ALDE CoR
ALLIANCE OF LIBERALS AND DEMOCRATS FOR EUROPE

PRINCIPLES
that make cities and communities *liberal*



European Committee of the Regions

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What matters is not where you came from, but where you are going.

PRINCIPLES
that make cities and communities
liberal

A digital version of this brochure is available at www.alde-cor.eu

Foreword

For the first time in the history of humanity, more people live in cities than in the countryside - in Europe the proportion is nearly three quarters. The trend is expected to continue throughout the 21st century.

This development has resulted in a new interest in cities and in particular their governance. It is in cities where many of society's key objectives for the future succeed or fail. It is often said that local politics is simply about practical solutions and that ideologies don't matter, but we believe otherwise.

A mayor with the right ideas and successful formulas can make a big difference, just as mayors with the wrong ideas can aggravate existing problems and bring on new ones. With this brochure, which stems from discussions within the Liberal Mayors Network, we aim to prove that liberal principles are the right ones to develop successful urban societies, and we outline how mayors can put them into practice.

We also think that this publication will be of interest to liberal politicians and activists working at any level of government, as a useful source of reference for the liberal principles that guide their political action. Let's build a liberal Europe and a liberal world together!



Bart Somers, Mayor of Mechelen

Bart Somers
President ALDE-CoR
World Mayor 2016

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01

Freedom and responsibilities

where citizens:

- are aware of their freedoms, and are able to exercise them;
- understand their responsibilities towards other citizens and the wider community, and fulfil them with conviction.

A liberal mayor will ensure citizens respect the rule of law and that the city administration has these objectives as priorities.

A liberal city is not a place of fear nor lawlessness, but rather a space of trust and justice.



02

Free enterprise

where citizens:

- are able to develop their entrepreneurship;
- can contribute to a thriving local economy and grow their small businesses;

A liberal mayor will promote small government, ensuring the city administration limits regulation to what is strictly necessary.

A liberal city is not a place of bureaucracy or big government, but rather a space of efficiency and effectiveness.



03

Democracy

where citizens:

- are directly involved in the decision-making processes, or feel that they are actively consulted and that their opinions are listened to and respected;
- are able to shape the future direction of their own lives and of their local community;
- individually or through civil society organisations, freely interact with their elected representatives and are able to hold them accountable.

A liberal mayor will be accessible to the citizens and will ensure the city council and administration actively reach out and encourage their participation in the decisions that affect them and will develop administrative capacity to focus on delivery of results.

A liberal city is not a place of submission, but rather a space for citizen government.



04

Independence

where citizens:

- are free from deprivation and able to contribute to society in meaningful ways;
- in cases where public help is required, are encouraged and helped to regain their independence as quickly as their personal circumstances permit them to.

A liberal mayor will target city policies towards preventing and reducing deprivation, and enabling citizens receiving public assistance to regain their autonomy over time.

A liberal city is not a place that promotes dependence, but a space of empowerment.



05

Inclusiveness and trust

where citizens:

- embrace diversity, because freedom and diversity are two sides of the same coin: there cannot be freedom without diversity and there cannot be diversity without freedom;
- welcome other citizens regardless of their geographical origin, ethnicity, religion, political beliefs, sexual orientation, etc.;
- contribute to building trust across communities, engaging in dialogue, sharing experiences, and working on joint initiatives.

A liberal mayor will set the example by reaching out to all citizens, building bridges not walls, and bringing all citizens together for dialogue and joint projects, and will ensure the city policies prevent the formation of ghettos of any kind. Ghettos destroy trust.

A liberal city is not a place of discrimination or rejection, but rather a space of association and respect.



06

Empowerment and emancipation

where citizens:

- are and feel free to choose their own lifestyle;
- are able to build their own unique identity without being judged by others.

A liberal mayor will set the example by promoting and defending diversity of lifestyles as a strength of the city.

A liberal city is not a place of conformity, but rather a space of choices.



07

Opportunity and social mobility

where citizens:

- are able to develop their ideas, talent, and expertise in new ways, quickly and easily;
- are encouraged and able to fulfil their potential by acquiring new knowledge and skills.

A liberal mayor will promote the talent factory by actively seeking to remove barriers that inhibit opportunity while protecting social cohesion, and will ensure city policies promote education, training, and accessibility.

A liberal city is not a place of fatalism, but rather a space of encouragement.



08

Liveability

where citizens:

- are and feel safe in their homes and on the street;
- feel free to access any part of the city;
- are able to move through the city freely and quickly;
- are able to lead healthy lives, enjoy clean air and have good access to outdoor spaces and sports facilities;
- actively contribute to the environment and a sustainable local economy.

A liberal mayor will ensure the city services are focused on enhancing the quality of life of the citizens and on delivering tangible results for them.

A liberal city is not a place of neglect, but rather a space of evolution and improvement.



09

Knowledge, education and culture

where citizens:

- have spaces to learn, reflect, are inventive, express their ideas, and share them with other citizens;
- are able to develop the local culture and share it across borders.

A liberal mayor will encourage diverse cultural expression and the pursuit of knowledge.

A liberal city is not a place of ignorance, but a space of enlightenment.



10

Smart innovation

where citizens:

- are able to create new and more efficient working methods;
- embrace new technologies and incorporate them effectively into society.

A liberal mayor will promote innovation and good civic use of new technologies.

A liberal city is not a place that rejects new ideas and methods but rather a space that is open to smart change and progress.



11

Positive action

where citizens:

- interact with other citizens, businesses, and public bodies, creating networks, connections and partnerships.

A liberal mayor will promote, facilitate and create spaces for this interaction.

A liberal city is not a place of stagnation, but rather a space of dynamic activity.



12

Optimism

where citizens:

- believe that it is in their power to build a better future, individually or as a community;
- see concrete progress and results that confirm their beliefs.

A liberal mayor will set the example by promoting optimism and delivering positive results.

A liberal city is not a place of pessimism, but rather a space of inspiration.



13

Openness to the world

where citizens:

- are able to connect with citizens from other places around the world;
- have the opportunity to meet and interact with people from other cultures;
- are able to inspire and be inspired through these interactions.

A liberal mayor will promote curiosity for the rest of the world.

A liberal city is not a place closed off from the world, but rather a space of global connections.

Notes



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