



ELDW THEME FOR 2021-2022

“PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT: LOCAL COMMUNITIES TAKE ACTION”

Our societies have faced an unexpected global challenge and have been struggling to overcome the outbreak of Covid-19. Besides the pandemic, a wide range of challenges migration influx, climate change and natural disasters loom ever larger.

While an essential battle has been fought against the Covid-19 pandemic, humanity's greatest existential threat continues to grow: Climate change. It represents one of the most urgent dangers to modern societies, having a direct and indirect impact on our communities and citizens. Responding to climate change requires immediate and effective measures at all levels of governance, with local and regional authorities being at the forefront of reducing the negative impacts of environmental changes on their communities.

Therefore, building up resilient communities in Europe and strengthening the protection of citizens must be placed as a priority. Thanks to its 14 years of experience, the ELDW initiative has the capacity to support mobilisation of local and regional authorities in increasing their resilience to climate change. For this reason, it is proposed that the ELDW in 2021 and 2022 should focus on: **“Protecting the Environment: Local Communities Take Action”**.

Citizen participation is not only the bedrock of democracy and good governance, but also should be the first objective included in the process of changing attitudes and behaviour. According to several studies, *resilience-building plans and strategies* for addressing climate change are not as effective as they were intended to be if they are not supported by citizens' efforts and adopted behaviour.

Awareness raising by encouraging partnerships and citizen engagement has a key role to play in resilient city development. Therefore, to protect the environment and building resilient communities and societies, awareness raising should be the main component of the ELDW 2021-2022 activities. Indeed, citizen involvement, establishing trustworthy channels, using digital technologies and contents, and increasing transparency should be added as sub-themes of the 2021 and 2022 editions. In this way, substantial advances will be achieved in the operationalisation of urban resilience.

The practice of providing access to knowledge and resources for citizens who might otherwise be excluded or marginalised at local and regional levels, is defined as inclusiveness. To ensure resilience, **citizen involvement** is important, especially of youth and children. Also, the involvement of representatives from different local stakeholder groups will help to create a sense of shared ownership.

To establish **trustworthy channels** to connect with citizens, to ensure their easy access to information about disasters, obstacles, or the challenges as well as the positive developments in the city. To ensure this, **digital technologies and contents** are encouraged to be used by municipal authorities.

Transparency refers to the extent to which shareable, appropriate, critical and sensitive information and data are made available to citizens. Transparency requires authorities to make it easier for citizens to access information, notably through open data and records management which allows tasks to be completed more effectively. Therefore, citizens should be informed about each stage of the decision-making process and they should easily reach the information using digital technologies, user-friendly applications, and so on. The municipality should also ensure that the information is disseminated through regular communication channels to provide all groups of the population (especially the elderly) with access to it.

Protection of the environment and building resilient communities cannot be waged by governments only. So, the ELDW partners are invited to create informal networks among local stakeholders and to work around shared values by discussing different paths in achieving the common objective.

Appendix

ELDW themes since 2010

Thèmes de la SEDL depuis 2010

Years / Années	English	Français
2019 – 2020	Local democracy: building trust	Démocratie locale : les territoires de la confiance
2017 - 2018	Citizen participation, consultation and commitment: for a thriving local democracy	Participation, consultation et engagement des citoyens : pour une démocratie locale dynamique
2015 – 2016	Living together in culturally diverse societies: respect, dialogue, interaction	Vivre ensemble dans des sociétés culturellement diverses : (se) respecter, dialoguer, interagir
2014	Participatory democracy: sharing, proposing, deciding	La Démocratie Participative : partager, proposer, décider
2013	Active citizenship: voting, sharing, participating	La citoyenneté active : voter, partager, participer
2012	Human rights make for more inclusive communities	Les droits de l'homme pour des collectivités locales plus inclusives
2011	Human rights - What about your backyard?	Les droits de l'homme – ça se joue aussi en bas de chez vous !
2010	The impact of sustainable communities in fighting climate change	L'impact des collectivités durables dans la lutte contre le changement climatique