

Athens Declaration for Healthy Cities



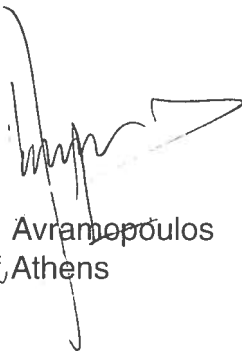
23 June 1998

On 23 June 1998, mayors and senior politicians from cities in Europe meeting in Athens to attend the International Healthy Cities Conference, which celebrated the first ten years of the European Healthy Cities movement and the launching of phase III (1998–2002) of the WHO Healthy Cities project, adopted this Declaration.

This political Declaration expresses the clear and strong commitment of cities throughout Europe to health and sustainable development. The Declaration highlights the priorities and new challenges for cities to address and work on and identifies ways in which national governments and WHO can support action based on health for all at the local and city levels.

Herewith we witness the signing of the Declaration.

Athens
23 June 1998



Dimitrios Avramopoulos
Mayor of Athens



Jo E. Asvall
WHO Regional Director for Europe



Athens Declaration Healthy Cities

Preamble

This International Healthy Cities Conference, which marks a decade of action by Healthy Cities in Europe, reinforces the commitment of participants representing European municipalities to continuing action aimed at health for all and sustainable development in the twenty-first century. City governments have a vital role to play if targets set under Health For All policies for improving the health of the inhabitants of European municipalities are to be met.

As mayors or senior political representatives of our cities, together with representatives of the World Health Organization, we meet in Athens on the threshold of a third phase that will guide our citizens into a new millennium. We believe that action at the local level is an essential component of any national or sub-national health strategy or programme. Partnerships for health across sectors are easier to create at this level. Participation and community empowerment are also more feasible.

Our cities have the greatest potential for improving health and the quality of life in the European Region. Women, children and men, acting together as citizens, are a dynamic force for innovation and change. We believe that we, as representatives of city governments, should take a lead, combining the political authority of our democratic mandate with our unique technical capacity to implement sustainable health and development policies.

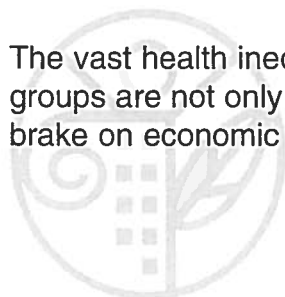
We pledge our continuing commitment to the implementation at local level of recommendations agreed through regional and global Health For All policies, the Rio summit (Agenda 21), the International Conference for Population and Development and the Beijing Summit. We will also ensure local participation in initiatives such as the UN International Year of Older Persons.

Key principles for health and sustainable development

As mayors or senior political representatives, we pledge to improve the health of our citizens, women, children and men, guided by the key principles of equity, sustainability, intersectoral cooperation and solidarity.

1. Equity

The vast health inequalities between and within cities and between gender and ethnic groups are not only an affront to human dignity but also a risk to social stability and a brake on economic performance. We pledge our political commitment to reducing the



health gap between and within our cities, making health more accessible to all and substantially improving the health of populations at risk.

2. Sustainability

Densely populated cities and urban regions provide vital settings for the implementation of important policies that combine environmental, economic, social and health objectives. We support the principles of health and sustainable development through our commitment to the European Health For All policy and the Charter of European Towns and Cities Towards Sustainability (the Aalborg Charter). These policy frameworks mutually reinforce each other, bringing together the goals of health for all and sustainable development. Sustainable development links policies such as those that provide education, develop infrastructure (including transport and public amenities), support businesses, create job opportunities (equal for women and men), improve well-being and safeguard the environment. At local level and on a global basis we will sustain our diverse populations, implementing ecological policies for the environment through sensitive development aimed at protecting the weak, promoting gender and racial equity, and enhancing the quality of life of all our citizens.

3. Intersectoral cooperation

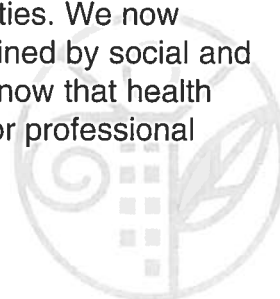
Health is promoted most effectively when agencies from many sectors work together and learn from each other. Health is everyone's business. We pledge our political support for unlocking the health potential of all stakeholders in our cities' future, including the specific needs of men, women, children, and minority populations. We also commit ourselves to maximizing the added health value of all municipal programmes through systematic assessment of the health impact of all our policies. Each section of municipal government can play an important role in advancing the health agenda and the cause of sustainable development.

4. Solidarity

A stronger collective effort is required to reduce inequity, strengthen cohesion within Europe and develop relationships with other parts of the world. Health for all is a global demand and we are determined to play our part in making Healthy Cities a global movement, contributing to world peace. We pledge our political commitment to international solidarity between cities and regions, mutual support and sharing of resources, knowledge, information and experience.

City leadership for health and sustainable development

The third phase of the WHO Healthy Cities' Project is a prime opportunity to learn from the ten years of experience of both planning and action in cities. We now understand better how health in the urban environment is determined by social and economic conditions and also by gender, age and ethnicity. We know that health should never be the exclusive concern of any one political party or professional



discipline. We are aware that health must become a vital element in the core values and mainstream plans of our cities. We will use these insights to implement local strategies for health and sustainable development in the twenty-first century.

We will create the preconditions for change and commit our cities to these specific actions for health through leadership and empowerment; through partnerships and infrastructures for change; through integrated planning for health and sustainable development; as well as through networks. We pledge to assist in taking the health for all approach beyond cities to rural areas, localities, provinces, regions and other levels of sub-national government.

1. Leadership and empowerment

We pledge to make equity, health and sustainable development central values in our vision for the development of our cities. We will give political commitment and strong leadership to bring together and implement strategies for health for all and local agenda 21, paying particular attention to the need to provide leadership opportunities for women and minority groups. We will mobilize people and resources to attain Healthy City goals and fully engage local communities.

2. Partnerships and infrastructures for change

We will support strategic city-wide alliances for health and sustainable development involving the public, voluntary and private sectors. This cooperation should involve other agencies including universities. We will put in place adequate support structures to coordinate and support work towards the goals of the Healthy City Project. Access to public health expertise should be ensured through the maintenance of an appropriate public health infrastructure at local level.

3. Integrated planning for health and sustainable development

Drawing on relevant expertise, we will develop city health development policies, strategies and plans that set out to improve the social, environmental and economic determinants of health, setting targets and timetables for improving health while acknowledging the special contribution of each sector of city life and every agent of change. We will especially address issues related to:

- health needs of children and young people, women, ethnic minority groups and older people;
- links between poverty and health;
- needs of populations at risk;
- dangers which arise from tobacco abuse, addiction to drugs and alcohol, pollution, and violence; and
- other concerns connected to urban planning, ecological management and social support.



4. Networks

We give a specific commitment to phase III of the WHO Healthy Cities Project as a project city or national network city. At the local, national, regional and international levels, we will contribute as active members to strategic alliances for promoting health for all and sustainable development into the twenty-first century. We will work in cooperation with international bodies involved in tackling the problems faced by cities. Active support for the European Cities and Towns Campaign, in cooperation with other major networks and associations, will provide a further opportunity to advance the goals of Healthy Cities Project and promote the agenda of health for all and sustainability.

5. Monitoring and evaluation

We will monitor closely the impact of actions taken as a result of the adoption of the Healthy Cities philosophy and ensure that both processes and outcomes are evaluated against health targets. The Healthy Cities Project has played a major role in uncovering the determinants of health and has an important role to play in promoting and publicizing effective ways of reducing health inequalities and improving the quality of life for all.

Action by others

Cities cannot act alone. Within the European Region, the national and regional governments of Member States have a key role to play. They influence the pace and sustainability of modernization, industrialization and the pattern of urban development. They also provide the legislative and fiscal framework for health.

We therefore **call on national governments** within the European Region:

- (a) to recognize the importance of the local dimension of national health policies and acknowledge that cities can make a significant contribution to national strategies for Health For All and Agenda 21;
- (b) to use, in their national health strategies, the experience and insights of cities in analysing and responding to local health conditions using intersectoral approaches;
- (c) to examine ways in which additional resources could be made available in support of Health For All and sustainable development policies;
- (d) to support national networks of healthy cities in their coordinating and capacity-building role; and
- (e) to encourage the participation of local government representatives in Member States' delegations to meetings of WHO's governing bodies and other relevant international fora.



Welcoming the development of the WHO European Centre for Urban Health, **we look to the WHO Regional Office for Europe:**

- (a) to provide leadership and strategic support in work towards the goals of phase III (1998-2002) of the WHO Healthy Cities Project;
- (b) to promote capacity-building and networking for healthy cities in all Member States of the European Region, especially those that have not been involved so far in the movement, including the Newly Independent States and Member States in the Balkan region;
- (c) to provide technical support and guidance for better integrated city health planning, evaluation and monitoring;
- (d) to promote and encourage the development of local action components in all of WHO's technical areas; and
- (e) to promote synergy between sectors and settings, harmonizing the skills and experience of local and national governments.


We are convinced that the combined efforts of local, regional and national governments and of WHO will bring about changes that will substantially improve the health and well being of our citizens.



Statement of the WHO Regional Director for Europe

The present Declaration represents a major step forward in strengthening the commitment to implementing the Health For All strategy for the twenty-first century at the local and city level throughout the European Region, while also underlining the global scope of the Healthy Cities movement.

I hereby pledge the full support of the WHO Regional Office for Europe in working with project cities and networks of healthy cities to achieve the goals of the third phase of the WHO Healthy Cities project. I also undertake that I will take this declaration forward with all elements of the European Regional Organization of WHO and bring it to the attention of the Director-General.



E. Asvall

WHO Regional Director for Europe

23 June 1998



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