

From the Committee on the Information Society to the

"Committee of Digital and Knowledge-based Cities"

Since 2005 the Committee on the Information Society, Chaired by the City of Bilbao, has been working to reduce the digital divide and to boost the implementation of the digital local agenda as a mean for improving the quality of life of the citizens from the decentralized governments. Through the Committee, it has been promoted the development of a common vision and dynamics among local governments in favour of an inclusive Information Society that favours the reduction of the digital divide.

Even though from the Committee we are satisfied with the work developed until today, we believe that we found ourselves in the right moment to give a new impulse to the role that the Committee must play. Therefore, we have considered necessary that besides continuing with the work developed until now of sharing the digital development with other cities and regions that far away from reaching this objective, we give to the Committee a wider scope, based on the seek of the competitive excellence of the local governments through knowledge management and innovation in the cities and municipalities.

The Information and Communication Technologies are a key factor for innovation, a tool for knowledge management and the increase of productivity and consequently the local competitiveness. Because the endless amount of information that can be found in the Net is not useful if we are not able to capture, organize and analyse such information and transform it into a shared asset that helps to improve citizens' quality of life.

In this line, we would like to take advantage of the work already developed by the Committee and change the title of the Committee

from: Committee on the Information Society to **"COMMITTEE OF DIGITAL AND KNOWLEDGE-BASED CITIES"**

In this new focus, the main thematic areas of the Committee will be centred in Digital Cities and the Knowledge Cities, understanding the term of Knowledge City as a wide concept that also includes the one of Digital Cities.

This is because, we consider necessary that Cities create a virtual space of interaction between the citizens, the private sector and the public administrations, that promotes an inclusive Information Society, that uses Internet and the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) as support, for the creation of an advanced model of community, that fosters a sustainable economic and social development of the City based on ICT. In this context, the Digital Local Agenda represents a strategic tool for achieving that a City becomes digital in a planned and structured way.

It is important for cities to seek integrating in their economy the communal intellectual capital and knowledge for the development of services knowledge based services, with a universal, systematic, effective and efficient access to them and ICT, and that are able to attract and retain talent.

With this new perspective, the Committee will: continue with its activities as observatory for the identification and dissemination of studies; update the online platform www.digitallocalagenda.com as meeting point for cooperation and exchange of information and best practices among Local Authorities; develop in-person and on-line training courses with new methodologies in order to reach more people and more places at the same time; generate reference publications and documents in the field (summary of best practices, newsletters, etc.); boost the network and collaboration between the members; develop benchmarking studies and organization/support to international conference related to

the main focus of the Committee, in order to generate a declaration signed by local authorities.

We defend this new orientation for the Committee because we consider that Knowledge is the asset that based on ICT can help local authorities in their fight for competitiveness. However, it is hard to reach the expected results in the triangle of knowledge formed by education, investigation and innovation. Therefore, we believe that this new orientation of the Committee might help as guide and reference for local authorities from all over the world in their journey to the excellence in the knowledge management.

We take as example many cities and regions that have become Centres of worldwide competitiveness with higher levels of efficiency than the ones reached by many countries. Some examples of this are the experiences of cities as Bangalore in India or Biose in U.S.A –hardware and software-, New Hamburg in Brazil –footwear-, Sailcon in Pakistan –surgical instruments-, Taiwan in Taiwan –microelectronics- or Tel Aviv in Israel –software-.

It is clear the relation between knowledge, innovation and competitiveness. Therefore, that must be our goal: to construct competitive cities, based on the knowledge management and innovation. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to count on with well prepared and educated people; political commitment of a government with strategic vision; support infrastructures and a culture that promotes change to that direction. All of this must be accompanied with a planned strategy and long term vision.

It includes a comprehensive conception of development, based on the participation and communal dynamic for the achievement of common interests; the knowledge management to act adequately in the different spheres of the local activity; the resources management and motivation for innovating and creating; and the participation networks inside and outside the community. It is not possible to innovate without a context of

interaction. We are talking about a creative process that involves all the actors of society and in which cooperation and networks are key elements.

Several Networks are currently working in this idea of Digital and Knowledge Cities, such as Cross-Boarder Network of Knowledge Cities, the CAPTURE Network integrated by 21 medium-sized European cities, the Digital Cities initiative and so on. It is important that from the Committee we begin collaborating closely with this kind of networks.

Going deeper in this idea, the objective is to create an alliance between the members of the Committee in order to achieve a competitive economy fostered by the Local Authorities in which Knowledge is created, transmitted, acquired and used for promoting the economic and social development of the community.

The main objective of the Committee will be to create an efficient cooperation network integrated by Local Authorities in order to take advantage of the creativity, innovation and knowledge and to assimilate and adapt them to local needs in order to create new opportunities for everyone.

For all this, we propose that we begin an intensive development work to boost this new orientation in order to give value to the role of Local Authorities in the local development in a globalized world.