

Together we can move mountains - of plastic bags and other things!

When people from all nationalities, speaking many different languages, work together for a common cause there is no limit to their possibilities for successful action.

In Xàbia this has been demonstrated by PUXS (Para una Xàbia sostenible), an association formed by a group of people involved in the local Agenda 21. It shows just how much can be achieved by people working with a single aim - to ensure that Xàbia develops into a town with a sustainable future.



This association has been set up as a permanent feature of the work to protect our environment and to promote future development of our town in a way which maintains an ecological balance.

The Association's first venture has been promoting the use of the "Xàbia ecològica" bags. So far this very successful project has involved the importing and distributing of three thousand jute bags, which can be seen throughout the municipality. Small shops in the old town, the port and the Arenal began selling the bags last June and since then several prominent local organisations have ordered in bulk to have their own logos printed alongside the now well known "Xàbia ecològica". The Traders Association in the old town, the cancer help association MABS, and Jávea Golf Club are amongst those already participating. The Traders' Association in the Port are about to order their first batch of bags.

The next stage involves reducing the use of plastic bags throughout the town. The project was started in a small way, by encouraging local shops to sell the bags; this has the dual aim of changing the attitudes of "throw away" society and also promoting local shops and local produce. PUXS will now encourage larger shops and supermarkets to join in by reducing the number of free plastic bags that they give to customers. This is happening throughout Europe and PUXS would like to see Xàbia encouraging other Spanish towns to follow.

To spread the idea to our youngest residents, and their parents, PUXS are hoping to organise a bag decorating competition in the schools in Xàbia in January/February. There will be prizes for the three designs which best illustrate how Xàbia can become more sustainable and the winning entry will be printed on our bags, together with "Xàbia ecològica". We are hoping that businesses in the town will want to sponsor the prizes.

Xàbia is a multinational town and Agenda 21 is one of the activities which brings together many of those nationalities in a common cause. We need more common activities like the project to reduce plastic bags, as we have so many tasks to complete. The power of communities working together can never be underrated and in a time of economic crisis we need all the help possible. Think what other goals we could reach together! Customer power can work wonders in reducing the plastic waste that products are wrapped with - supermarket chains are very sensitive to their customers' disapproval. A small deposit charged on plastic bottles would hugely encourage their return for recycling - a walk along the shore in

Montañar demonstrates what an improvement this would be; it has been very successful in other countries, Canada is one example.

And we still have time to make Xàbia the first plastic bag free town in Spain - think what amazingly good publicity that would be! We can do it if we all work together.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever did."

Margaret Mead

Nina Davies

www.xabia21grupos.org