



greencities

AGREEMENT ON COOPERATION

– a Binding Agreement on
Environmental Partnership for Municipalities

Preface

Green Cities – for Municipalities and the Environment is a visionary and binding partnership agreement between member municipalities that work to ensure sustainability and to make an extra effort to preserve the environment.

The municipalities of Albertslund, Ballerup and Copenhagen initiated the partnership in 2000, and Fredericia, Herning, Kolding and Allerød joined later.

The partnership was based on three declarations of intents – dogmas – that describe the partnership philosophy:

- Dogma 1** Human impact on nature must be measured
- Dogma 2** An environmental improvement plan must be drawn up
- Dogma 3** Environmental work must be anchored in all municipal activities

Environmental benchmarks were set up for each dogma, and the member municipalities have all worked towards achieving these goals. This has helped us in getting closer to realizing our vision of sustainability.

In recent years the dogmas have been interpreted in a number of different ways, and we now wish to specify and make our environmental profile more stringent. From 2005 to 2007, we carried through a development project with the support of the EU Life-program. Based on experiences gained from this work, we have decided to revise the framework for our partnership and intensify the demands to our goals and progress documentation.

This document is the result of these initiatives and constitutes the foundation for our cooperation towards sustainability.

On behalf of the Steering Committee

A handwritten signature in green ink that reads 'Leif Pedersen'.

Leif Pedersen

The vision

Our vision is to create an environmentally sustainable society. We therefore wish to make an extraordinary effort to preserve the environment through a binding partnership agreement and political leadership.

We have listed ten sustainability areas:

Soil

We want to improve the quality of our soil so as to ensure our health.

Groundwater

We want the quality of our drinking water to be so good that only simple water treatment is needed. Groundwater consumption should follow its natural recharge rate.

Air

We want to stop air pollution.

The climate

We want to make energy consumption CO₂ neutral.

The Countryside

The countryside offers rich and varied possibilities for adventure. We want to manage countryside areas through ecological principles, ensuring as much biodiversity as possible.

Noise

We want to remove damaging noise from all buildings and public spaces.

Chemicals

We want to stop all use and emission of substances and products that are damaging to health and environment.

Waste

We want to implement waste management methods that do not put strains on the environment.

Municipal planning

We want to include sustainability principles and environmental stress assessment as a natural part of all municipal planning activities.

Anchorage

We want to encourage citizens, companies and public authorities to act environmentally responsible and show commitment to sustainable environment development.

Common Benchmarks

All members have agreed to the Common Benchmarks and have pledged to seek to fulfill them.

**We have common benchmarks with each sustainability area.
Our current benchmarks are as follows:**

- We want to reduce domestic water consumption to a maximum of 100L /day per inhabitant before 2012
- We want to manage municipal agricultural areas according to ecological principles
- We want to stop the use of pesticides on municipal property and we want to influence citizens, companies and farmers to stop using pesticides in general
- We want to reduce air pollution and we want to comply with NO₂ and particular air-pollution limits by 2015
- We want to reduce CO₂ emissions by 25 per cent compared to 2006 by 2015
- We want to stop loss of biodiversity by 2010, and by 2015, we want to have increased the number of prioritized species
- We want all municipal food to be organic. At least 75 per cent of our food should be organic by 2012
- We want to have reduced the number of buildings with damaging noise by 2015, so that no citizen should be exposed to damaging noise in their homes at night
- We want to establish and implement an environmentally progressive purchasing policy that includes specific environmental targets
- We want to phase out municipal use of the 13 most dangerous chemicals that have been pointed out by the Green Cities municipalities. A specification on municipal usage should be finished by 2010
- We will deposit a maximum of 5 per cent waste per year by 2015
- We want to develop common sustainability guidelines within the road construction and building sector
- We want all municipal institutions to be environmentally certified by 2015. New Green Cities members must work out a plan for full environmental certification and have all measures implemented within a period of 10 years
- We want to implement and support targeted activities aimed at ensuring cooperation with citizens
- We want to strengthen environmental efforts that go beyond legal requirements through formal cooperation with the business community
- We want to include sustainability in all policies and service areas

The Rules of the Game

We have established a set of rules which we are all bound to follow.

The Partnership:

Our partnership is based on four principles which must be followed in our work to realize our vision and achieve our common benchmarks:

- Measurement
- Planning
- Anchorage
- Audits

The partnership is dynamic: New common benchmarks may be adopted and old ones abandoned at any point during our activities.

Our Partnership means that we:

- are working to achieve our common benchmarks
- point out and collaborate to fulfil new common benchmarks
- work out green accounts every year. These accounts cover the entire municipal geographic area and also contain general information related to our vision and common benchmarks
- work out a plan that includes local benchmarks and action plans in accordance with our vision and common benchmarks
- work to anchor environmental sustainability to get citizens, businesses and everyone within the municipality to take it upon themselves to act in an environmentally responsible manner

- annually submit a common declaration containing recommendations for national and international environmental initiatives
- subject ourselves to external audits in accordance with common principles
- pay our member subscription fee to fund common Partnership activities, the environmental prize, etc., and we each pay for the audit of our municipality

It is the purpose of the audit to:

- Present a performance status assessment for each municipality
- Present a progress evaluation
- Point to any weaknesses of consequence to the Partnership
- Be the basis for the annual partnership evaluation performed by the Steering Committee

Organisation:

The Partnership is coordinated by a political steering group. This steering group is responsible for the Cooperation Agreement and the Audit principles and will work to further environmental cooperation.

Every municipality will appoint one political representative for the Steering Committee.

If during the annual audit the Steering Committee should decide that a member municipality is not sufficiently committed to furthering environmental progress, the Steering Committee may provide recommendations.

Should the member municipality still not show enough effort to comply with the Cooperation Agreement, a Steering Committee majority vote may decide to exclude the municipality in question.

The Steering Committee will set up Working Groups to investigate different issues. The Working Groups will include relevant public officials from the member municipalities.

Every municipality appoints one or two officials for the Directors Group. This group will prepare the Steering Committee meetings and will be the contact link to the Working Groups. Terms of reference must be drawn up for both the Steering Committee, the Directors Group and the Working Groups, and these terms will be subject to approval and ongoing revision by the Steering Committee.

The Chairmanship runs for two years and is held alternately by the member municipalities. The municipality, which hands over the Chairmanship, will subsequently have the Vice-chairmanship for one year. The municipality which is taking over the Chairmanship will be in charge of the Vice-chairmanship in the last year of the previous Chairmanship.

The municipality holding the Chairmanship is also in charge of the common secretarial tasks for the Partnership. The Secretariat will prepare the meetings for the Directors Group and the Steering Committee and will take part in arranging the annual conferences and the partnership environmental prize award.

There are two annual conferences:

A spring conference for the Working Groups, the Directors Group and the Steering Committee to discuss the development of the Partnership.

An autumn conference, which is open for everyone, and which serves as an experience exchange and inspirational platform.

Payment:

Every municipality contributes to common functions and the partnership prize award through a partnership subscription fee which is determined in relation to the municipality's size. The subscription fee for a calendar year is determined by the Steering Committee in the spring the year before, so that it may be included in the municipal budget plans.

The subscription fee is currently:

- DKK 55,000 for municipalities with up to 100,000 inhabitants
- DKK 110,000 for municipalities with more than 100,000 inhabitants

Budgets and accounts are administered by the chairing municipality through the Secretariat. Audited accounts are presented each year.

First payment is due upon admittance to the Partnership and will subsequently follow the calendar year.

The Environmental Award:

The Green Cities Partnership may award an environmental prize every year. The purpose of this prize is to focus on sustainable development and to demonstrate that the Partnership supports initiatives that further this development.

The prize may be awarded to individuals, staff groups or organisations who make a special effort to further sustainable development.

A judging committee has been set up to appoint each year's winner. The Judging Committee is

formed by three members. Changes in the Judging Committee may be made by the Steering Committee.

Members of the Judgment committee are representatives from:

- The Danish Society for Nature Conservation
- The Danish Environmental Protection Agency
- The European Environment Agency

Member municipalities may recommend candidates for the environmental prize to the Judgment committee.

Partnership eligibility and municipal board approvals:

All municipalities are eligible to become members of the Partnership upon registering an application and endorsing this document.

A municipality may be eligible to become a member of the Partnership even though it is not able to meet all the requirements. However, the municipality must be determined to work towards meeting the requirements eventually. It is a membership requirement that the municipality draws up an action plan for achieving the common benchmarks no later than 12 months after endorsing the document.

It is also a membership requirement that this document and the audit principles have been adopted by the municipal council. Municipalities may participate in the Partnership as observers for a period of six to twelve months without paying subscription fee.

Resignation:

Members of the partnership can resign at any time. Notice in writing must be sent to the Secretariat no later than 1 October, and resignation will be effective as of 1 January.

Revision of this Document:

This document has been adopted by the municipal boards of all member municipalities and the Steering Committee may only make editorial or clarifying changes. Changes in current benchmarks and future common benchmarks are subject to approval by the municipal boards of all member municipalities.

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