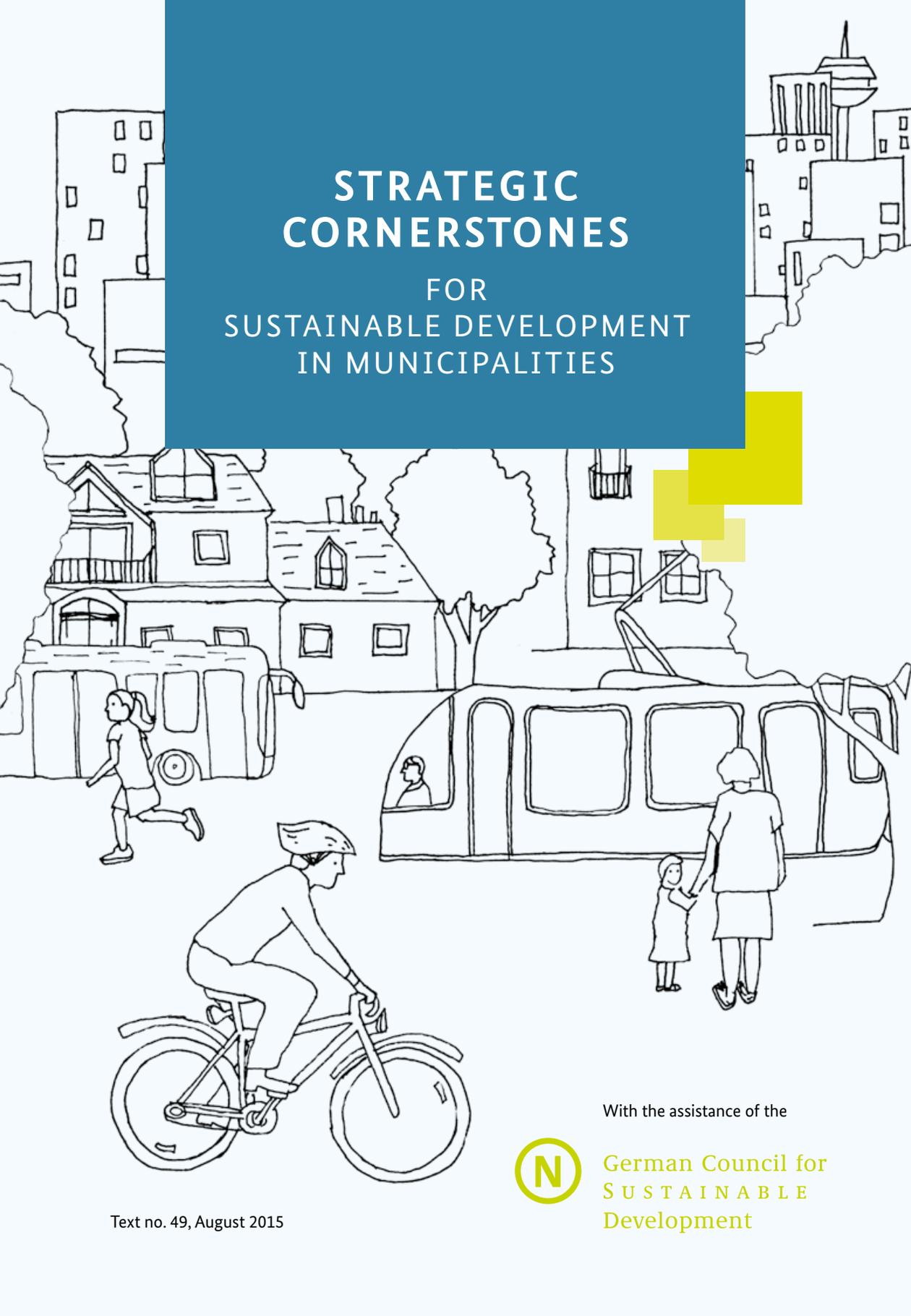


# STRATEGIC CORNERSTONES

FOR  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT  
IN MUNICIPALITIES



With the assistance of the



German Council for  
SUSTAINABLE  
Development



**STRATEGIC  
CORNERSTONES**  
FOR  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT  
IN MUNICIPALITIES

Second, fully revised, extended and updated edition



RAVENSBURG



AUGSBURG



RHEINE



TÜBINGEN

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KASSEL



# BACKGROUND

At the invitation of the German Council for Sustainable Development, Lord Mayors and political representatives of various cities in the Federal Republic of Germany convene, and those in attendance are especially committed to the notion of sustainability and to dialogue on the strategic issues facing the “Sustainable City”. In particular, the participants swap notes on their own approaches as local and state officials and tackle the issue of how local sustainability policy can gain in standing and importance in federal policies. The Lord Mayors have agreed on strategic cornerstones for sustainable development in municipalities as commitments and recommendations as well as a basis for calls for action by policymakers. The German Council for Sustainable Development has facilitated this dialogue process. The content of the dialogue is exclusively the result of the discussions held by the Lord Mayors.

The “cornerstones” were first adopted by the Lord Mayors involved in the “Sustainable City” dialogue in 2010 and then updated in 2015. Stimuli from an RNE dialogue project involving around 100 young municipal actors have been incorporated into the revised edition. These representatives of the generation that will be bearing more responsibility in the future have, as part of the “Municipal Sustainable Development” project and at the invitation of the German Council for Sustainable Development, formulated recommendations for the Federal Government as well as for the Lord Mayors who are involved in the “Sustainable City” dialogue.

DÜSSELDORF



BONN

# WALK THE TALK: LORD MAYORS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

We, the Lord Mayors of Augsburg, Bad Homburg, Bonn, Bottrop, Cologne, Constance, Darmstadt, Delitzsch, Düsseldorf, Erfurt, Essen, Frankfurt am Main, Freiburg, Friedrichshafen, Hanover, Heidelberg, Karlsruhe, Kassel, Leipzig, Lörrach, Ludwigsburg, Lüneburg, Munich, Münster, Norderstedt, Nuremberg, Osnabrück, Ravensburg, Rheine, Suhl, Tübingen and Wernigerode, align our policies to the principles of sustainability. It is our conviction that only the practice of integrated, sustainable urban development, which addresses ecological, economic and social issues on equal terms and operates on the basis of intergenerationally just finances, can create the foundation for the future of our cities. We want to expand our – to all intents and purposes different – approaches. Local policy responsibility and practice must play a greater role in sustainability policy.

The cornerstones for sustainable urban development are to be understood as a contribution towards revising the 2016 National Sustainability Strategy. We call upon the Federal Government to take these into account.

LUDWIGSBURG



## Our four cornerstones

We, as Lord Mayors, hereby declare our commitment towards assuming holistic responsibility for the following:

- I Sustainability must be conceived by people: concrete, spirited, hands-on and with a perspective, and in conjunction with people who are increasingly embracing the notion of sustainability. For this reason, we rely on dialogue, participation and support for the development of capacity building aimed at assuming responsibility, and we give sustainability a face through concrete local projects.
- II Sustainability entails not consuming more resources – including financial ones – than are regularly renewable. For this reason, we advocate a balanced budget and the reduction of debt for the benefit of generations to come, and we call for the municipalities to be given structural relief. We call for a correction of the financial distress experienced by the municipalities that has resulted from a shift in expenditure without adequate matched funding through a fair community financing system that realigns the income and expenditure of the municipalities.
- III Sustainable development requires integrating departments and factual issues into a wider picture. For this reason, we give top priority to sustainability and integrate this cross-cutting task into policies and administration. We advocate that sustainability management – wherever this is practised – be driven by principles and rules. Here, the Federal Government should lead the way in revising the 2016 Sustainability Strategy.
- IV Sustainable development requires that all the state levels act in concert and work hand in hand on a level playing field. The adoption of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the multitude of sustainability strategies in federal concert place new and significant demands on the consultation, coordination and participation among the various levels. We want to take part in this but call upon the Federal Government to create better conditions for doing so as the government plays a leading role here. We believe that a sustainability goal for cities will result in a crucial strengthening of the role played by the municipalities and call upon the Federal Government to help us implement this goal.

We invite all mayors in Germany, all other political levels and the general public to support our cornerstones. We are aware that many have already made such a move. We look forward to welcoming as many fellow advocates as possible to help us – in conjunction with the German Council

for Sustainable Development – to make our initiative even more effective. Anyone who is serious about the notion of sustainability must harness it for the future of the cities. We hold in high regard the manifold sustainability initiatives taking place in municipalities, such as the Leipzig Charter, the commitment to Local Agenda 21 or the intensive international dialogues and networks (ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability with the European Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign, Covenant of Mayors, Energie Cités, Climate Alliance / Alianza del Clima, to name but a few). We want to capitalize on these activities and give municipal sustainability policy in Germany a new boost, even though we have thoroughly different focal points and pursue diverse approaches. What brings us together is our personal assumption of responsibility. There are no blueprints and no easy fixes for sustainable development. But one thing is certain: nothing will work without political leaders setting a credible example, or without their stirring commitment and without their persevering initiative.



DELITZSCH



ESSEN

FREIBURG



# I. PARTICIPATION AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Creating structures that suggest sustainability-oriented action is a task for politicians. But sustainable development cannot and must not be enacted top down. It must be lived on all levels and can only be achieved with the commitment of civil society. We trust in the knowledge, experience and ideas of people in our cities. By the same token, we enable people to take part in the political process – regardless of their educational background, descent, or social or economic situation. By showing that we value such knowledge, we create trust. For us, parliamentary democracy, but also local as well as national petitions and referendums, constitute the basis for participative approaches. We view the municipal level as the place where democracy can most immediately be lived and experienced, and as the most appropriate place to test and lastingly implement direct democratic elements. We therefore not only facilitate participation but also call for involvement and the assumption of responsibility. True participation requires commitment on the part of the general public. Those participating should share responsibility for implementation, outcomes and efficacy.

LÖRRACH



In concrete terms, participation and public involvement to us means:

## 1. Promoting self-initiative and involvement

Sustainable urban development that embraces the local conditions can only be collectively advanced by policymakers, administrations, civil society and the companies located in the municipality.

For this reason, we involve the people in our cities in important urban policy issues and major investments. In this regard, we inform them in detail and in good time and make the procedures, bases, objectives and effects of decisions publicly known. We lead by example and construct processes transparently by updating the public on which proposals have been reviewed and thereafter providing feedback on the outcomes of the decisions taken. When involving the general public, we set store by having a balanced composition and appropriate procedures. In doing so, we clearly and unequivocally cite both the means and boundaries of participation.

We help people take their issues in the local community into their own hands – not as a substitute for government services that are not provided but as a value in itself. We want to help this self-initiative to evolve. In concrete terms, this means that we establish clear responsibilities for municipal sustainability management and public involvement. To achieve this, we create structures within our administrations, make resources available and build the capacity of our employees accordingly.

## 2. Courage to experiment

Participation must be realized in diverse ways. As divergent the municipal constitutions are and as divergent the local political and social situation is, the conceivable approaches, actions and ideas relating to sustainability are just as diverse.

It is meaningful to give individual actions an institutional framework. One means of doing this is to appoint citizens to advisory councils which deal with sustainability matters and to create round tables, forums and networks for opinions and ideas to be exchanged.

### 3. Giving companies a role

Participation and dialogue are keystones for the interaction with trade, industry and the business sector as a whole.

We are therefore increasingly including chambers, business associations and federations located in our cities, as well as individual companies into the sustainability process. In concrete terms, this means that, in the vital fields of sustainable urban development, we continue to develop the dialogue with relevant industries and regional federations of enterprises with a view to advancing sustainable development. Through this approach, we foster cooperation between the various interest groups in future-proof, expedient projects. We want to further develop responsibility for a sustainable economy in cooperation with companies and support the application of the Sustainability Code.

### 4. Promoting sustainable lifestyles

The ambitious sustainable development goals that the municipalities have set themselves require not only efficient measures but also a change in social awareness.

We therefore advocate promoting energy-saving behaviour and convincing people of green mobility and lifestyles as well as sustainable product alternatives. We make clear that sustainable consumption, less or “other” forms of consumption can signify greater quality of life, satisfaction and health. For this reason, we further the dialogue on what shape resource-light and healthy living can take that minimizes the ecological burden on the planet, helps to distribute available resources fairly and broadens the horizon beyond the municipality.

CONSTANCE



We support the numerous creative approaches – such as “repair cafés”, community gardening or sharing things – that offer added value for all. This also strengthens social cohesion.



LÜNEBURG



HANOVER

## 5. Urban visions: firming up collective development

Urban visions and models serve as orientation for municipal sustainable policy and, in particular, provide a reliable framework for political decisions that have long-term implications.

Together with the populace, local businesses and associations as well as scientists, academics, politicians and administrations, we are developing a future vision of our city and constantly firming this up in the opinions formed by urban society and through the use of science and innovation that will lead to the city of the future. We use visions and models as the framework for our planning and decisions. Through bindingly formulated sustainable development goals and guidelines, we build the bridge to everyday political and administrative life.

## 6. In dialogue: advancing the energy transition

The energy transition – or “Energiewende”, as it is frequently called – requires the broad-based participation of citizens, associations and companies. Successful participation within the municipalities is also of great significance for national goals and projects. In the municipalities, many of the technical and social solutions of the energy transition must be set in motion – innovatively, true-to-life and collectively with the local populace. However, policymakers at federal and Laender level must construct an economic and political framework that enables the municipalities to fashion the energy transition with their public utility companies.

We are aware of our need to significantly reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. For this reason, we are deploying strategies and programmes to achieve the greatest possible energy savings and reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, with the long-term aim of becoming CO<sub>2</sub> neutral. We will gradually bring

the urban infrastructure and the basic structure of our buildings in line with these requirements and we advocate energy efficiency and the construction of low-energy buildings in municipal building projects, in anticipation of the envisaged 2019 standards. Model and pilot projects will play a crucial role in terms of being able to afford to convert the city into sustainable structures and facilities – ranging from single new housing areas to existing areas and entire urban districts. We set great store by suitable means for the local populace to actively participate in decision-making and also by combining social housing schemes and energy-efficient retrofitting in order to also enable low-income earners to have a high energy standard.



COLOGNE



MUNICH

MÜNSTER



## II. SUSTAINABILITY IN MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Fiscal sustainability also exists. It has two facets: on the one hand, a sustainable policy must be financially viable or be founded on self-supporting economic effects. On the other hand, financial resources must be conserved just like ecological resources and, in many instances, must first be restored. For this reason, a balanced budget and debt reduction for the benefit of future generations form the core objectives of urban policy.

These objectives demand massive efforts on the part of the municipalities. However, they also require structural relief. We expect the Federal Government and the Laender to establish the conditions to secure stable and lasting municipality funding.

In concrete terms, sustainable municipal finance to us means:

### 1. Aligning expenses and income

We want to strike an appropriate and future-proof balance between municipal expenses and income. This cannot be achieved solely at municipal level, however. Sustainable development in municipalities entails the principles of connectivity and subsidiarity as well as securing appropriate shares of state tax income. We find it unacceptable that municipalities should continue to be required to take charge of and finance tasks that lie in the hands of the Federal Government, especially those in the social domain, when municipalities are unable to influence their development and their rising financial burden exceeds the means available to the municipalities. Against this backdrop, we



OSNABRÜCK

call for an earnest review of tasks. Additional tasks should only then be assigned to the municipalities if the funding of such tasks can be lastingly guaranteed and a mutually agreeable funding solution is found. This furthermore necessitates having secure sources of income, which, in turn, includes the right of munic-

ipalities to a source of tax revenues based upon economic ability, as guaranteed in Art. 28 Para. 2 of the Basic Law.

## 2. Planning long-term

Sustainable municipal financing must be applied to expenditure and income alike.

For this reason, we advocate the comprehensive and consistent criticism of tasks and the development of new, efficient and holistic planning methods, working methods and forms of cooperation. In years that produce high levels of tax revenue, we do not downscale our consolidation efforts but continue to add to them.

We utilize existing municipal means to further the preservation of natural resources and the use of innovation technologies, and, in doing so, also achieve financial savings in many cases. We use the opportunity to utilize funds acquired in this way – through corresponding financing models (such as *intracting*<sup>1</sup>) – in order to accomplish other sustainable projects. We do not save on investments today in order to reap short-term benefits at the expense of economic viability tomorrow (e.g. when erecting public buildings or with regard to energy-efficient retrofitting).

Short-funded public budgets require consistent performance scrutiny of the budgetary handling of financial resources. For this reason, we formulate quantified goals for the city budget and use indicators for the purpose of review and control.

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<sup>1</sup> *Intracting* is a special financing instrument for municipalities that is used to accomplish measures aimed at saving energy or other resources.



WERNIGERODE



ERFURT



HEIDELBERG

### 3. Establishing cost transparency

Clarity and transparency with regard to costs and economic use must be viewed as the basis for long-term and realistic planning. This especially holds true for construction or infrastructure projects, the procurement of IT devices or motor vehicles and other durable consumer goods. At the municipal level, we want to play our part in seeing prices reflect the economic, ecological and social truth.

In concrete terms, this means that we especially review the costs of all major investment projects that result from their entire life cycle. Moreover, we encourage the Federal Government and the Laender to work hand in hand with the municipalities to develop respective instruments and to test them on specific examples which can be applied in practice.

## 4. Developing and testing auditing methods

Sustainability audits should, in future, safeguard the budgetary handling of financial and natural resources.

In concrete terms, this means, for us, that we want to audit the sustainability of all new and material measures and – through processes and outcomes – engage in a meeting of minds with all governmental levels. We encourage the federal and state institutions to develop suitable instruments in cooperation with leading municipal associations.

## 5. Disclosing the financial situation

The financial situation of our municipalities – including everything that follows in terms of possibilities and restrictions – should be clearly discernible to the people. This sets the premise for high cost-awareness on all sides and makes it possible for actors outside the political and administrative system to identify opportunities and risks at an earlier stage.

For this reason, we advocate having the greatest possible transparency when it comes to the financial situation, income, expenditure and assets of our municipalities and municipal companies.

DARMSTADT



NUREMBERG



# III. SUSTAINABILITY AS A CROSS-CUTTING MUNICIPAL TASK

All policy areas are vital to sustainable development. Looking to tomorrow requires a mindset which transcends departmental policy and marries ecology, social affairs and economy into one vision for tomorrow.

In the day-to-day administrative work involved in performing urban services and tasks, this principle is expressed in the duty of every area to comprehend and implement sustainability as a cross-cutting task. This is, as we know, easy to say, but only the greatest of commitment will see it effectively organized and managed. We also know, however, that those who try in earnest reap the external benefits through the creation of a more attractive city worth living in and the internal benefits through increased employee motivation.

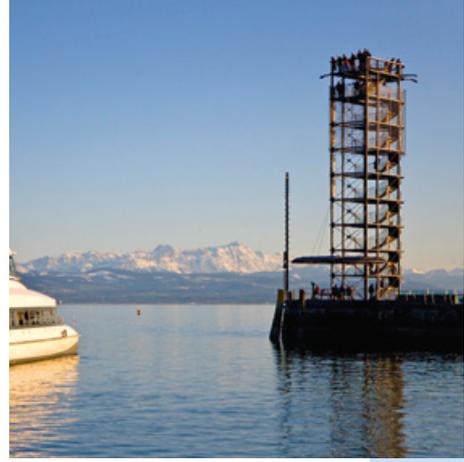
In concrete terms, this, to us, means:

## 1. Making sustainability a top-level issue

Responsibility for the subject of sustainability must be borne by those at the top of the political chain for the effectiveness of the matter to be safeguarded.

One meaningful opportunity is to engage a sustainability officer. This is the basis on which sustainability activities must be coordinated within the administration and a link established to those with political responsibility at RNE, in civil society, science and academia and the business community. We advocate having an intensive meeting of expert minds between and within the various administrative levels as well as with the political bodies. We ensure

that the administrative services for sustainability and the personnel responsibilities are clearly discernible. Understanding sustainability as a cross-cutting task also implies that we nurture employees' skills within the meaning of "Education for Sustainable Development".



FRIEDRICHSHAFEN

## 2. Improving sustainability management

We aim to draft and compile programmes geared towards the guiding principle of sustainability by using an interdisciplinary and cross-departmental approach and a meeting of expert minds.

The gradual introduction of integrated sustainability management serves to steer the drafting and implementation of action programmes and to subject them to a review at regular intervals. We firm up our guiding principles in a target system that we layer with suitable indicators. As part of a system aimed at long-term monitoring, we make results tangible and illustrate where adjustments need to be made.

We offer the Federal Government our experience when it comes to improving the management rules defined in the National Sustainability Strategy.

## 3. Aligning municipal companies to the model of sustainability

Sustainability as a municipal task goes beyond the basics of modern administrative techniques. It is vital that every department, every association, every company and every person in the city understands what role they each play in the city's sustainable development. The task of structuring and organizing this falls to us as Lord Mayors.

For this reason, we align our own enterprises, public utility companies and other municipal companies to the model of sustainability. We advocate that our companies assume their social responsibility to a greater degree and make their sustainability management transparent, for example by using the Sustainability Code.

## 4. Leading by example

Every municipal administration must be a first mover if it wants to be credible in the eyes of its citizens. Focus can be placed on procurement, education, the promotion of voluntarism, climate protection, and the fostering of the regional green economy.

In our public procurement system, we deploy the available legal means and align it to social, economic and ecological criteria. By doing so, we embed the notion of sustainability in numerous concepts, measures and technical plans performed by the administration.

To facilitate a sustainable procurement policy, we urge the Federal Government to simplify and make more efficient the information used on product labels required for the socially responsible and eco-compatible manufacture of products. Binding recommendations for seals and certificates are required that are legally compliant when used in calls for tender. Seals should be subject to minimum statutory requirements with a view to making products comparable.

## 5. Increasing future viability: Education for Sustainable Development

Entrenching sustainable development in formal education is a task of the Laender. However, municipalities also bear significant responsibility: here, everyone in our cities must be empowered or given the opportunity to acquire the skills required to lead a good life and to positively shape social development.

We incorporate the Education for Sustainable Development goals into our guidelines and strategies.

BOTTROP



We support structures, initiatives and projects and provide children and youths in particular with the room to develop their own ideas based on their living situations. All facilities and establishments, regardless of whether these form part of formal or informal education, must work more closely together than in

the past. We support the implementation of the World Programme of Action “Education for Sustainable Development” in Germany.

Education and capacity building are the key to participation within and by our society. For this reason, we focus in particular on people who come to us as refugees or migrants. We have an appropriate range of educational services at the ready to enable these people to acquire access to public life.

KARLSRUHE



FRANKFURT AM MAIN

LEIPZIG



# IV. COORDINATION OF THE SUSTAINABILITY ACTIVITIES PERFORMED BY THE MUNICIPALITIES, LAENDER, FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, THE EUROPEAN UNION AND GLOBALLY

The improved and more effective coordination of all levels – ranging from the municipalities to the EU, and globally – presents a major opportunity but momentous responsibility alike. However, this cannot be achieved through formal administrative guidelines but only through the active will of all involved to work hand in hand and share their opinions and experience on effective and successful strategies.

In concrete terms, this, to us, means:

## 1. Reaching a healthy balance between “bottom-up” and “top-down”

At all levels, sustainability strategies must clearly specify the challenges, on the one hand, while showing a high degree of coherence and connectivity, on the other. This is often no easy task and requires a high degree of responsibility and creativity.

We align ourselves to the sustainability strategies of the Laender, to the National Sustainability Strategy and, in particular, to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals in their most recent version of September 2015. However, for their

NORDERSTEDT



implementation to be effective, greater integration of the municipalities into the development of such strategies is required. Local self-administration is a vital political asset and its significance should be afforded greater consideration.

We encourage the Federal Government to press ahead with the perpetuation of the National Sustainability Strategy – with the involvement of the Laender and municipalities – in light of its effectiveness on the ground and also to remain committed to further pursuing the development of an EU sustainability strategy.

## 2. Working together on measuring sustainability

Every political level is called upon in equal measure to assess its successes, weaknesses and conflicts in regards to sustainability using appropriate parameters.

We commit to this task and, in carrying it out, align ourselves to the goals and requirements of the individual municipality. We are prepared to incorporate those indicators of the National Sustainability Strategy and (if available) of the Laender strategies into our municipal sustainability strategies for which it is meaningful to draw a municipal balance and which do not generate excessive bureaucratic effort. The Federal Government and the Laender should involve the municipalities more actively in the furthering of their goals and indicators and ensure that the vast majority of the Federal Government/Laender indicators can be meaningfully reproduced at the municipal level, that they are of practical relevance there and that the appropriate data can be made available.

The municipalities have a significant role to play in the implementation of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals that are due to be adopted in September 2015. We are aware of this responsibility and suggest improving the exchange of experiences and information with the Federal Government on their implementation and monitoring.

## 3. Pursuing the political guideline of sustainability more seriously

We are willing to adopt the strategies of the Laender as well as the National Sustainability Strategy as our own guideline. In return, however, we expect the Federal Government and the Laender to align their policies even more closely to this guideline than before. They should design statutory regulations, fiscal policy and funding programmes more than ever before along the lines of a sustainable development of our country and our cities and with due regard to intergenerationally just funding.

We propose that the exchange of experiences and the provision of information be improved on all sides. Sustainability requires all those concerned working in partnership.

#### 4. Assuming global responsibility

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals underscore the significant contribution to sustainable development that is made at the local level. The goals illustrate that development policy remains a vital global issue, but they rightfully go far beyond this. We believe that it is absolutely crucial that municipalities network more closely at the international level, engage in an exchange of views and opinions on specific issues and collectively contribute their standpoints and interests into political processes, including on the international stage.

We have learned that we can achieve a great deal in international cooperation projects and partnerships and this is why we have made development cooperation a permanent element of our local policy. At the heart of this policy are partnerships on equal terms as well as the sharing of tried-and-tested best practices. At the same time, we make effective use of the multicultural and international nature of our municipalities, the wealth of knowledge and experience of municipal self-administration, and our practical experience with sustainable urban development. The Federal Government should give municipalities even greater recognition and assistance as development cooperation actors. The international exchange on implementing the Sustainable Development Goals should be intensified.



BAD HOMBURG

SUHL



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Lord Mayor Andreas Brand, Friedrichshafen  
Lord Mayor Uli Burchardt, Constance  
Lord Mayor Peter Feldmann, Frankfurt am Main  
Lord Mayor Peter Gaffert, Wernigerode  
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Published by the Lord Mayors involved in the “Sustainable City” dialogue

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