

Security, Democracy and Cities: the Aubervilliers and Saint-Denis Manifesto

At a time when Europe and the world are going through an economic crisis that may jeopardize the social and cultural heritage of the twentieth century, local authorities, institutions and Civil society representatives, gathered under the auspices of Efus in Aubervilliers and Saint Denis, wish to reaffirm that facts show that social prevention policies are effective in terms of fight against violence and crime. Let us be reminded that prevention is five times less expensive than other policies, and in that regard is not only humanly but also economically more efficient.

This has led Efus to choose “the future of Prevention” as a theme for its fifth international conference in Aubervilliers and Saint-Denis, after Montréal, Barcelona, Paris and Naples, during which more than 900 people, including representatives of 180 cities and 36 countries on five continents gathered on 12, 13 and 14 December 2012.

This conference was concluded by the adoption of a Manifesto, published hereinafter, and to which will be added recommendations from the thematic sessions of the Conference.

Far from being a Conference report, this Manifesto is an expression of its conclusions and the principles advocated by its participants and sets out the principles and values of the Efus community. It is designed to be a source of support and inspiration for local authorities in designing and promoting their security policies. It also aims to carry the voice of cities, towards national, European and international institutions.

It is based notably on:

- The Delhi Declaration on Women’s Safety « Building inclusive cities and communities”, Women in Cities International, November 2010, Delhi;
- The Leipzig charter on sustainable European cities, Informal European Ministerial Meeting on Urban Development and territorial Cohesion, May 2007, Leipzig;
- Security Democracy and Cities, The Zaragoza Manifesto, November 2006, Saragossa, The Naples Manifesto, December 2000 Naples;
- The Aalborg charter for sustainable development, United Nations, 1994 & 2004, Aalborg;
- The European charter on the Safeguarding of Human Rights in the City, May 2000, Saint Denis;
- The UN Guidelines for the Prevention of Crime, United Nations, 2002 ;
- The European Urban Charter, Council of Europe’s Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, 1992

Challenges for Europe

The current state of global upheaval means that we are facing tremendous environmental, social, economic and financial challenges in the future.

Europe is experiencing imbalances and disparities, in particular an outburst of unemployment, which has plunged European citizens into a state of anxiety, weakening the social fabric and trust in the future. Faced with uncontrolled globalisation, the opportunities of which are not always exploited to the full, Europe has a tendency to become fragmented and withdraw into itself. In each of its localities, the crisis threatens social cohesion and solidarity, making selfishness and individualism emerge.

Feelings of insecurity are riding high like never before and citizens are mistrustful of politics, hotly contesting its ability to change the course of events.

Organised and financial crime, relatively absent from public policy preoccupations, represent a threat to social balance and to our democratic bases.

Europe is not keeping pace with these challenges because its social and economic project does not sufficiently correspond to citizens' expectations and does not facilitate their support.

Although making considerable progress, first of which ensuring peace for 65 years, Europe does not elicit a strong sense of belonging from its citizens, which prevents a collective investment.

The risk of authoritarianism

Faced with these challenges, there is a major risk of only addressing the most visible signs of these imbalances: manifestations of poverty, urban riots, human trafficking, development of addictive behaviours, gender-based violence, youth violence, anti-social behaviour.

In the short term, authoritarian responses offer to acting authorities the advantage of visibility. In the long term, this approach has major social and economic costs and seriously jeopardises our rights and freedoms.

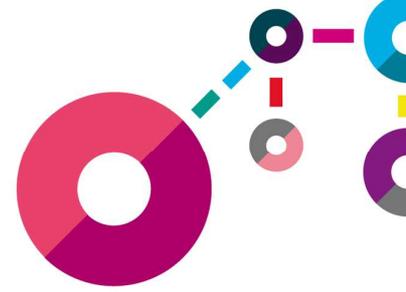
May reason prevail

Taking into account the social, economic and environmental challenges in the near future forces us to think in both the short and long term in each of our decisions concerning the future of our communities. It forces us to re-examine our priorities, reinvent our methods of action and offers us an opportunity for innovation.

Democratic debate, nourished by science and knowledge brings us to better measure the financial and economic consequences of our decisions for the future.

Our reactions to the current disorder must follow this difficult and demanding route. More than ever before, security should be built on the balance between sanction and prevention.

Cities must ensure that public authorities respond coherently to the smallest as well as the most important criminal activity.



Prevention: a choice for the future

By choosing to focus their work at the conference on the future of prevention, Efus cities are promoting an optimistic dynamic to counter the paralysing sense of fear. Rejecting the fatalism linked to times of economic crisis, it is our responsibility to identify and invest room for manoeuvre and development opportunities.

The prevention option is hailed as a rational, strategic option that has the best cost-benefit ratio. In the context of budget restructuring and restrictions in the coming years, stakeholders in security need to combine increased creativity with pragmatism. The search for efficiency reinforces the importance of partnership and of the working relationship between stakeholders, both public and private, within a collective project.

Security and sustainable development

Applying principles of the Alborg Charter, Efus cities seek a high quality of life for all. They refuse short-term emergency management and promote policies of sustainability.

The cities have highlighted the current need for investment in prevention to ensure that security, a basic element of quality of urban life, is a fundamental right for future generations.

Citizens at the heart

Security policies should be designed and constructed around the individual and collective needs of citizens, and not according to public institutions. To do this, participation is a cross-cutting principle of action, enabling civil society to be involved in all stages of design, implementation and evaluation of policy-making.

Future prevention can only be designed and achieved with the full participation of young people, who are all too often stigmatised and victims of violence. Concrete goals and means of expression need to be restored to the common political project that unites European citizens. This active form of citizenship includes the involvement of citizens in security, particularly through education to legality and sharing values of justice and democracy.

Informed policy

All policy should take into account the latest technical and scientific knowledge and create the conditions for knowledge.

To do this, cities need to find ways to ensure that their policies are defined and guided by both qualitative and quantitative data, and not on prejudice or ideological stances. They must commit to systematically assessing their prevention actions, in order to increase efficiency and therefore bring prevention to a new stage of professionalization.

A Europe of cities

European cities are characterised by the existence of public spaces that are shared by diverse population groups: they wish to preserve and develop this urban characteristic. Priority is given to the creation of social ties and conviviality: security does not seek to alienate citizens from each other but rather to create shared spaces in which the safety of all is ensured. Public space embodies social cohesion and symbolises the relation between citizens and their city.

European and national institutions now recognise cities as essential partners. Being the closest to the citizens, they combine competences in solidarity, prevention and sanction with expertise in the management of everyday problems. The allocation of financial and human resources should reflect the distribution of competences and recognise the partnerships and collaborations between states, cities and civil society.

Cities "Living Together"

Cities advocate a Europe that is open to the world, respecting regulations and laws, and taking full advantage of the diversity of their populations.

Cities express their desire to make security a public good, based on the respect of fundamental rights, to be guaranteed in both the public and private space, invested in by both individuals and groups.

This security is complex and must be based on a very wide-reaching partnership. It is designed and implemented through the combination of prevention, sanction and solidarity policies. Promotion of women's rights and gender equality must be systematic and constant. Proactive policies promoting living together and conviviality are vital for our societies, otherwise tempted by withdrawal into themselves.

A just city is a safer city.