresses (media).



## PART II

# 5 Steps for the Aalborg Commitments Implementation

*Visionville wants to develop a strategy for a change and compares it to a long journey. Visionville sees the destination far away and it is uncertain when it will get there. How to set off the general direction and make the travelling meaningful and agreeable in itself? The inhabitants of Visionville decide to create steps that are self-motivating and choose means that are meaningful and not just means to an end...*

Environmental policies have been criticised for neglecting the social and political context of the urban issues. Therefore, there is a need for a management process which considers all sustainability aspects, including social and economic issues. The ultimate aim is a good quality of life for all citizens and for subsequent generations.

An important assumption is that it may not be possible in the beginning to achieve all this. Therefore, it can be compared with planning a long journey with one step following the other. The Aalborg Commitments are the **road map** for this journey.

# 1. Baseline Review

*“Produce a baseline review of your local situation within 12 months of signing”*



*Before beginning the long march, StatusCity wants to have a better understanding of its starting point. Descriptions and data reflect its moods, hopes, constraints, current feelings and also the baggage of the past. Only by considering and managing all facets simultaneously, StatusCity can be successful...*



The assessment of the local situation is a continuous and dynamic process, which is not only implemented within Local Government, but also involves other utilities (for example public transport companies, energy, waste, water services). In order to set up the baseline review and analyse the current situation, Local Government needs to collect information and draw up a list of all relevant stakeholders. The co-ordination of the assessment is the responsibility of the Co-ordination Unit. The outcome of this assessment is the Sustainability Report.

## Memorandum for the Baseline Review

- *Did you define the boundaries?*
- *Did you select the themes?*
- *Did you consider the legislative context?*
- *What is your current status? and*
- *How to measure it?*

## *Did you define the boundaries?* Adoption of a local scale

The Urban Thematic Strategy refers to the urban area, meaning that cities must not be perceived as areas that are administratively separated from their hinterlands and isolated from their wider regional context. The functional influences of cities reach far beyond their immediate boundaries with multidimensional links. It is, therefore, important that policies in pursuit of urban sustainability are considered in the wider context that goes beyond the boundaries.

### ● **Déjà vu? Taking into account what already exists**

Cities collect data for different purposes: Strategic Plans, Local Agenda 21 processes, EMAS, ISO 14001, State of the environment report or Sustainability report, environmental accountability reports, environmental budgeting reports, *ecoBUDGET* Master Budgets, Strategic Environmental Assessment procedures, etc. Instead of duplicating the efforts, it is important to use what already exists as a starting point. Therefore, the Baseline Review represents the document where existing data are integrated and relaunched in a co-ordinated and coherent picture.

### ● **Evaluate and make progress**

Local Evaluation 21 is an on-line tool offered to local authorities across Europe for self-evaluating Local Agenda 21 and similar processes for sustainable development. Local authorities and their stakeholder groups are able to assess the quality and progress of their local process for sustainable development, analyse strengths and weaknesses and identify possible areas of improvement. Participating local authorities become part of a Europe-wide benchmarking system.

Further information is available from the website: [www.localevaluation21.org](http://www.localevaluation21.org)

● **Urban area? The importance of neighbours**

Although “city” and “urban area” are generally used as synonyms, they are not the same. All cities are urban areas, but not all urban areas are cities. Urban areas have relevant operational implications for the management of affairs of a country at all levels. Urban areas present specific opportunities and challenges, requiring specific responses in terms of providing for the needs and enhancing the status and preserving and regenerating the environment.

## *Did you select the themes?* **Defining the content of the Baseline Review**

The Aalborg Commitments are a framework for local sustainable development, from which Local Governments may select areas where they want to focus action and make progress. The first step in this process, however, will be to identify areas, in which the Council has already been acting and has achievements to present.

## *Did you consider the legislative context?* **Mapping of legal requirements**

The Baseline Review needs to make reference to all legislation relevant to sustainability issues. Therefore, it can be assumed that all main laws, regulations, formal acts are available and included in the Sustainability Report.

Every department of the Council should prepare an index of binding tools that the public is obliged to fulfil or to take into account. In practice, Local Government already gathers information on current legislation affecting sustainability aspects and ensures that its employees have access to this information.

● **Can't get enough of it**

It is possible that some data might still be missing within the first assessment. This is not uncommon! It does not make sense to spend much time and energy in an attempt to fix all the exact figures. The important thing is to accept a level of uncertainty, find the missing gaps, and to fill them within the next revision.





## *What is your current status and how to measure it?* Collection of information and selection of indicators

Local Government should collect all current reference data and indicators related to sustainability issues. Constraints to this must be recognised, such as the cost of collection, retrieval, and quality control of existing data, and the familiarity with the availability of relevant data. Where knowledge is dispersed through many agencies and institutes, inventories of data sources and of specialist skills should be prepared at an early stage of the process.

Any discussion on indicators must recognise the two dangers: over-complexity and over-simplicity. Between these two extremes, there is undoubtedly a useful working range of options for selecting an approach that matches indicators. The main philosophy behind the Aalborg Commitments process is that a sustainable Local Government is more than simply one with a clean environment. Indicators for local sustainability must therefore go beyond traditional environmental indicators and demonstrate the relation and interlinkages between environmental, economic and social aspects. Therefore, the process of indicator definition should ideally be conducted as a cross-departmental process. However, due to the required technical know-how, this should be decided based on the local situation.

### ● Sustainability Reports in Germany

Pilot municipalities in the Federal State of Rhineland-Palatinate/ Germany assessed their sustainability performance with the support of a special matrix of sustainability indicators. It interrelates the Local Governments mandates to fulfil citizens' needs on the one hand, and to protect the common goods of social equity and environmental resources on the other hand, while looking into possible linkages.

Based on the indications given in their sustainability reports, cities have set priorities and focussed on areas that most need attention, elaborating action plans. During workshops with relevant stakeholders, long-term objectives and respective targets were set as well as measures to reach these targets. The workshops have been focussing on issues such as "sustainable housing", "income and education" or "natural environment and tourism".

Web-site: [www.iclei.org/europe/projekt21](http://www.iclei.org/europe/projekt21)

## One step forward

The results of the Baseline Review form the basis for the establishment of priorities for further work, considering *Strengths* as well as *Weaknesses* that can become evident within a SWOT Analysis, together with *Opportunities* and *Threats*. It is important also to note that the Baseline Review of the next management cycle will be an evaluation of the achievement of the previous year's values. Viewed in this way, the Baseline Review acts as a kind of auditing tool for monitoring of the previous year.

### ● **Baseline Review of the Province of Siena, Italy**

On June 20, 2006, the Province of Siena officially signed a first agreement protocol with all the Municipalities and the Mountain Communities of the Sienese Territory for the endorsement of the Aalborg Commitments, giving priority to the initiatives aimed at promoting the ten Commitments. In order to provide a synoptic picture of the state of the art in the Province of Siena with relation to the activities and actions on sustainability, it seemed appropriate to include these into the grid provided by the Aalborg Commitments along with some objectives /indicators for their monitoring. It is immediately visible what and how many initiatives have already been integrated by the Province of Siena and their coherence with the Aalborg Commitments.

Web-site: [www.mue25.net](http://www.mue25.net)

### ● **Reasons to be careful in reporting: one two three ...**

It is strongly recommended to document all information regarding indicators in a common template. This may be valuable as justification for third parties' reviews, to avoid duplicating work by discussing the same issues year after year, to provide background information on indicators to stakeholders, politicians and experts or to assist the familiarisation of new employees.



## 2. Target Setting

*“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”*



*The establishment of partnerships to identify potential aspirations and measures makes the journey of Villambition clearer. Sense of place, commitment, personal responsibility, public consensus are motivators to move further in an evolutionary progression...*

### ● [www.localtargets21.org](http://www.localtargets21.org)

A new on-line tool developed for Aalborg Commitments signatories is available from this web-site. For each of the 10 Commitments, Local Governments are able to consult a selection of possible indicative targets, and receive useful information on them. They can then select targets relating to their local context and enter relevant baseline data against these, from which they will receive a feedback report. The Tool is supported by detailed Guidance (an electronic downloadable document) on Selecting and Setting Targets.

Local Targets 21 is the outcome of the STATUS (Sustainability Tools and Targets for the Urban Thematic Strategy) project, funded under the Sixth Framework Programme of the European Commission.

### ● **S.M.A.R.T. is Smart!**

The International Network for Environmental Management (INEM) suggests that the objectives should be “SMART”. SMART stands for:

**Specific:** Focus on important performance factors; avoid broad expressions like ‘being more environmentally friendly’.

**Measurable:** What hasn’t been measured cannot be managed. Consequently, objectives must be quantitative in order to be measured. Choose measurements carefully to gain feedback on progress.

**Achievable:** If your objectives are set too high it is unlikely that they will be realised and this will de-motivate those involved. You should also avoid setting too many goals.

**Realistic:** On the other hand, if objectives are set too low, you may not reaching your full potential for action.


**Time-bound:** Objectives should always include a time limit to enable you to decide if they have been met.

Target setting is extremely important in the Aalborg Commitments process both because it sets limits for resource consumption and because it aims at a desired quality of life within the City. “Targets should be *Achievable* and *Realistic* – not too high and not too low. They are generally a compromise or trade off between what is envisioned and what is feasible. Agreement on targets by all relevant stakeholders and actors will develop ownership of the process and responsibility to implement respective measures. It will also provide the necessary ongoing support for implementing the Sustainability Cycle and its continuation. However, a participatory approach requires that Local Governments shift their understanding of governing and define their role primarily as important partner for local sustainable development – advising and recommending, when requested, supportive and helpful, when needed. The Local Government should seek to find some sort of formal agreement on partnerships”<sup>4</sup>.

## Memorandum for the Target Setting

- *If everything matters, then what matters most?*
- *What do you want to achieve and how?*
- *Who is in the game?*

4 “Guidance on selecting and setting targets for the Urban Thematic Strategy” Local Targets 21, see box above



## *If everything matters, then what matters most?*

### **The priority setting**

It is strongly recommended that all Ten Commitments are addressed when identifying key priorities, tasks and targets. Establishing priorities for action on the many issues identified by the Aalborg Commitments is not an easy task. The way forward is provided through participation. Once local problems have been identified and key stakeholders agree to participate, then it is possible to make an initial ranking of the top priority issues. These can be selected on the basis of criteria such as:

- the magnitude of gaps associated with the actions/measures
- the size of productivity losses caused by those gaps
- the integration among actions/measures from different fields of Commitments
- whether or not the unfulfilment of the action/measure leads to an irreversible outcome.

Once the Council has decided which resources and aspects should be given priority, these should be expressed using a set of indicators selected from the Sustainability Report. Developing of and agreement on indicators is of strategic importance, as then measurable and quantified targets for the priority areas can be agreed, monitoring of progress and success of measures can be carried out and the evaluation of results and achievement will be possible.

## What do you want to achieve and how? The definition of targets and measures

Once indicators have been selected, the next stage is that of target setting.

The Aalborg Commitments apply both strategic, long-term targets (10 – 15 years) and operational, short-term targets (1 – 3 years). Targets are defined in comparison to a reference or base year, which can vary from the chosen indicator and usually depends on data availability. This framework of long and short-term targets, which forms the Sustainability Targets prevents Local Government from losing sight of the route to sustainable development. Of course, the definition of a new long-term target has to be undertaken every time the long-term target has been achieved and certainly when the due-date for target-attainment has been reached. Choosing the short-term targets derived from the long-term targets is the next stage and is a central part of this stage.

### ● An unsolvable puzzle

Should you select “comfortable” targets in order to celebrate success or is it better to set more ambitious targets, that can give more impulse and stimulate sustainable development of the community? Do you first define the Sustainability Programme or do you first establish the long term targets? Do you use already agreed plans and programmes or do you decide the introduction of new measures? There is no general answer to these questions. Each city has to decide on its “philosophy” and on who/what is leading the process.

### A3. 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 to:**

Commitment	Main actions	Target 2012	IND fa	IND org	Process of implementation
1. reduce primary energy consumption, and increase the share of renewable energies.	1. Photovoltaic roofs and biomass heating in the Pinocchio school 2. EASY project 3. Measures for reducing private transports 4. Promotion initiatives	From LA21: 1. – 6.5% greenhouse gases 2. electricity consumption from 943 to 800 kwh/pc 3. 12% of renewable energies	ACI 3.1	GRI 2 E/F GRI 3 E/F GRI 4 E/F	
2. improve water quality, save water, and use water more efficiently.	Multiservizi's (Public Agency for water management) activities: 1. water quality monitoring 2. sewage system monitoring 3. water saving	From LA21: - 50% cutting of water consump. pc - to purify 100% of the waste waters	ACI 1	GRI 1 E/F	
3. promote and increase biodiversity, and extend and care for designated nature areas and green spaces.	1. Activities for Conero park and maritime area 2. Activities for green public spaces maintenance: Cardeto, Cittadella, etc.	From LA21: - 32 sm/in of green urban areas	ACI 2 ACI 4.4 ACI 7	Na	
4. improve soil quality, preserve ecologically productive land and promote sustainable agriculture and forestry.	Na	From LA21: - maintain the same share of artificial land (22%)	ACI 4	Na	
5. improve air quality.	1. Daily monitoring system 2. Measures for reducing private transports and incentivate new fuels/engines 3. Urban Mobility Plan with its actions 4. Promotion initiatives (stopping cars etc.) 5. Limitation of non-catalytic vehicles circulating	From LA21: - 50% cutting of PM10 produced	ACI 3.2	Na	

IND fa = indicators functional area (Ancona is applying ACI, Adriatic Common Indicators. See Ch.1 for a full explanation)  
IND org = indicators related to the organization (Ancona is applying GRI, the Global Reporting Initiative system. See ch. 2 for a full explanation)  
Na = not available



## Who is in the game?

# Seeking partnership commitments and involvement of stakeholders

In order to achieve the targets set, it is extremely important to define and agree on measures. Although a number of activities are linked to existing processes, there is a need for scheduling of measures and assignment of responsibilities and deadlines. They must be agreed more generally in this phase, and more in detail at the beginning of the implementation phase. This is because it is extremely difficult to appropriately estimate the impact of measures and events a priori. Nevertheless, the announced measures should be linked to responsibilities and involved actors, considering the simple fact that Local Government does not have a complete control of what is happening within its territory.

In addition, positive inputs of the various stakeholder organisations can be incorporated in the definition of the local vision of a Council. Combining the stakeholders' view with the target setting is advantageous for both processes and is an important step towards building support for implementing the planned measures.

## One step forward

The participatory target setting process ends in the form of Sustainability Targets and defines a Council's long-term vision to sustainable development focusing on priority areas, structured according to affected resources, using indicators and time-related targets and measures. Therefore, this is the core step of the Aalborg Commitments implementation process. The result of this step is the steering document that politicians will refer to and return to, for launching the next cycle.

### ● New environmental programme in Växjö, Sweden

Following the Baseline Review based on the Aalborg Commitments, a new environmental programme, which replaces the former environmental policy and the Agenda 21 strategy, has been approved by the City Council. It has been developed in co-operation with several administrative departments and it contains three profile areas: "Life", treating the consumption issues, "Our nature" focusing on water and nature issues as well as "Fossil fuel Växjö" targeting energy and transport issues. The set of indicators used are: budget indicators, environmental asset indicators, efficiency indicators. For the budget of 2008, indicators for social and economic areas will be incorporated and a main challenge is to identify indicators which can represent the targets in the local programmes. Further information can be found at: [www.mue25.net](http://www.mue25.net)

### 3. Political Commitment



*The City Council of StrategyCounty believes in new and more integrated actions that reflect the strong relationship between environmental problems and socio-economic developments over space, over time. The approval of the local targets of StrategyCounty has provided the stable basis for the development and the management of all changes together ...*





The Aalborg Commitments require political approval and support. Therefore, the Sustainability Targets should be debated and approved by the Council. The most effective way to build political commitment is to convince the politicians that their involvement in the planning process will lead to direct environmental, social and economic benefits.

## Memorandum for the Political Commitment

- *Did you hear from the leadership?*
- *How are you disseminating?*
- *How to make your targets concrete?*
- *Did you involve the community?*

### *Did you hear from the leadership?* The involvement of key decision makers

The implementation of the Aalborg Commitments is an effort of the whole Council and calls for innovative crossing of boundaries. Therefore, political approval is extremely important for launching a full-scale, overarching programme rather than isolated pilot projects on small issues. Having the political involvement guarantees a full play of the administration from the beginning without local offices/services having to learn from a pilot example. This avoids decentralisation due also to the increasing of initiatives dispersed to many separate offices.

It is obvious that different countries, regions and areas have different cultures in, for example, their administrative and community organisations, communication styles, environmental awareness, and technical history. However, in each case, when the process towards creating a Council decision on an important development issue is initiated, it is very important to involve the key decision-makers from the start, in particular the Mayor and vice Mayors. The formal decision-making process can involve the Council Board, the specialised Committees (environment, finance, executive) and finally the Council.

In addition, the major political groups and their leaders should be informed in order to create political support during the implementation of the Aalborg Commitments.

#### ● **An apple a day...**

Policy makers are more likely to feel a sense of ownership of the Commitments if they are actively consulted and involved in the process of their signature and not just passively supportive for any reasoning behind. In order to take this decision, politicians have to be well informed and kept informed day by day about resources needed, benefits and outcomes associated with the endorsement as well as a time plan for implementation. Therefore, it is extremely important to involve continuously Mayor, Vice Mayor, Deputy Mayors, as well as the political groups. In addition, media and public (institutions, associations and Agenda 21 forum) should be pre-informed about the ongoing process in the City and the development of the Target Setting process.

## *How are you disseminating?* Information of media

### ● **An appointment with chance**

As resources are often limited, policy makers will want to focus on a few strategic interventions or activities that can then be effectively managed and where several cross cutting problems can be addressed at once. When explaining the local targets to politicians just remember that they are endowed with: development of strategic policy direction; set-up of an agenda and development of a city vision; cooperation with neighbours, resources, networks; maintenance of service quality, administrative reform goals. Therefore, prepare short presentations and/or brief notes with key points, including: organisational and financial resources, integration with other urban policies, possible representative/visibility functions, co-operation with other administrative levels, contribution to a strategic vision and, at the same time, ensurement of main task accomplishment.

It is useful to make the local targets publicly visible by a range of modes of public communication such as informational rights, and the local media, etc.

To effectively communicate and disseminate the Commitments, the media need to be somehow “educated”, as their tendency is to sensationalise provocatively topics and problems (environmental disasters, social conflicts and economic losses) rather than focus on real local priorities and routine planning. Continual bad news stories are more likely to drive people in despair and apathy than to stimulate new awareness and determination to implement change.

## *How to make your targets concrete?* Approval of the Sustainability Targets

The Council ratifies the Sustainability Targets by vote. The aim is to achieve consensus on the repeated action of developing, approving and evaluating the implementation of the targets, and this will usually involve a concluding debate to determine consequences on the implementation phase.

The draft of the Sustainability Targets must not be presented as an over-detailed, comprehensive work and should be presented to the Council together with an explanatory report. The structure of the presentation and the documents should be made linguistically or culturally sensitive.

Once the draft of the Sustainability Targets is finalised, it should be ratified by a majority Council resolution.



## *Did you involve the Community?* **Information and involvement of general public**

Aalborg Commitments also require public support. Once the decision on the Sustainability Targets has been taken, the general public should be informed through public hearings, press, local newspapers, broadcasting, campaigns, radio spots, door to door distribution of leaflet, and information on the Local Government's web site.

### **One step forward**

A political decision/agreement made by Local Government regarding the implementation of Aalborg Commitments has important practical consequences for implementation. Politicians should be aware that this phase is extremely important because the selection of targets will strongly affect and influence political planning.

## 4. Implementation and Monitoring

*“Make a regular Aalborg Commitments monitoring review available to your citizens”*



*“The big difference of ActionDistrict” says the Lord Mayor “is that there is more action than talk. But that’s not all. ActionDistrict does not need charismatic, remarkable, grand heroes. The success of the City comes from integrated daily work of people acting and leading in their own area of expertise and responsibility. Recognising that after great progress, there is more to do ...”*



In this phase, implementation is initiated, the measures and institutional arrangements are set in place, the overall process is made routine, and monitoring procedures are established. Within the institutional arrangements compromises have to be made, as the needs of all will never fully coincide. Learning to build such differences, to compromise in ways that don't alienate particular stakeholders is an essential element of the implementation process.

Monitoring is an ongoing process of the targets set according to the indicators of the Baseline Review. It is very difficult to measure precisely the impacts of initiatives and projects. A complex analysis will never be accessible and used, and a simple extrapolation may give misleading information.

## Memorandum for Implementation and Monitoring

- *Are you going more in detail?*
- *Who is doing what and by when?*
- *Are you on track?*
- *Are there more downs than ups?*

This step is characterised by different activities:

- the decision of a Sustainability Programme to be carried out confirming or revising what was already agreed in the target setting phase
- the assignment of responsibilities and deadlines
- the monitoring process and
- the decision on new corrective measures.

Please note that these activities are not necessarily in chronological order even if for reasons of simplicity, they are described consecutively.

### ● Uncertain which way to move

Externalities are very difficult to predict. Even when national and international conditions remain relatively stable, the construction of a tramline may sometimes produce unexpected responses by the local population, in terms of employment, housing, recreational, and other kinds of patterns.

Uncertainty increases as a prediction is made for times further and further into the future. As the predictions of long term consequences are so uncertain, a good option is also to make a decision on the expected short-term impacts and verify/adjust during the implementation phase.

## Are you going more in detail? Decision on a Sustainability Programme

When the Council ratifies the local targets, it also charges Local Government with its implementation. Although the implementation is sometimes considered the weakest component in the Sustainability Cycle, the challenge is related to the need to implement measures in order to achieve the local targets set.

Therefore, a concrete output of this step is a local Sustainability Programme as part of the “task list” of all sectors in the administration. The Sustainability Programme is decided by the City or by other actors for meeting the targets set, generally with a positive impact. In defining the measures to achieve the targets, a particular difficulty is mentioning every possible impact, even those that are very unlikely to occur, are controversial or could catch the attention of the news media.

In cases in which the implementation of the defined measures is reported in a merely descriptive and qualitative way, the Co-ordination Unit should consider further investigation.

### ● Implementation in Ludwigsburg, Germany

After defining a set of strategic objectives for 11 policy areas in a wide participatory process, the City of Ludwigsburg now mainstreams its whole local policy-making and implementation process. The Local Government departments are structured along the 11 policy areas, and the municipal budget mirrors this structure. Based on the outcomes of the participatory objective setting, each department develops a so-called ‘Master Plan’ which replaces or incorporates all former tasks of the respective department. The strategic objectives are accompanied by a set of indicators, and together with the 11 Master Plans, form the task list of the whole local authority moving from the indicator values to the strategic objectives. On a cyclical basis, both objectives and Master Plans are reviewed by the local Council, and priorities are set for the next implementation period. Further information can be found at: [www.ludwigsburg.de](http://www.ludwigsburg.de)



## Who is doing what and by when? The assignment of responsibilities and deadlines

The quality of the Aalborg Commitments implementation in a Council is determined largely by the interaction of those actors who have an impact on problems and their solutions. In addition, their continual involvement is essential, since short term and medium term targets can be easily lost by failing to follow up with actions in subsequent stages.

It may be wise to apply a monitoring-record template, in order to keep track of all relevant information regarding the monitoring of an individual indicator. This comprises information regarding the actors responsible for monitoring the respective indicator, regarding ownership and access to data, the format of data and comments regarding transformation needed and supporting information.

Monitoring involves also exchange of information with external actors. It is empowering for actors to see that their actions are having a measurable effect, but similarly it is disempowering to receive no feedback or a feedback of no relevance. Actors may no longer be willing to fulfil their commitments due to short term interests and needs.

In this case, the traditional Local Agenda 21 forum could be effective in discussing, raising awareness, negotiating and finding a solution to the conflict.

### ● No changes please

Every effort should be made to avoid incomprehensibility and/or ambiguity with stakeholders, which may occur if measures are implemented without explanation of the new approach, if the responsible parties are not clearly indicated, if uncommon measurement units or scales are used to predict impacts and effects.

## Are you on track? The Monitoring Process

Once the Sustainability Programme with associated responsibilities and deadlines has been laid down, the Co-ordination Unit can start to record the events that have actually occurred. This comprises the monitoring of the impacts and the keeping track of data. Related to each individual indicator, appropriate monitoring techniques need to be applied, to record the impacts of individual measures or ongoing developments. However the responsibility for the appropriate application of monitoring techniques and the submission of data lies with the responsible persons/organisations/authorities assigned to this activity and has to follow the reporting duties as outlined during the “organisational set-up” phase. The regular Aalborg Commitment monitoring process should be made available in order to keep local citizens informed about the progress towards the Aalborg Commitments achievement.

## Are there more downs than ups?

### Decision on new corrective measures

After the measures are scheduled, the results are monitored and “accounted” and any corrective measures can be taken accordingly. This means that where a measure is announced for a certain date but is delayed or not introduced at all, the Co-ordination Unit has the right to request an explanation.

Sometimes deviations might be so serious that political leaders have to decide on how best to proceed. When this occurs, senior management informs the Council and the decision on new corrective measures could be again be combined with corresponding responsibilities and deadlines. If changes are required that are too substantial to be considered as amendments or deviations on the Council resolution, the targets set must undergo a further round of editing and approval.<sup>5</sup>

## One step forward

Implementation is the stage where all the activities planned in the 10 Commitments are put into action and monitoring is important to ensure that these activities are implemented as per schedule and as planned. Because they are so interrelated, it is recommended that Local Government plans implementation and monitoring processes at the same time. This phase is then an important input to evaluation, for drawing lessons from the implementation experience and using the lessons in the next cycles. The distinct aspect of evaluation is that it involves value judgement and hence it is different from monitoring, which is only observation and reporting of observations. Local Governments need to capture all meaningful data and information about outputs and outcomes from this phase to give an assessment on the progress made towards the achievements, revisiting and re-identifying the objectives and targets, determining the best approach to use and the measures to select and agree upon.

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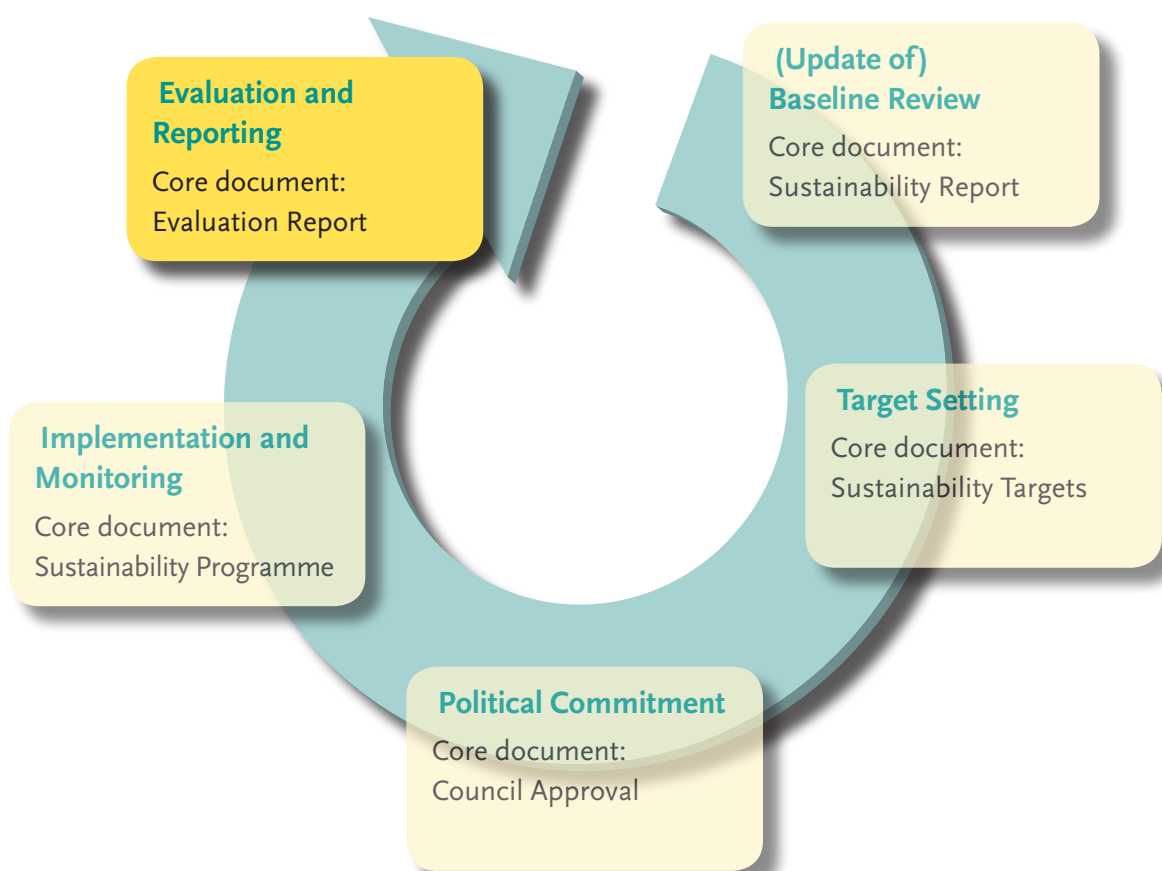
<sup>5</sup> More details in: ICLEI, “The *ecoBUDGET* Guide”, Växjö, Sweden 2004





## 5. Evaluation and Reporting

*“Provide information on your targets and progress for regular assessments. A first European assessment is scheduled for the year 2010, with subsequent review scheduled in five years cycle”*



*The leadership in ExpostVillage wants the city to adapt and change on a scale never attempted before and measure the progress and the innovation. ‘Are we marching in the right direction? How have we got to this spot? And are there any clues as to where to proceed? How is the change different from before?’*

The first aim of reporting is to check if the Council is on track, for example if the objectives of the Aalborg Commitments and the target values have been met or are in the process of being met. Secondly, it is an ongoing review of the Aalborg Commitments themselves and a benchmarking of European Local Government. Therefore, reporting provides also reliable information for evaluation purposes.

Evaluation is important for learning, validation of results and decision-making. It is not a one-off event, and should be done before, during and after implementation:

- before implementation (ex-ante), evaluation is needed in order to assist in making decisions on how the overall system will be implemented and the possible consequences of the planned targets and measures to the citizens over a period of time,
- during implementation (interim) as a continuous process, evaluation enables the Local Government to progressively review and adapt the measures according to the changing circumstances in order to attain the desired targets and project objectives,
- after implementation (ex-post), evaluation is needed to retrace the planning and implementation process and results after the implementation of actions and measures. It might result in changes to the organisational set up of the Local Government, or it might result in changes to the future measures and targets themselves.

## Memorandum for Evaluation and Reporting

- *Do you have a work-year balance?*
- *Are you into assessment?*
- *How to help the Aalborg Commitments stay?*
- *Did you involve the local community?*

### ● **If at first you don't succeed Go back, all is forgiven**

Sometimes the best way to respond to obstacles is simply being persistent. This means to repeat the efforts in next cycles until the local conditions become supportive or until the cumulative effect of the messages gets through. The battle can be aimed at maintaining the success of the Aalborg Commitments programme or at solving the uncertainty of financial support. For whatever reason, use the resilience approach to absorb stress, or to return and recover after interruption caused by external negative events!

## Do you have a work-year Balance? The Evaluation Report

At the end of the cycle, the Co-ordination Unit concludes the monitoring and draws up the Evaluation Report, i.e., a balance for each indicator included in the Sustainability Targets.






Evaluation has both intrinsic and extrinsic benefits. An intrinsic benefit is to determine with more certainty whether the measures are effective in achieving the goals and to help provide “mid-term correction”. The extrinsic reason for evaluation is that the programme that is formally evaluated is more likely to be disseminated, replicated and win awards.

The Evaluation Report can be regarded as a core result of the Aalborg Commitments cycle. It is presented as a table/brief text to be published at various levels. Comparing the past values and the current values does not just allow comparisons between target and performance values, i.e., an appraisal of the past cycle. More importantly, what has been achieved is measured against the long-term target and presented, as a percentage of the latter’s attainment.

Therefore, the Evaluation Report summarises and explains the result of the cycle informing about the achievements of the respective Commitments – whether or not the targets have been met – to the citizens and the Council.

This document is essential to determining which elements have been accomplished and which events have occurred and the reasons for this. All the results should be displayed graphically.

### Example of Evaluation Report. Extract from *ecoBUDGET* Project (Bologna, Italy)

RESOURCE	indicators	Reference year value	Value 2001	Value 2003	Short term target (2003)	Mid-term target (2005-2010)	Short-term target evaluation	Comments
AIR QUALITY	Concentration of PM10 ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ )	64 (2000)	53	45	45	40 (2005)		The concentration of PM10 was affected by extraordinary meteorological events
	<i>Distance to Mid-term target</i>	0%	46%	79%	79%	100%		
	Concentration of benzene ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ )	9,7 (2000)	10,3	8,4	10,0	5 (2010)		The concentration was principally affected by extraordinary meteorological events (rain). Furthermore, the trend is influenced by natural renewal of motorcycles
	<i>Distance to Mid-term target</i>	0%	-13%	28%	-6%	100%		
	Concentration of nitrogen Oxides ( $\text{NO}_2$ ) –Stalingrado monitoring station ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ )	79 (2000)	88	94	-	40 (2010)	-	In the last few years monthly fluctuations occurred, but annual concentration is to be considered almost constant
	<i>Distance to Mid-term target</i>	0%	-23%	-38%		100%		

The subsequent reviews to evaluate progress are scheduled in a five year cycle. Long-term targets are to be regularly evaluated within an (internal and/or external) audit, and political debate should follow as to whether they have proven suitable, or if a new situation requires new ambitious targets. The results have to be taken into consideration in the revision process.

## Are you into assessment? The Audit

The draft version of the Evaluation report is subject to an Audit. The Audit is related to:

- the measurement and assessment of the technical achievements (performance) on the sustainability aspects of the City (the destination)
- the process organisational changes (people and organisations working together and combining their efforts, how theory goes into practise, education and training of people on a problem, use of knowledge and innovation in unforeseen ways) and the individual, institutional and systemic capacity development within the City (the journey).

The results achieved during the implementation of the Aalborg Commitments are checked against the management background. This means verifying whether or not the new structure hindered better performance. Moreover, this further helps in:

### ● Criticism is true friendship

A possibility of Audit is the so-called “Peer review”, an evaluation made by equals. The peer is a person who has similar, comparable experience and is working in a similar role or context. Generally, the peer is considered as a “critical friend” from another local government. The purpose of the peer review is to inform and accelerate the implementation of the Aalborg Commitments, identify strengths and weaknesses, make recommendation to improve the system, raise the profile of the Aalborg Commitments in the local government. The method has the benefit that it allows the representatives from other local governments, as the peer, to share their varied skills and experience. The review allows for comparison and exchange of information among local governments. Further information can be found at: [www.presud.org](http://www.presud.org)

- identifying constraints or bottlenecks encountered in the implementation phase,
- assessing the benefits and the number of people who have benefited,
- providing a clear picture of the extent to which the intended targets have been realised,
- providing ideas on the strengths of the Aalborg Commitments implementation, for replication.

The Audit may be performed as a SWOT analysis, enhancing Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats or in addition as a Peer Review made by other cities applying the Aalborg Commitments.

The results of the Audit are incorporated in the report and then submitted for presentation to the City Council.



## ***How to help the Aalborg Commitments stay?*** **The ratification of the Evaluation Report**

One of the concluding steps of the Aalborg Commitments implementation cycle is the ratification of the Evaluation Report. It is important to achieve a complete understanding and a critical examination of the targets and the measures. Management or corrective measures for next cycles can only be effective if possible alternatives and all concerns have been discussed in detail.

After the debate, the Council ratifies the Evaluation Report by vote. Rather than having a real approval/ratification, some cities just accord fully with the achievement of measures and targets. Finally, further to that, Local Government is commissioned with preparing the next cycle.

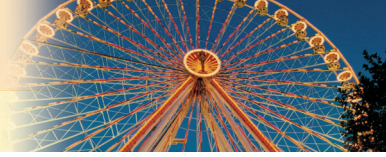
## ***Did you involve the local community?*** **Public information**

Evaluation and Reporting should not be a closed process with the results available only to local policy makers. Rather it can become a useful mechanism for keeping local people informed about the measures, maintaining a level of awareness about the Aalborg Commitments initiative, and upholding their enthusiasm for their own role in the process. Therefore, special attention must be given to communication and dissemination within the locality. This means that the general public must be informed of the results achieved as ratified by the Council and the Evaluation Report should be announced in the local press and made easily available on the internet.

## **One step forward**

The evaluation process does not end with the submission and the ratification of the Evaluation Report. Rather the findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned need to be internalised and acted upon. Therefore, the subsequent step is to follow up on the Evaluation Report and implementation of change. Viewed in this way, the *ex-post* evaluation becomes an *ex-ante* evaluation assisting in making decisions and establishing the targets for the new Baseline Review and therefore the next cycle.





## PART III

# The end or the beginning

*Sustainability is ruled by Hestia, which takes care of domesticity, family and inhabitants, Hermes, which deals with commerce and Ceres, preparing the ground for plants. They serve at high sacrifice and there are no medals to show for it. Valour, freedom, creativity, integration, beauty, liveability, dynamism, continuous improvement remain the own reward.*

Once the mechanism is put in place for the first time, in the next years the whole process is designed to work like a well-oiled machine. By analogy, a “domino effect” will set off the chain of all steps linking them together in a continuous process and (re)defining the targets set as becoming part of Local Government’s procedures.

## Aalborg Commitments Implementation Guide

The Aalborg Commitments Implementation Guide is the handbook leading local governments through the Sustainability Cycle step by step.

It supports signatory local governments in responding to the requirements of the Aalborg Commitments. It provides a mechanism to enable local governments to get easy access to knowledge, resources and other tools they may need.

The Guide works in parallel with what already exists, and thus creates synergies and links with existing guidance and tools, and covers any gaps.

The Aalborg Commitments Implementation Guide has been co-financed by the European Commission's 6th Framework Programme on Research.

