

Local Agenda 21 and the European Experience

L'Agenda 21 pot considerar-se com un dels resultats més durables i, possiblement, més efectius de la Cimera de la Terra de 1992 a Rio de Janeiro. Només a Europa, han estat aproximadament 4.000 les ciutats, les administracions regionals i locals i les autoritats regionals que han implantat algun tipus de procés de l'Agenda 21. Aquesta ponència dóna a conèixer les principals conclusions del recent projecte LASALA, que ha dut a terme un programa de recerca d'àmbit europeu sobre la iniciativa AL21. La recerca ha posat de relleu importants nivells de compromís en diversos governs locals europeus y elevats nivells de compliment dels seus objectius en molt poc temps. Malgrat que encara hi ha molt camí per fer, el projecte LASALA indica que les Agendes 21 són un eficaç vehicle polític per fomentar i donar suport a iniciatives de desenvolupament sostenible d'àmbit local a Europa.

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La Agenda 21 puede considerarse como uno de los resultados más duraderos y posiblemente más efectivos de la Cumbre de la Tierra de 1992 en Río de Janeiro. Sólo en Europa, aproximadamente 4.000 ciudades, administraciones regionales y locales y autoridades regionales han implantado algún tipo de proceso de la Agenda 21. Esta ponencia da a conocer las principales conclusiones del reciente proyecto LASALA, que ha llevado a cabo un programa de investigación de ámbito europeo sobre la iniciativa AL21. La investigación ha puesto de relieve importantes niveles de compromiso en distintos gobiernos locales europeos y elevados niveles de cumplimiento de sus objetivos en un breve plazo de tiempo. Aunque todavía queda mucho camino por recorrer, el proyecto LASALA indica que las Agendas 21 son un eficaz vehículo político para fomentar y apoyar iniciativas de desarrollo sostenible de ámbito local en Europa.

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Local Agenda 21 may be regarded as one of the most enduring and possibly most effective outcomes of the 1992 Rio de Janeiro 'Earth Summit', and in Europe alone, approximately 4,000 cities, municipalities at regional and local level, and regional authorities are now engaged in a Local Agenda 21 process of some kind. This paper reports on the main findings of the recent LASALA project which conducted a Europe-wide research programme into the European LA21 initiative. The research demonstrates the significant levels of commitment to the LA21 process amongst European local government, and the high levels of achievement towards LA21 goals within a very short space of time. Although there is still a long way to go, the LASALA research indicates that LA21 is an effective policy vehicle for encouraging and supporting sustainable development initiatives at the local level in Europe.

Local Agenda 21 and the European Experience

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Local Agenda 21 may be regarded as one of the most enduring and possibly most effective outcomes of the 1992 Rio de Janeiro 'Earth Summit', and yet in one sense, it was an afterthought -something that only emerged at the last minute, as a consequence of the lobbying by world-wide local government. The agreement at Rio to 'Agenda 21' is widely regarded as the most important outcome of the Summit, and it is, in principle, a global plan for sustainable development. Chapter 28 of Agenda 21 deals with the role of local government and its contribution to this plan through the designation of Local Agenda 21, but it was only at the very last minute that Chapter 28 was included, and the contribution of local government to sustainable development established.

LA21 is very much the child of local government. It has prospered in a climate of neglect by most national governments (although there are honourable exceptions), and the credit for both creating LA21 and for establishing the process world-wide rests firmly with the local government organisations and with local government itself. Local government, in co-operation with local organisations and communities has both defined and implemented the process, aided and encouraged by organisations such as the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives world-wide, and the European Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign.

In this paper we examine the European experience of LA21, drawing upon the results of a recent extensive survey of local authorities in the European Union and candidate countries. This research project, entitled *Local Authorities' Self Assessment of Local Agenda 21 (LASALA)* was co-funded by the European Commission, and was completed in October, 2001. (Evans & Theobald, 2001a; Joas et al, 2001).

The background to the LASALA research

During the last five years there have been numerous studies of the progress that has been made with respect to LA21 in many, if not most European countries. Finland and the Baltic Region (Joas, 2000); the Czech Republic (Czech Environmental Institute, 1997); Italy (Avanzi, 1999); Denmark (Ministry of

Environment and Energy, Denmark, 1998); and the UK (LGMB, 1997) are all examples of LA21 country studies which have been undertaken during recent years. Although these studies and reports have generally set country experiences within an international (and specifically European) context, in the main they are parochial in the sense of seeking to quantify and assess progress and achievement. These studies provide a wealth of information which has thrown considerable light on the effectiveness (and otherwise) of initiatives within each country, and they have proved to be a valuable source of information for studies which have utilised this data to construct a wider European perspective.

The most notable of these wider European studies is that carried out by a research network co-ordinated by two academics based in Norway and Sweden (Lafferty and Eckerberg, 1998). This project brought together studies of eight European countries in order to draw wider conclusions on the European LA21 experience, and this has subsequently been extended to 12 countries under the Sustainable Communities in Europe SUSCOM project funded by the European Commission (Lafferty, 1999). In addition, a more recent report based upon this work has just been published (Lafferty, 2001). The only other Europe-wide LA21 study is that undertaken by the Eurocities Environment Committee (Vallittu & Lehtimäki, 2001) which was based upon an email questionnaire to 60 cities.

These studies have provided valuable insights into the European LA21 process, and the intention of the LASALA project was to complement this work by undertaking an extensive research project in order to evaluate the European LA21 experience.

The LASALA Evaluation: Local Authorities Self-Assessment of LA21

The LASALA project had a distinctive perspective on LA21. The project was not only concerned to provide a common framework for the evaluation of LA21 across Europe but it also had a remit to assist and support local authorities in the evaluation of their own work in this area. The aim was therefore to seek to identify European-wide trends and processes, and to link these to the building of an effective common European framework for the evaluation of LA21 and local sustainability processes.

Approximately 230 local authorities were recruited from across Europe to participate in LASALA. These local authorities undertook a self-assessment of their LA21 processes, through the completion of two Exercises. The first Exercise was an in-depth questionnaire to be completed by the LA21 co-ordinator on behalf of the local authority. The second Exercise required the

setting up of a workshop in which a range of stakeholder groups would discuss and record their perspective on the local authority's LA21 process, and progress, within the context of the 13 Aalborg Charter commitments. The self-assessment was intended to assist the local authorities themselves in reflecting on the progress of their LA21 plans and policies as well as providing an invaluable database for evaluating the development of LA21 across Europe. The Evaluation Report of the Self Assessment Method from the project (Evans & Theobald, 2001b), available on the LASALA website, explains the methodology of self-assessment and the evaluation process in detail.

The Characteristics of Local Agenda 21

LASALA was concerned with the evaluation of the European LA21 initiative, focusing upon the two central project themes of Eco-efficient Urban Management and New Models of Urban Governance.

Eco-efficient Urban Management was interpreted by the Project Team as comprising of three principal elements. Firstly it refers to the various *policy tools* available to local authorities, such as EMAS, sustainability indicators or ecological footprinting, which assist the policy formulation, implementation and evaluation processes. Secondly, the concept also involves the policy-making and administrative *structures* which encourage and support eco-efficiency. This implies the adoption of methods of working which permit integrated and 'horizontal' approaches to policy, working across professional and departmental barriers. The third element is the extent to which policies have been adopted and implemented which have a specific eco-efficiency objective, such as CO₂ reduction.

The concept of *New Forms of Urban Governance* is central to LA21, referring to the need to support a shift from 'hard' top-down government to 'soft' bottom-up governance, involving new and more collaborative ways of working between local governments and their citizens and stakeholders.

According to ICLEI, a Local Agenda 21 is characterised by:

- *The integration of issues: environmental objectives are linked with economic and social objectives*
- *The integration of interests: in a culture of dialogue and participation, all groups in society are to be involved*
- *Its long-term character: measures and projects are based on long-term objectives keyed to the precautionary principle*
- *Its global dimension: impacts of local action on global development are measured, ways of counteracting the global unequal distribution of consumption and wealth are identified. The local contribution to global sustainability is an explicit goal*
- *Sustainable management of resources: utilisation of natural resources is based upon the rate at which new resources are formed; substance inputs into the natural regime are based on its capacity to degrade them. (ICLEI, 1998).*

The aim of the LASALA project was to assess the extent to which the LA21 process stimulated changes in local government practice and policy in each of these areas, and with this in mind, the LASALA team chose to adopt two 'characterisations' of LA21 for use in the evaluation process. These two are complimentary in the sense that they are both deeply rooted in a common understanding of the LA21 project and the role of local government and local communities in the process. However, they have been constructed for slightly different purposes. The ICLEI definition of the Five Characteristics of LA21 (see Box 1) is a statement of the 'spirit and purpose' of LA21, derived in large part from an interpretation of Chapter 28 and as such it represents a broadly accepted perspective upon the LA21 project. The Thirteen Commitments of the Aalborg Charter are similarly widely accepted and are again based firmly in the vision embodied in Chapter 28. However, the Charter Commitments also represent a *statement of intent* given by the signatory municipalities to work towards local sustainability.

The five ICLEI characteristics enabled an evaluation of the extent to which the principles of LA21 have become embedded in local authority thinking and practice, while the Aalborg Commitments enabled an assessment of 'the extent of progress towards' the practice and process of local sustainability across Europe.

The Aalborg Charter was written and approved by participants at the 1994 European Conference on Sustainable Cities and Towns, held in Aalborg, Denmark (see Box 2). By signing the Charter, municipalities both participate in the European Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign, and adopt the Thirteen Commitments of the Charter. As with the ICLEI characteristics, the central themes and principles of LA21 form the basis of the Charter. However, these Commitments also operationalise the characteristics, in that they are specific policy principles for sustainable development.

The Aalborg Charter

Notion and Principle of Sustainability

The idea of sustainable development is to achieve social justice, and sustainable economies, without overburdening nature and destroying natural capital. Our standard of living, and way of life should therefore reflect this.

Local Strategies towards Sustainability

Sustainability will not be achieved by an ad-hoc approach. It requires the incorporation of sustainability principles into all the policies and practices which affect the operation of a city or town.

Sustainability as a Creative, Local, Balance-Seeking Process

The wide-ranging activities of a city constitute its overall ecosystem. The activities inter-relate and create an organic whole.

Resolving Problems by Negotiating Outwards

The town or city should attempt to find environmentally sustainable solutions within its own boundary. However, if the town or city is unable to resolve problems or imbalances itself, it works together with other municipalities, or the wider region or nation to develop sustainable solutions.

Urban Economy Towards Sustainability

A clean and healthy environment is a pre-requisite for investment and for the future economic development of a city or town. If the natural capital of a city/town is reduced or destroyed, economic sustainability will not be guaranteed. How is the natural capital maintained or preserved in the light of new forms of economic development?

Social Equity for Urban Sustainability

The basic social needs of citizens, such as access to water, food, housing, healthcare, education and employment are essential if sustainable forms of society are to be maintained in towns and cities.

Sustainable Land-Use Patterns

Land-use planning provides a mechanism to ensure that new developments are designed with sustainable concepts at their core. At the same time, the land-use planning system considers the relationship between the city, the rural hinterland, regional and national planning.

Sustainable Urban Mobility Patterns

The need for less congested and polluted cities is a key objective for a more sustainable city. A less congested city is a more efficient and cleaner place and also ensures a healthier living environment.

Responsibility for the Global Climate

Climate change is a serious concern for the future of the planet, and its causes are varied. The local level has a key role to play in ensuring that adverse climate change is decelerated and ultimately reversed.

Prevention of Ecosystems Toxification

Prevention of the pollution of ecosystems and human health toxification.

Local Self-Governance as a Pre-Condition

The sustainable development of cities and towns is largely the responsibility of the individual city or town, therefore the necessary powers and opportunities are needed at the local level if appropriate decisions for a sustainable future are to be made.

Citizens as Key Actors and the Involvement of the Community

A consensus on the future sustainable development of the town or city requires that all sectors work together and recognise their individual responsibilities in delivering their local objectives for sustainable development. This also requires education, training and access to information for all sectors.

Instruments and Tools for Urban Management Towards Sustainability

In developing strategies and actions for sustainable development it is also necessary to be able to assess their success/failure and to measure whether sustainable development is being incorporated within the overall urban management of the city or town.

Utilising the results of the LASALA Exercises 1 and 2, the Project Team prepared two major reports. The first of these was an evaluation of the European LA21 initiative against the ICLEI characteristics and the thirteen Aalborg Charter Commitments (Evans & Theobald, 2001a). The aim here was to assess the extent to which the LASALA municipalities had made progress towards the interpretation of LA21 embodied in the two characterisations and the principal findings of this evaluation are outlined below. The second report focused on the evaluation of good local sustainability practice, identifying 24 local authorities across Europe (Joas et al, 2001).

Progress of the European LA21 Initiative

Local Agenda is a unique creation. It is a policy tool, an initiative, taken up by more than 5,000 municipalities and local communities world-wide and yet stimulated by a few brief pages comprising Chapter 28 of the Agenda 21 Agreement at the Rio Earth Summit. Chapter 28 is remarkably short and imprecise and yet has been incredibly influential. Crucially, it has been revised, extended, and given meaning by its users - local authorities and communities around the world. The sophisticated interpretations outlined above from ICLEI and Aalborg embody concepts and notions which are hardly hinted at in Chapter 28.

In Chapter 28, local authorities are requested to meet certain objectives - by 1996, for example, most local authorities in each signatory country were to have achieved a consensus on 'a Local Agenda 21' for the community - and they were enjoined to encourage the participation of women and youth in decision making, planning and implementation processes. All this is linked to the key understanding that local government has a key role to play: "As the level of governance closest to the people, they (local authorities) play a vital role in educating, mobilising and responding to the public to promote sustainable development". So if LA21, as part of Agenda 21 is about 'thinking globally, acting locally', it is equally about "educating, mobilising and responding".

In view of this, how can the European LA21 initiative be characterised? Has it worked, is it successful, and is it worthy of further support and investment by local and national governments and by the European Union?

On the basis of the work of the LASALA project reported here, the answer to the questions has to be an unequivocal "yes". The LASALA local authorities display a rich and varied range of projects, initiatives, policies and approaches which collectively represent a major European contribution to the global sustainable development objectives agreed at Rio. To be sure, many of these

initiatives were in train before 1992, and many would have taken place without LA21. However, there can be no doubt that the impetus, structure and philosophy of LA21 has been of pivotal importance in supporting and stimulating these endeavours and in encouraging municipalities and local communities to 'act locally'.

Given the brief nature of Chapter 28, it is quite remarkable that LA21 has been so influential. In part this is due to the tireless work of organisations such as ICLEI and the European Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign, but it is also a consequence of the quite remarkable impact of the LA21 'brand', and the power of the arguments and positions which comprise the concept of 'local sustainability'. After all, approximately 1,300 European local authorities have found the conceptions sufficiently compelling to actively sign up to the Aalborg Charter. Given the altruistic nature of the Aalborg Commitments, it is a testament to the global awareness, environmental commitment and sense of civic responsibility of the municipalities involved that such declarations have been made.

Local Agenda 21 has been instrumental in changing policy and political behaviour across Europe. More significantly perhaps, it has played a major role in reformulating attitudes, values and ways of working in European local authorities. Clearly, there are still major obstacles to be overcome, and there is plenty of evidence to suggest that the rhetoric is often more impressive than the policy reality. Nevertheless, the LASALA research demonstrates without any doubt that LA21 has had a significant impact on the local policy environment and policy outcomes out of all proportion to the levels of resource investment. In the face of much national government neglect and disregard, it has liberated local initiative and supported local ideals towards a global goal.

Two further issues emerging from the LASALA research demand particular emphasis:

Knowledge, awareness and understanding: LA21 was 8 years old at the time of the LASALA survey, and most local authorities participating in the project had only been involved in the process since 1995. However, despite the short period of involvement, the participant municipalities' levels of understanding, knowledge and awareness of LA21 appears to be remarkably high. Across Europe, respondents to both Exercises have demonstrated that they understand the complex conception of sustainable development, that they recognise that this is more than simply an ecological goal, and that the social and economic dimensions of sustainability should have equal prominence. Furthermore, in many cases, municipalities and stakeholders exhibited an

extremely sophisticated understanding of the local sustainability process and policy environment, recognising the complex and contested nature of the ideas, and the problems inherent in policy delivery. This is true for local authorities across all countries and all the LASALA European regions.

Recurrent references to global/local linkages, to the involvement of stakeholders, to the need to develop local capacity and to the many other constituent elements of the LA21 project clearly indicate the overwhelming importance of the LA21 initiative as a force for stimulating action around local sustainability.

Commitment to the local sustainability process: Most of the LASALA participants are signatories to the Aalborg Charter, and it might therefore reasonably be argued that this in itself demonstrates a high level of commitment to the local sustainability process. Moreover, the simple fact of participation in the LASALA project is again an indicator of commitment. However, the responses to both Exercises clearly convey very high levels of commitment to both LA21 and to the local sustainability process as a long-term exercise. This is demonstrated in two ways: firstly by most municipalities' perception that they are involved in a variety of policy initiatives which seek to change individual and organisational behaviour over an undefined but nevertheless lengthy time scale; and secondly, by most municipalities' awareness of the difficulties and problems which will need to be overcome, and their clear perception of the ways in which these might be addressed. The survey responses clearly convey an optimistic and positive attitude towards the local sustainability project.

The Future of LA21 in Europe

LA21 is an amalgam of aims, purposes and outputs. Chapter 28 of Agenda 21 clearly emphasises LA21 as a *process*, whereby local authorities have a key role in establishing a consultative and consensus-building process with citizens and stakeholders which will increase awareness and understanding of sustainable development and will acquire the information need for formulating best strategies. This process is at the very heart of LA 21, and is its central strength and *raison d'être*. However, of equal importance is the output from the process. Chapter 28 has the production of 'a Local Agenda 21' as a key objective for local authorities, usually interpreted as some kind of *plan* for achieving local sustainable development objectives.

Inevitably, these two elements of LA21 have been given different emphasis in different localities, and although it is clear that both elements are of equal importance, it is sometimes implied that the 'plan' should have pre-eminence

over the 'process', and that once the plan is prepared, the process is redundant. Furthermore, in some countries, notably the UK, the introduction of a statutory system of local planning incorporating sustainable development is sometimes seen as removing the need for LA21. Each country and city has to take decisions which are appropriate for its own local circumstances, but the LASALA evidence clearly shows that the LA21 *process* has been extremely effective in securing changes in attitudes, understandings and practices at the local level. This is not to suggest that plans are unnecessary or should not flow from the LA21 process - this is clearly not the case. It is simply to recognise that there are likely to be real and tangible benefits to municipalities who continue to encourage and support the LA21 process which will then in turn be linked to some kind of strategic plan for local sustainable development.

It may well be that the LA21 'badge' will need re-thinking in some countries or municipalities, and a more 'user-friendly' title adopted. However, the somewhat enigmatic title of LA21 does not seem to have been a major handicap in most European countries, and there does not seem to be a pressing reason to seek to rename the initiative at the moment. The key point to emphasise here is the need to continue to support and invest in LA21 as a central tool in European sustainable development policy.

The European local sustainability and LA21 networks which link municipalities and which provide information, knowledge and experience exchange and support are significant and growing. Many of the LASALA local authorities reported that they had benefited from other cities' LA21 experience or had used initiatives such as the European Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign or organisations such as ICLEI for information and support. Moreover, there was a general feeling that it would be beneficial for more advice and support to be available from both national and European levels of government, particularly in areas such as the use of common benchmarks or sustainability indicators. Some local authorities, particularly in the South and in the CEE countries need more expertise to support their LA21 work. At present, some municipalities use external consultants, but there is a need to draw more directly upon Universities and the education sector.

LA21 has developed with limited support from national governments, and yet has proved to be an effective mechanism for developing local capacities for securing change. The LASALA research shows very clearly that local authorities now need assistance from both their national governments and the European Union so that they can build upon and take forward the local sustainability work initiated under the LA21 banner. In part this means resources, but perhaps

more important than this is the political prioritisation of LA21, and the associated processes of guidance, co-ordination and support.

In particular, there is a clear need for the European Union to provide an increased level of support to LA21. The European Commission already contributes in several valuable ways to the European LA21 initiative, principally through supporting bodies such as ICLEI and the European Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign. However, it is clear from LASALA that local authorities now need more than this. Firstly, there is a need to encourage and support individual local authorities by working towards European benchmarks against which local authorities can assess performance. In particular, the LASALA research indicates support for common European sustainability indicators. Such indicators, termed 'EU composite sustainability indicators' do already exist through the work of the EU Expert on the Urban Environment working group. It is possible however that there needs to be further development and support of these. Moreover, European wide approaches such as common indicators need to be underpinned by continued support for international co-operation and exchange of experiences and approaches within Europe that has proved so important to date.

Secondly, given the reluctance of some national governments to provide more than notional support to LA21, there is a need for the European Parliament and Commission to consider ways of either supporting local authorities directly, or through the conduit of national governments. Such support could and should include resources, both in terms of finance and expertise, but of equal importance is the need to place LA21 on a firmer and longer term basis so that it can become embedded into the practices and procedures of European local government policy making. The challenge is to assist local government in its desire to overcome the endemic 'short-termism' that is anathema to the successful implementation of sustainable development. The new community Framework for co-operation to promote sustainable urban development does address this issue to some extent, but more action is needed. The European Commission is currently amending the 6th Environmental Action Programme to include an Urban Thematic Strategy. This Strategy will have Local Agenda 21 as one of major themes, and this welcome development will at last place LA21 at the centre of European strategy for sustainable development at the local level.

The process of nurturing a local dialogue for sustainability requires patience, resources and a long-term commitment. Local authorities in Europe have made impressive gains in this respect, but there is still some way to go, particularly in terms of involving traditionally excluded groups and those interest organisations who have as yet to be involved.

By definition, 'stakeholders' will tend to involve themselves if the 'stakes' are perceived to be important, and it can be assumed that interest organisations such as business and commerce are in the main little interested in LA21. This is because they cannot see its relevance to their activities and, with some exceptions, they are not prepared to invest resources in something that they view as peripheral. If LA21 and associated plans are to be effective in the longer term, this must change. Local authorities, in concert with national governments and the European Union, need to take the sustainability agenda out beyond its 'natural constituency' of the public sector and environmental NGOs to involve those interest organisations whose participation and commitment will be essential if sustainable development is to have real meaning. This process will not be unproblematic, and it will inevitably involve conflict and major disputes over priorities and approaches. However, this process cannot be evaded.

In the case of individual citizens, the issues are slightly different. In the main, it is the educated and articulate, property-owning members of the middle class who are the most regular contributors to participation programmes like LA21. However, this does not mean that other social groups do not have an interest in these matters. Low levels of participation may result from pressures of time, unfamiliarity with the issues, different interpretations of 'environmental issues', questions of language or cultural circumstances, or problems of mobility. These and other factors may conspire to continue to exclude the social groups that Agenda 21 is committed to include. So far, local authorities have not been successful in addressing this problem which will require both resources (this is a time-consuming process) and expertise. As with the involvement of organised interests, if sustainable development is to be a durable and effective principle and process in Europe, it will have to be more socially inclusive than it has been to date.

During the last ten years, LA21 has effectively placed sustainable development on the local policy making agenda. In addition to supporting a continued European LA21, the next task must be to facilitate a process of mainstreaming sustainability, to ensure that the principles of sustainable development permeate all aspects of local decision making. The LASALA research indicates that there are already positive moves in this direction, but there is still a long way to go. Given the commitment to the principles of sustainable development at the level of the European Union, this emphasis upon mainstreaming sustainability is consonant with wider policy objectives, and in terms of local level policy making there are two tasks which need to be addressed.

The first is that of extending an understanding of sustainability and the associated policy goals beyond those members of the 'sustainable development community' in local government, and out to other local authority officers and politicians who as yet have had little contact with the approach. The objective must be to develop a culture of institutional learning through which the ideas and concepts of sustainability become embedded in institutional culture and approaches to problems. Inevitably such a process will take time and resources, but it is an essential precondition for embedding sustainability in the policy process.

Secondly, as many of the LASALA participants have noted, there is a need to encourage local authorities to adopt new structures and ways of working which more accurately reflect the more 'horizontal' and integrative policy approaches required. In part this involves eroding any professional and departmental barriers which may compartmentalise decision-making. However, there is also a need to identify gaps in knowledge and expertise that may require investment and support. It may be possible to address these gaps through encouraging closer links between local government and educational institutions, particularly universities, and the LASALA experience suggests that encouraging an exchange of ideas and experiences between European local authorities is particularly useful.

The process of policy evaluation often results in a call for more resources. However, in the case of LA21 this would be over simplistic. Although the need for investment by national governments and the European Union along the lines discussed above is clear, LA21 is about more than just this, even though on any assessment, the whole LA21 initiative must be regarded as excellent value for money. In order to build upon the achievements so far, LA21 must be brought in from the margins to become part of the mainstream of European policy making at the local level. LA21 is a unique initiative and approach, which has proved to be effective. The challenge now is to build upon this to support European local authorities in their task of acting locally for global sustainability.

Notes

- (1) LASALA was co-funded by the European Commission's Directorate General for Research: Fifth Framework Programme, 1998-2002, thematic Programme: Energy, Environment and Sustainable Development, Key Action: "City of tomorrow and Cultural Heritage". Contract number: EVK4-CT-1999- 00011
- (2) Full details of the LASALA project, the Self-Assessment Method and associated reports and publications can be found at <http://www.iclei.org/europe/lasala>

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