

Theme:

NATURAL COMMON GOODS



D 03 Urban Green Days

Environmental education as one of the mainstays of Local Agenda 21 in Alonsotegi

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City Profile: Basque Country - Spain

Short city/region profile:

Alonsotegi is a municipality in the Bilbao metropolitan district, with a surface area of 21 km². For over 100 years, it belonged to the Barakaldo municipal district until its deannexation in 1991. Only 5% of its surface area is urban, with the rest being hills and scrubland, the highest of which (Ganekogorta) reaches 998 metros. The River Cadagua runs through the municipal district, which is therefore a very narrow valley. This can give an idea of the municipality's rugged landscape, which is very uneven and with steep slopes.

Number of inhabitants:

Alonsotegi has a population of 2,700 inhabitants. Population under 18: 304. Population over 65: 592. Urban area 1,5 km². Distribution of active population: Agriculture: 2%; Industry: 32%; Services: 58%.

Social, economic and environmental background:

Alonsotegi's situation in the Basque Country's largest industrial and working class zone has meant that it suffers from the same social and economic problems that the municipalities of this area of Bizkaia suffered from during the industrial restructuring in the 70s and 80s. The outcome of this is that it has a much higher unemployment rate than that of Bizkaia, and which has only recently begun to drop. The steep slopes, together with the poor use of the land (such as uncontrolled farming and stockbreeding, growing unsuitable crops, abandoned mines, etc.), has resulted in significant erosion problems in some areas. This situation, combined with the fact that streams flow from the summits into the River Cadagua in the heart of the town, means that there is a risk of floods and landslides. Other existing problems are deforestation, land that is likely to be contaminated, the banks of the rivers and streams in very poor condition and with buildings on them, which is the source of the flood risk problems...

Summary:

Since 2000 Alonsotegi has implemented the Agenda 21 being the activities on the educational issues one of the pillars of the process. The town council in collaboration with the regional and basque governments promote the organization of activities that help citizens to be aware of the magnitude of environmental problems and to know what they can do to get a better global environment.

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Conference organisers: CEMR, ICLEI and the City of Aalborg: aalborgplus10@akkc.dk
Focal sessions preparation: ICLEI's International Training Centre: aalborgplus10@iclei-europe.org

Executive Summary:

- In the face of the social, economic and environmental situation of the municipality of Alonsotegi, the municipal council decided in 1999 to draw up a revitalisation plan including Local Agenda 21 as the most suitable tool for co-ordinating the process.
- 2000 saw the signing of the Aalborg Charter and the conducting of several diagnostic studies. In 2001 a public involvement forum was set up and in 2002 the Local Plan of Action was approved.
- Environmental education actions have been one of the mainstays of the Local Agenda 21 scheme. They are aimed at both adults (talks, visits, leaflets) and children (workshops, outings and School Agenda 21).
- The levels of involvement achieved and the impact caused differ greatly between the two groups: children participate and assimilate the concepts dealt with easily, but it is hard to get adults to take part in the activities organised.

Abstract:

In 1999 the municipal council of Alonsotegi faced a complex mix of social, economic and environmental problems. It decided that implementing a Local Agenda 21 scheme was the best way of dealing with those problems as a whole on a long-term basis. As a result the Aalborg Charter was approved in a plenary session of the council in 2000 and a number of diagnostic studies were conducted to assess the situation of the municipality. January 2001 saw the setting up of a public involvement forum which, after a year of work, resulted in a Local Plan of Action.

One of the mainstays of the Local Agenda 21 process in Alonsotegi is the organising of environmental awareness and education activities for the public to enable them to take stock of the environmental changes required at the municipal and global levels.

These activities are carried out on two fronts: for adults and for children. Those aimed at adults are mainly talks, visits and mail shots, while those for children comprise thematic workshops, outings and a School Agenda 21.

The impact achieved has differed from one approach to the other: participation among children is high, and they are quick to assimilate the ideas studied, but it is very hard to get the adult population involved, and therefore hard to instil an awareness of the current problems and to get them to change their habits. In any event, some sectors of society have been mobilised and activities are being organised jointly by public bodies (municipal council, provincial council, Basque Government) and organisations in the municipality (state school, associations), including Green Week, Water Week, Car-free Day, etc.

Together with supra-municipal campaigns (provincial council, Basque Government) these municipal-level actions are making the public aware of environmental problems on a global scale and locally in Alonsotegi, at a time of change and renovation in the infrastructures and amenities of the municipality.

C.V.: Aitor Santisteban Aldama

He is graduated in Biological Sciences (specialising in Fundamental Biology) from the University of the Basque Country in 1993, and Doctor in Biological Sciences cum laude, from the University of the Basque Country in November 1998.

Deputy Mayor and Councillor for Town Planning and the Environment at Alonsotegi since 1999, he has been instructor for the Agenda 21 municipal technicians training course, and he is actually the coordinator of Udaltalde 21 Enkarterri in order to implement Local Agenda 21 in the Encartaciones region (Bizkaia).

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