



**“PLAN OF ACTION FOR DISCUSSION
AND FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF CITIES
AND LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES
FOR THE COMPLETE DEVELOPMENT
OF THE INFORMATION SOCIETY”**

Bilbao, November 11, 2005

PLAN OF ACTION OVERVIEW

1. As Local Authorities, we have a commitment towards the future of our Cities and Regions. A future in terms of sustainable development which we will only be able to achieve insofar as we develop endogenous capabilities in each city and region, always within an environment of cooperation and working together, with Local Authorities and local and supralocal representatives who are able to contribute to the achievement of complete digital development.
2. The Cities and Local Authorities' Plan of Action for the complete development of the Information Society includes 3 strategic courses of action:
 - A - Development of an e-Local Agenda in each city and region
 - B - Reinforcement of Digital Solidarity
 - C - Strengthening of the institutional role of Local Authorities in the development of the Information Society and cooperation between Local Authorities
 - D - Creation of decentralised instruments for cooperation and solidarity such as "The Network for Cooperation and Digital Solidarity-IT4ALL", the Digital Solidarity Agency and the Torino Training Centre

A- DEVELOPMENT OF AN "e-LOCAL AGENDA" IN EACH CITY AND REGION

3. Within their sustainable development strategy, each city and region should commit itself to creating and undertaking their own **e-Local Agenda, a local e-strategy for the development of the Information Society**, which would be defined as *"a common strategy for the development of the Information Society, a project shared with citizens that responds to their needs and hopes, which bears in mind the socio-economic, cultural and institutional specifics of each city or region and contributes to the reinforcement of policies and actions aimed at achieving sustainable development (economic growth, culture and identity, social cohesion, environment) and which will benefit greater development for the cities or regions' citizens, especially for the most disadvantaged groups"*.
4. The e-Local Agenda should be a broad concept and should not just be a model of e-government containing the e-services offered by the Local Administration, rather it should locate the Local Administration at the centre of a node of inter-relationships that will be specified in a wide-reaching public-private and public-public partnership with the aim of guaranteeing the development of all the spheres that make up the Digital Society.
5. Each e-local agenda will have as starting point a diagnosis of the situation and an analysis of the demands and needs of citizens, and it will develop solutions and services in fields such as Accessibility and inclusion, Culture and identity, Government, Democracy, Health, Education and training, Business development, Infrastructures and Security.

6. The aim of this line of action is to ensure that a significant number of local authorities develop and implement their own Digital Local Agenda before 2010.
7. In order to facilitate the creation and development of the e-local agendas, a service platform will be created. This platform will become a meeting point for Local Authorities, where cooperation will develop a collection of instruments that favour the dissemination and exchange of knowledge, points of view and experiences between the various Local Authorities that are in charge of leading the process within their fields of responsibility, including support services as information and motivation, an archive of indicators, recommendations and good practices, and training and advice to achieve the knowledge and skills needed to lead this process.

B- REINFORCEMENT OF DIGITAL SOLIDARITY

8. Digital Solidarity refers to actions aimed at reducing inequalities in the access to and use of information and communication technologies that affect both groups within a society, as well as the entire population of certain areas of the world. The aim of Digital Solidarity is to reduce poverty, break isolation and offer opportunities to all people for harmonious development and dialogue between peoples.
9. Local Authorities will contribute to develop awareness amongst political representatives, agents, companies and citizens in terms of "Digital Solidarity". In particular, Local Administrations will be asked to consider a chapter on "Digital Solidarity" in their proposals, destined both at the e-inclusion of disadvantaged groups and also at Decentralised Cooperation.
10. Local Authorities will also guarantee the development of applications and services adapted to the needs of groups that are disadvantaged and far removed from the Digital Society; mothers without family support, young people at risk of exclusion, old people, ethnic minorities, immigrants, refugees, etc.
11. Local Authorities will also promote initiatives as the "Digital Solidarity Fund", which has been set up as an instrument that allows the cities and regions with the most resources to channel solidarity towards the least developed cities and regions. The Digital Solidarity Fund will finance actions aimed at reducing the digital divide between North-South countries and will promote structural projects that have a strong impact on the socio-economic activities of the least developed countries. This is done via the setting up of applications and services for administrations, citizens and companies.
12. A lobby activity will be carried out to ensure that other financial instruments, such as the Regional Development Banks and the Social Bank allocate a sufficient amount of their resources to support Digital Solidarity initiatives.

13. The plan's ultimate aim is to ensure that all local authorities include a "Digital Solidarity" viewpoint in their Local Agendas in order to guarantee universal access to the benefits of the Information Society for all citizens, both on a local and world level.

C- STRENGTHENING OF THE INSTITUTIONAL ROLE OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INFORMATION SOCIETY AND COOPERATION BETWEEN LOCAL AUTHORITIES

14. The two previous courses of action mentioned earlier (development of an e-Local Agenda and the promotion of Digital Solidarity), require a favourable environment to be successful, based on two essential ideas: the promotion and acknowledgement of the strategic role played by Local Authorities in the development of the Information Society and a decided commitment to Cooperation between Local Authorities. For achieving these goals, among others, the following activities will be carried out:
15. Continual contact with the United Nations' System and its organisations in order to convey the needs and demands of the Local Authorities in this field and the work developed by them, development of continued lobbying of international organisations linked to the Information Society, and coordination with other social and economic representatives who can contribute on an international level to the complete development of the Information Society for all people.
16. Participation in international forums linked to the Information Society, and the organisation of forums where issues concerning Local Authorities can be discussed and which aim to increase cooperation in the digital sphere.
17. Support for cooperation opportunities between Local Authorities in this sphere.
18. Representation before the United Nations' System and other international authorities will be the responsibility of United Cities and Local Governments and their regional and national divisions. This will be done in collaboration with other regional associations and networks specialised in the Information Society.

D - CREATION OF DECENTRALISED INSTRUMENTS FOR COOPERATION AND SOLIDARITY SUCH US "THE NETWORK FOR COOPERATION AND DIGITAL SOLIDARITY, IT4ALL", THE DIGITAL SOLIDARITY AGENCY AND THE TORINO TRAINING CENTRE

19. The result of this second phase of participation by Local Authorities in the World Summit on the Information Society focuses on the putting into operation of this new decentralised instrument for cooperation and solidarity in the field of the Information Society.
20. Starting from the premise that the development of the Information Society is a key instrument for improving the quality of life of our citizens and the sustainable development

of our cities and regions, the objective is to use the advantage of acting in a coordinated manner in a global environment, as Local Authorities, by sharing information and knowledge and strengthening our role with regard to other institutions, while also acting locally and responding at the same time to the commitment to solidarity that we take on by signing the principles and values laid out in the *"10 Principles of Bilbao"*.

21. These new instruments must include a series of elements that facilitate the preparation and implementation process, on the part of the Local Authorities, of their E-Local Agenda (their own Information Society development strategy) and the carrying out of projects that arise out of them. The idea is to take advantage of global information and knowledge and adapt it to the reality of the local situation. Some of the elements that can contribute to achieve this goal are the following:
 - a. The Digital Forum: This area provides access to global information and knowledge (best practices in the regions and cities of the world), which we then adapt and apply locally (e-Local Agendas)
 - b. Development Beacons: This section draws on global information and knowledge to provide a support that can be used to create e-Agendas and mark out projects (the beacons represent the bridge between the global and the local). It is a network of training and consultancy centres for local authorities based on a decentralised model.
 - c. Financial instruments that enable projects defined within the framework of the e-Local Agendas to get up and running. The involvement of states and international institutions and contributions from the private sector (development banks, companies, etc.) are essential in the implementation of these instruments. Above all, given that solidarity and the fight against the digital divide feature among the principles guiding the entire process, local authorities must view digital solidarity as a fundamental component in their development cooperation strategies. As a consequence, solidarity-based financial instruments such as the Digital Solidarity Fund will be given full backing. The Fund is an instrument that allows cities and regions with the most resources to channel solidarity towards their lesser-developed counterparts.