



## Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities

In Marseille in November 2008, European Ministers responsible for urban development endorsed the creation of a common European Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities (RFSC). The RFSC has been conceived as an operational web-tool dedicated to the implementation of the objectives formulated in the Leipzig Charter for Sustainable European Cities. Indeed, this web-tool aims to support cities to better take into account the integrated approach and sustainability principles when designing policies and actions at various urban scales. Therefore, the RFSC is a tool that can be used by European local authorities which are involved in, or are willing to start, a process of integrated sustainable urban development.

### ***What?***

#### **The RFSC is:**

- A common and operational understanding of the shared European objectives and principles of integrated sustainable urban development
- A set of tools, which aims to support cities to better define their strategies and projects from a sustainable urban development point of view
- A toolkit to foster dialogue on sustainable urban development and the integrated approach within and between cities
- A voluntary and free web-tool for cities.

#### **The RFSC is not:**

- A restrictive and narrow definition of the sustainable city
- An evaluation tool of urban policies from a third party perspective
- A benchmarking tool
- A set of sustainability indicators
- A list of cities' good practices in sustainable urban development
- A ready-made tool.

### ***For whom?***

The RFSC is for the voluntary and free use of all cities, as its open and adaptable nature allows all local authorities to be involved in the process. It has been tested so far by 66 European cities (6 cities from the URBACT project LC-Facil and 60 cities from throughout the EU to reflect the various sizes, types and urban situations and challenges).

### ***For what?***

The RFSC will enable cities to self-assess and improve all types of territorial strategies, policies or projects: from a strategic master plan covering a big territory to a sustainable district project. It will assist cities in the process of incorporating the principles of sustainable development into these strategies, policies and projects.

### ***How?***

The RFSC is a flexible and adaptable web-tool which will help cities better define their strategies and projects from a sustainable urban development point of view. The RFSC will also provide a mechanism to assist those cities willing to share questions and experiences with other local authorities.

### ***The functioning of the RFSC can be described in 3 steps:***

- **Ask yourself the right questions** regarding the weaknesses and strengths of your strategy or project in terms of integrated sustainable urban development;
- **Check the integrated approach** of your policies and identify "cross-references";
- **Select the right indicators** in order to follow the progress made.

A demo-version of the RFSC prototype is available on the following website: <http://rfsc-demo.tomos.fr/> (login and password are both "demo").

### ***The RFSC – a shared European process***

The elaboration of the RFSC and its progressive dissemination among European cities are based on a joint European process involving EU Member States, the European Commission (Directorate-General for Regional Policy), cities and stakeholder organisations.

#### **Working structure:**

- *Urban Development group* (monitoring committee)
- *Member States and Institutions group* (MS/I group)
- *Management Team* (joint leadership: France, Council of European Municipalities and Regions – CEMR, European Commission).

#### **Expertise and support:**

- *CERTU* (Centre d'Etudes sur les Réseaux, les Transports et l'Urbanisme; technical experts, webmaster)
- *URBACT project LC-Facil*
- *National Support Groups*
- *NICIS Institute* (testing phase).

Cities have been a crucial source of inspiration in this process. The analysis of existing frameworks and practices, in addition to on-site interviews and visits, has been an important step in the elaboration process. Cities have also been involved in the National Support Groups and have thus had the opportunity to react and contribute directly to the work of the MS/I group and to put forward national specificities in terms of sustainable urban development.

### ***What is the integrated approach?***

The growing acknowledgement of sustainable urban development principles has been accompanied by the development of the notion of the ***integrated approach to sustainable urban development***. This way of thinking is characterised by:

- A holistic, **cross-sectoral**, approach that takes into account all the fields of urban development, covering the whole urban territory and **involving all actors** and stakeholders concerned;
- A process of growing **coherence and synergies** between all the different public policies affecting urban development, from the European to the municipal level.

This is why the RFSC covers the interactions between the **4 pillars of sustainable development**: economy, social, environment, governance.

### ***What are the next steps?***

Following a testing phase in 2011, the RFSC will be launched at a conference jointly organised by the European Commission, the Danish Council Presidency and the city of Aalborg on **21/22 May 2012 in Aalborg (Denmark)**. This conference will gather all the stakeholders involved in the RFSC initiative, including the 66 test cities from all over Europe.