



# GOOD PRACTICE REVIEW



# Invest in your city



INVEST IN **VITAL ENVIRONMENT**



INVEST IN **GOOD GOVERNANCE**



INVEST IN **PARTNER-SHIPS**



INVEST IN **BEST SOLUTIONS**

LOCAL AGENDA 21





**“Where economic, environmental and social interests meet, there is sustainability.”**



## Invest in Agenda 21

*More than 80% of Europeans live in cities. City leaders are key persons in building sustainable urban environments for the Europe of the future. As leaders, we must invest in the involvement of our citizens and stakeholders in order to tackle our challenges together.*

*Where economic, environmental and social interests meet, there is sustainability. The combination of these aspects means an investment in a prosperous future. Local Agenda 21 is one of the most innovative and cost-efficient tools that cities can use for sustainability planning.*

*Some 4000 cities are currently already working on Local Agenda 21 in Europe. In co-operation, European cities possess huge resources and represent a global major force for improvement and excellence.*

*On behalf of the Union of the Baltic Cities, I am happy to address this Local Agenda 21 Good Practice Review for all city leaders dealing with the above-mentioned issues. It contains good “sustainability lessons” from a number of cities and businesses. I hope you will find them inspiring. We really aren’t facing our challenges alone.*

*Per Bodker Andersen  
President of the Union of the Baltic  
Cities, Mayor of Kolding*



*Opening the beaches for swimmers and holidaymakers was one of the goals in the Local Agenda 21 Action Plan, approved by the Sopot City Council in 1996.*

# Sopot Beaches Cleaned Up

## Tourists Are Back Again

Each year, the City of Sopot is visited by over 2 million tourists and holidaymakers, who are captivated by its golden beaches and its wide variety of treatments for illness. Sopot's status as an official health resort is the result of several years of hard work to clean up the beaches and improve the water quality. The work was done together by the citizens and city administration.



### Partnership With NGOs

The plan was created in strong co-operation between grassroots interests and the authorities. The initiators of the process succeeded in integrating and mobilising people from varied environments with various objectives – behind common goals.

In 1997, an NGO 'Sopot for the Environment' was established. Its members are active citizens as well as officials from the city administration and Council. The NGO has taken care of many activities outlined in the Action Plan. Now in the year 2001, the 'Sopot for the Environment' has been given the main responsibility of running Local Agenda 21 activities with a special focus on public participation. The City Council supports the work financially and also carries political responsibility. The next project shall be the creation of the LA21 Forum in Sopot.

### An Officially Recognised Health Resort

In Sopot, there are twelve streams running through the city to the sea. These streams were badly polluted, due to insufficient waste and sewage management. For this reason, two sewage-pumping stations were modernised, several storm sewers repaired and rainwater reservoirs built. All streams were bacteriological tested, and the streams have been continuously monitored thereafter.

The waste management system was also renewed: a composting plant was set up and litter segregation systems were initiated. For all the improvements made in air monitoring control, Sopot received the City Towards EU Compliance Award 1999 as the city which has achieved outstanding progress in the implementation of the European Community's air quality legislation.

In February, 1999 the Polish Minister of Health issued a decision to the town authorities stating that the town of Sopot had met all necessary requirements to be hailed as a health resort. ■

Tourism is the main source of Sopot's revenue. Opening the beaches for swimmers and holidaymakers was therefore one of the goals in the Local Agenda 21 Action Plan, approved by the Sopot City Council in 1996. As a result of the activities during the following years, almost the entire length of the shoreline and the marine coastal water now fulfil the criteria for bathing.

### Realistic Action Planning

A number of various stakeholders participated in the making of the Local Agenda 21 Action Plan: inhabitants, members of the academic world, health resorts, tourist and recreation services, local businesses, non-governmental organisations, state police and political parties as well as self-government authorities and the Town Hall. During the course of many workshops, they managed to create a plan which attempted to articulate the needs of most citizens.

As a result, the Action Plan had the best possible base for action. The planned activities were something *possible* to implement, and even more importantly, *very likely* to be implemented. After five years, there is hardly any field of the Action Plan that is not being successfully realised.

Over the years, the LA21 Action Plan has become the main objective for the development of the city. Detailed schedules of the undertakings have been prepared, and the city management and departments are obliged to report on the implementation of the plan each year.

## Contents

■ Editorial by the UBC President	..... 2
■ Tourists are back again - Sopot Beaches Cleaned up	..... 3
■ Sundsvall used to be known for burdening environmental problems - Heading Towards a Sustainable Society	..... 4
■ Hannu Niilekselä, KPMG Finland: Market Pressure is the driving force of Sustainability	..... 6
■ Riga's biggest challenge is to foster Democratic Development	..... 7
■ Core for Scandic success rests in Value-Based Leadership	..... 8
■ The Natural Step Framework is the basis for Scandic's work on sustainability	..... 9
■ Aalborg Charter Sets the Course	..... 10
■ Sustainability has a packaging problem	..... 11
■ Success Factors for Local Agenda 21 Commitment More Important than Money	..... 12
■ Efficient Networking	..... 13
■ Is Your City Facing These Challenges?	..... 14
■ Union of the Baltic Cities Serving the Cities in Agenda 21	..... 15



## Sundsvall used to be known for its burdening environment Heading Towards a

**In 1990, the City Council of Sundsvall made a radical decision. They wanted to get rid of their old tarnished image in order to become a healthy municipality with unspoilt natural surroundings. The Council resolution announced: “The image of Sundsvall as an environmentally burdened industrial centre shall be changed. Not later than 1995, the city will be well-recognised for the results of its favourable environmental protection efforts.”**

Now in 2001, Peter Gavelin, Chief Executive Officer of the City of Sundsvall, gladly admits that the city is currently often referred to as a good, inspiring example in Local Agenda 21. However, these achievements have not been reached without obstacles: “Our task is not easy. It will take a long time and we also have our ups and downs” Gavelin avers.

### **Better Image Adds Attraction**

Over the years, Sundsvall had been associated with major industries in the area: pulp & paper as well as chemical and aluminium manufacturers. Leaching landfill sites, a dying seabed, contaminated soil and water pollution were the tragic inheritance of this 150-year-old industrial history.

Despite an economic crisis which struck along the way, the politicians have stuck to the original goal. Major improvements have been achieved by both the industries themselves and the municipality. The fruit of their combined efforts is successfully changing Sundsvall’s image.

*“We want people and companies to move here. Naturally, they’re interested in what kind of quality of life and environment we’ve got here. We are not only working for the people who live here now, but also in order to market Sundsvall and everything it offers to outsiders,” Gavelin declares.*

### **Start with Openness and Transparency**

The first environmental balance sheet, published by a Swedish municipality, was completed by Sundsvall in 1991. Today,

**Sundsvall invests in empowerment: people should be given the opportunity to obtain knowledge and then allowed to try their own ideas.**

## Environmental problems

# Sustainable Society by 2020



Photo: Mattias Toivanen / Kuva.fi

roughly every third local government in Sweden releases annual environmental audits or balance sheets. A balance sheet is an annually published document which includes statistical data and analysis of the present environmental situation.

The balance sheet was part of the new policy of open and transparent governance. Gavelin emphasises that both positive and negative developments should be told. "If we aren't able to cope with some problems, we write about it. You shouldn't only whitewash or 'greenwash'."

The environmental balance sheets have been adopted by the community. The local media presents and analyses the contents of each new balance sheet, and inhabitants can obtain free copies from libraries. Currently, all inhabitants have access to the same information as the "experts". In Gavelin's opinion, there is less confrontation and fewer conflicts in Sundsvall now, compared to ten to twenty years ago. "Nowadays there is more consensus - this is the right way to go on."

### Local Agenda 21 is a Pleasure

A large number of new dynamic projects have generated new approaches and ideas which have been incorporated in the day-to-day work of the municipality. These were gathered under the umbrella of Local Agenda 21 in 1996. The Sundsvall Agenda 21 sets an overall goal to make Sundsvall a sustainable society by 2020.

Gavelin confesses that the hardest part is to ensure that all municipal sectors are involved. "The point is to get both the management and their employees to acknowledge that it is in their own best interest." One of the main instruments of Local Agenda 21 work is to create good examples that can be adopted by others. Showing what is possible creates momentum, which again initiates change. Awards are presented to individuals and companies every year. "We make people feel proud of what they do. It doesn't cost much, but it makes it a pleasure to



participate in the agenda work," Gavelin points out.

### Neighbourhood Empowerment

The Sundsvall Agenda 21 wants to create pioneering experiences also in other fields besides environmental protection. Great success has been achieved in *Nacksta*, an area of 4,500 inhabitants. Previously

notorious as a "centre for immigrants and drug-addicts," it is now cited as an example of what residents can make happen. Since the 1990's, the Nacksta residents have:

- increased the number of people playing an active role in clubs and associations from 20 to over 500;
- started some 10 new associations;
- taken over the running of outdoor bathing facilities which were under the threat of closure;
- reduced vandalism. The bathing facilities have not needed renovating for seven years and the annual cost of repairing broken windows and removing graffiti has fallen from € 28 000 to € 6 400;
- opened a gym, car repair workshop and cafe.

### Savings from Clean workplace!

The *Clean Workplace!* project tried to inspire people to act and work for the environment at municipal workplaces. The working method was based on empowerment: good examples were put forward and the units could decide themselves if and how they wished to participate and what pace to set.

*Clean workplace!* also saved money. For each year the project continued, the municipality saved about € 150 000. If the same changes had been made to all workplaces functioning under the municipality, approx. € 580 000 could have been saved. Since the project ended, many of these changes have actually been put into effect.

Another innovative example of energy-saving and the reduction of environmentally



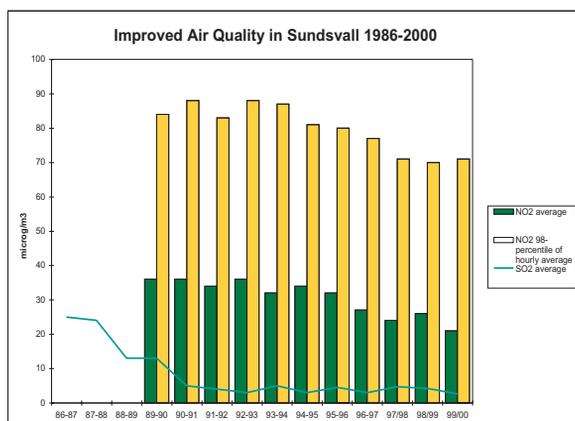
"Nowadays there is more consensus in Sundsvall, this is the right way to go on", says Peter Gavelin, the Chief Executive Officer.

harmful impacts is found in the local hospital. All cooling devices using Freon gas have been removed from use. Instead, a basin of 6000m<sup>3</sup> was built to be filled with approx. 30 000 m<sup>3</sup> of snow each winter. The melting water from this basin is used to fulfil the cooling needs of most of the hospital throughout the year. The need for electricity has decreased from 750kWh to only 30kWh.

### Improvement is possible

So - will Sundsvall be sustainable by the year 2020? "Not completely," Gavelin admits, but quickly continues: "However, we could have energy, waste and transport system which are sustainable. Of course, we also have to accept that many things are ultimately influenced by outside interests."

The year 2020 was chosen because in 1996 politicians in Sundsvall could easily remember from 25 years back how much progress had been made since the outset of the 1970s. "We should remember the amazing improvements which have been made during the last twenty years - and to be happy that all this has been possible," Gavelin reminds all the pessimists. He makes one wonder what Sundsvall may well be able to achieve over the next 20 years.





Interview with **Hannu Niilekselä**, senior partner, KPMG Finland

# Market Pressure is the Driving Force of Sustainability

*“Without continuity there is no sustainability and no development,” says Hannu Niilekselä.*



**“Amongst the biggest impacts on the development of environmental programmes in the Finnish forestry sector was the pressure and publicity given to them by environmental groups”, claims Hannu Niilekselä, the Senior Partner of KPMG Finland. In his opinion, stakeholder pressure has had a great impact on increasing environmental, social and economic awareness in strategic management. “Stakeholders made the forestry sector realise that it is not a question of caring for the environment being compulsory, but that this provides competitive advantage.”**

The KPMG Sustainability Services offer a whole range of assistance from the creation of sustainability strategies to the building of management systems with performance indicators, reporting structures, etc. The unit in Finland was founded in 1998, even though first services, environmental reports and verification were already provided already during the beginning of the 1990s.

“The demand for these services has grown very rapidly over the past two to three years, especially last year. When there is supply, there is also demand - and vice versa,” Niilekselä says, emphasising at the same time how important it is to offer quality.

## Quality Requires Continuity

Couple of years ago, it became like a fashion for companies in Finland to produce environmental reports. Niilekselä compares some of these to “Easter grass:”, when Easter comes, such grass is green and pleasant photos are taken of it. But when Easter is over, the grass dies.

“There was no continuity. Continuity is the key. There is no

sustainability and no development if we only look at single points of time and separate occurrences,” Niilekselä explains. Creating a context in which information can be compared over time and related to targets and other activities in the field is necessary in order to have a perspective on what kind of development we are facing. This means a lot of hard work.

The word ‘responsibility’ is frequently repeated by Niilekselä. “Acting responsibly is an obligation on the part of companies,” he emphasizes. “Defining the strategies of a company means formulating the values of a company. At that point it is natural for a business to consider its relation to society and the responsibilities the enterprise has towards it.”

When referring to the role of cities in this process, Niilekselä does not see a difference between the strategies for sustainable deve-

**“Cities are enterprises for which sustainable development is of uppermost importance.”**

lopment in cities or in businesses. “Cities actually are businesses. They deal in a very concrete way with questions related to all these issues. Cities are enterprises for which sustainable development is of uppermost importance.” Their immediate challenge is to find appropriate, cost-effective tools to create an effective base for sustainable development.

KPMG’s background in accounting is the link for offering sustainability services to businesses and various organisations. The reliability of information - be this in regard to financial or environmental performance - is essential for credibility. “Personally, I believe it is better that environmental information is reported as part of annual accounts rather than as a separate report. In that case, it really has to be in harmony with the ‘hard numbers’,” Niilekselä recommends.

KPMG offices were established in Baltic countries during the 1990s, and KPMG Finland was involved in starting the office in Estonia. The future trends in the Baltic Sea region are clear for him: “Sustainable development will play an even stronger role in business activities. The direction of development - how far and how fast we go - will be determined by legal developments, pressures and expectations on the part of the surrounding society. Once it starts, the development may be quite fast.”



*“Stakeholders made the forestry sector realise that caring for the environment provides competitive advantage.”*

Photo: Jarmo Aaltonen / Lehtikuva



- KPMG is a leading global professional advisory firm providing assurance, tax and legal as well as consulting and financial services. Its clients are made up of businesses, funds, state companies and public enterprises of all sizes.

# Riga's biggest challenge is to foster Democratic Development

**When the Environmental Strategy 2000-2010 of the City of Riga was being prepared, over 250 participants took part in it. "There is an increasing understanding in the city administration that public participation in the early stages of decision-making in fact shortens the decision-making process in the long run and leads to better decisions," says Indulis Emsis, the Vice-Chairman of the Riga City Development Committee and the former State Minister of Environment for Latvia.**

Riga is characterised by diversity – in the standard of living, nationality, religious orientation, life-styles and world-view. This can be seen today in the large number of NGOs. Regarding city development, the most visible are environmental and social NGOs.

In developing democratic traditions, Riga has had to overcome five decades of enforced non-participatory behaviour, as many other cities in the eastern parts of Baltic Sea Region. A functioning democracy needs a lively civil society and an administration that supports participatory and transparent decision-making. "Especially when many citizens live in poverty, developing democratic instruments is very challenging," Emsis clarifies.

## Prospects of Democracy

According to Emsis, public participation strengthens democracy and creates conditions for the elimination of corruption. The building of strategic and transparent decision-making requires changes in the political and administrative culture. "Despite many improvements, the tradition of command-and-control type of administration can still be seen in Riga too," admits Emsis.

Many positive developments have taken place in Riga. During the preparation of Environmental Strategy 2000-2010, two seminars, an international conference and several meetings took place including over 250 participants from public authorities, NGOs, university, businesses and citizen groups.

"Today, quite a bit is being done: the city informs public about proposed plans, organises public discussions and involves interested NGOs," Emsis avers.

Riga citizens are also learning to become more active in expressing their opinion. More than 10,000 signatures were collected into a petition against disordered development of the old part of the city. As a consequence, the Riga City Council announced moratorium to stop all construction activity before the Old Riga Development Plan was ready.

## Forum for Dialogue

Creating a dialogue between all the stakeholders is a complex issue to be developed by all parties. The recently established Riga Environment Centre Agenda 21 aims to increase citizen and stakeholder awareness regarding question of sustainability and to increase stakeholder capacity for constructive participation in the planning and decision-making process.

## The Environment Centre Agenda 21 acts as a mediator between public and the City Council.

The Centre acts as a mediator and a bridge between public and the City Council. At present it has three employees and its first project with the Mezaparks Neighbourhood Associ-

ation recently received funding from the Phare Access programme. The aim of the project is to create a local plan and indicators of sustainability for the Mezaparks area together with the City of Helsinki Environment Centre.

Both the Environmental Strategy and LA21 Environmental Centre are products of an EU-funded co-operation project between Riga and the municipality of Norrköping in Sweden. The model for the Centre was taken from a similar centre in Norrköping, which was founded in 1995 and announced as the best in Sweden in 1999.

*For this article also the following persons were interviewed: Valdis Kalnozols, Chairman of the City of Riga Committee for Environment and Arvids Ulme, Chief of the Environmental Protection Club, the largest environmental NGO in Latvia.*



# The Core for Scandic Success Rests in Value-Based Leadership

**"I have never been involved in activity where I can see such a unifying force among all employees, irrespectively of where they work. Everybody appreciates our values and activities in the environmental and social field," says President & CEO Roland Nilsson when asked to describe the reasons for the success of his company, Scandic Hotels.**

**Roland Nilsson was named "Leader of the Year 2000" in Sweden.**



Roland Nilsson was named "Leader of the Year" in Sweden last year. The award was given to Mr. Nilsson for his work in making Scandic Hotels a successful hotel chain which has become a model for the industry. The turnaround from the state of crisis at the beginning of the 1990s has been outstanding.

Nilsson does not hesitate to say that the orientation towards sustainability has played an important role in making the company successful. "It is part of my leadership phi-

losophy to show the values you believe in. Engagement for the environment has strengthened our organisation. It is a very solid core of our company culture. That is something to be proud of."

For Scandic, environmental activities are not just a question of good conscience. It is a strategy for survival. A hotel chain is a corporate made up of people who serve other people. Nilsson is concerned about the younger generations, who are really worried about the environment. "If companies do not consider environmental issues as important for their business, they will lose value with the next generation of consumers. The younger generations will reject doing business with companies which are not environmentally conscious," he avers.

## "Ecolonomy" - economical and ecological gains

Turning these values into practice has not only affected the image of Scandic Hotels. The combination of ecological and economical interests has been given the term *ecolonomy* at Scandic. There has been a reduction of 13% in water and 24% in energy consumption since 1996 in total for all Scandic Hotels. Unsorted waste has been decreased by 40%. Reductions in costs have been



Photo: Hannes Victorzon / Kuvaario

equally impressive: changes in consumption during 1997-99 resulted in annual savings of \$2m.

All new rooms at Scandic since 1995 have been furnished as environmental rooms. This means wooden

floors, furniture made from Nordic tree species, pure wool or cotton textiles, and a minimum of chrome and other metal parts. The rooms which were refitted in 1997 alone have reduced the use of plastic by 90 tons and metal by 15 tons.

"In the beginning, we knew it was going to be a higher investment for us to change into more environmentally friendly interior and chemical usage but that in the long run we would have lower operating costs. The lifespan of our investment has increased dramatically. So all-in-all it has been a highly positive economic calculation," Nilsson explains.

## Innovation and dedication

Finding more sustainable solutions to run the business requires innovation, dedication and continuous development by each unit and each worker in the service chain. In 1997 all Scandic hotels started to separate their waste into 5 different fractions, and today one of the hotels has as many as 26 fractions.



*Wooden floors, furniture made from Nordic tree species, pure wool or cotton textiles, and a minimum of chrome and other metal parts are the basis for any new hotel room at Scandic hotels.*

In 2001 a KRAV-labelled breakfast was introduced in all Swedish Scandic hotels. KRAV is the Swedish label for ecologically produced food. "Eco-labelling breakfast - our most important meal - means that our guests and Scandic actively contribute together to a larger share for ecological agriculture," Nilsson states.

A very good example of individual hotel-related innovations is found at a Norwegian Scandic Hotel in Oslo. It has developed a special heating system in which - instead of keeping the temperature at 20°C all the time - the basic temperature is 16°C. When a guest signs in a signal is sent to the valve to turn on the oversized heaters. It takes an average of 7 minutes for a guest to reach his/her room - and within 14 minutes the room has 20°C. This system alone has reduced energy consumption by 15%.

#### The boss as an enabler

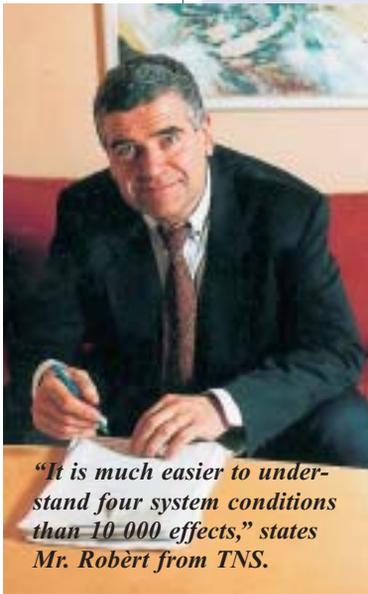
When Nilsson is asked what he thinks has been most difficult in this process, the answer comes immediately: "The first meeting." Convincing sceptical and doubtful people has taken time and a lot of effort. "I was continuously communicating this as an important strategy for the survival of the company. I was showing that this was a highly decisive decision to initiate from our side," Nilsson explains.

Scandic is a very good example of how successful results depend on the commitment of the top executive. One of the employees of Scandic describes an international seminar he attended: "There were employees from several companies and we were supposed to list barriers and enablers affecting our implementation of sustainability programmes. I was the only one from Scandic - I was also the only one to list my boss as an enabler and not a barrier."

For other leaders starting to work with sustainability strategies, Nilsson has some advice: "Take your time. Find common targets. Utilise the force found among your em-

## Natural Step Framework is the Basis for Scandic's Work on Sustainability

*Scandic Hotels has co-operated with "The Natural Step" when developing its approach to sustainability. The Natural Step (TNS) is an international organisation that uses a science-based framework to assist organizations in integrating environmental and social considerations into strategic decisions and daily operations. The TNS Framework has helped many organizations around the world to embrace sustainability proactively. These initiatives have resulted in greater effectiveness, reduced costs, improved quality, security, employee satisfaction and public acceptance as well as new opportunities coming forward.*



*"It is much easier to understand four system conditions than 10 000 effects," states Mr. Robèrt from TNS.*

*"The TNS Framework is based upon 'backcasting' from principles of sustainability. Backcasting is a way of looking at the current situation from a future perspective. You begin by envisaging a successful result in a sustainable future, a vision to aim for. Then you ask: What can we do today to reach that result? This ensures that your strategy and actions are taking you in the direction you*

*wish to go in" explains Karl-Henrik Robèrt, the founder and Chairman of The Natural Step.*

*Since it is not possible to accurately predict and agree upon the future, the idea of the TNS framework is to agree upon basic principles or conditions which must apply in any sustainable society. These conditions, known as the four System Conditions, have been developed by an international network of scientists. "The System Conditions can serve as a kind of lighthouse to us", Robèrt declares.*

### The System Conditions

In a sustainable society, nature is not subject to systematically increasing ....

- 1... concentrations of substances extracted from the earth's crust.
  - 2 ... concentrations of substances produced by society.
  - 3 .... degradation by physical means.
- and, in that society ...
- 4 ... human needs are met worldwide.

*Robert has been impressed with the achievements of Scandic Hotels: "Implementing Sustainability is very much about leadership. Leadership comes before management," he comments.*

ployees. Give *them* the power to be innovative and come up with solutions and suggestions for improvements."

#### Passing on the values

Over the last few years, the Scandic chain of hotels has expanded dynamically. Strong core values have eased this process. According to Nilsson, it has been easier for other organisations acquired by Scandic to accept these values and become part of the new organisation.

During the summer of 2001, Scandic was faced with a new situation when it was purchased by the Hilton Group. Even though the Scandic will keep its name, how will they adapt to becoming part of a larger hotel chain? Nilsson trusts that the importance of these issues will be understood by Hilton, stating: "I have the positive belief that they will actually take our knowledge and our philosophy into their own organisation." ■



## City of Aalborg – Scene for the Charter

**“We took the initiative to host the Conference in continuation of the meeting in Rio. It was an important kick-off for sustainability thinking in many cities. There was talk of the ever-growing environmental problems everywhere. Attention was awakened, and this triggered many new initiatives. The Aalborg Conference turned out to have major future significance in regard to the passing of the Aalborg Charter,” explains Kaj Kjaer, who was Mayor at the time when the First European Conference of Sustainable Cities and Towns was organised in the City of Aalborg in 1994.**

Following the Conference, Aalborg set off to promote sustainability in all sectors of the municipality. According to Kjaer, Mayor of Aalborg for 16 years, an environmentally safe development can – at first – seem costly, therefore requiring a high degree of political consensus. “Citizens are presented with new economic burdens, for example cleaning of wastewater or obtaining clean drinking water. The modernization of old urban neighbourhoods is costly for both owners and tenants. It requires political courage to impose economic burdens, when the results are often visible only in the long run,” Kjaer clarifies.

### Profitable Co-operation

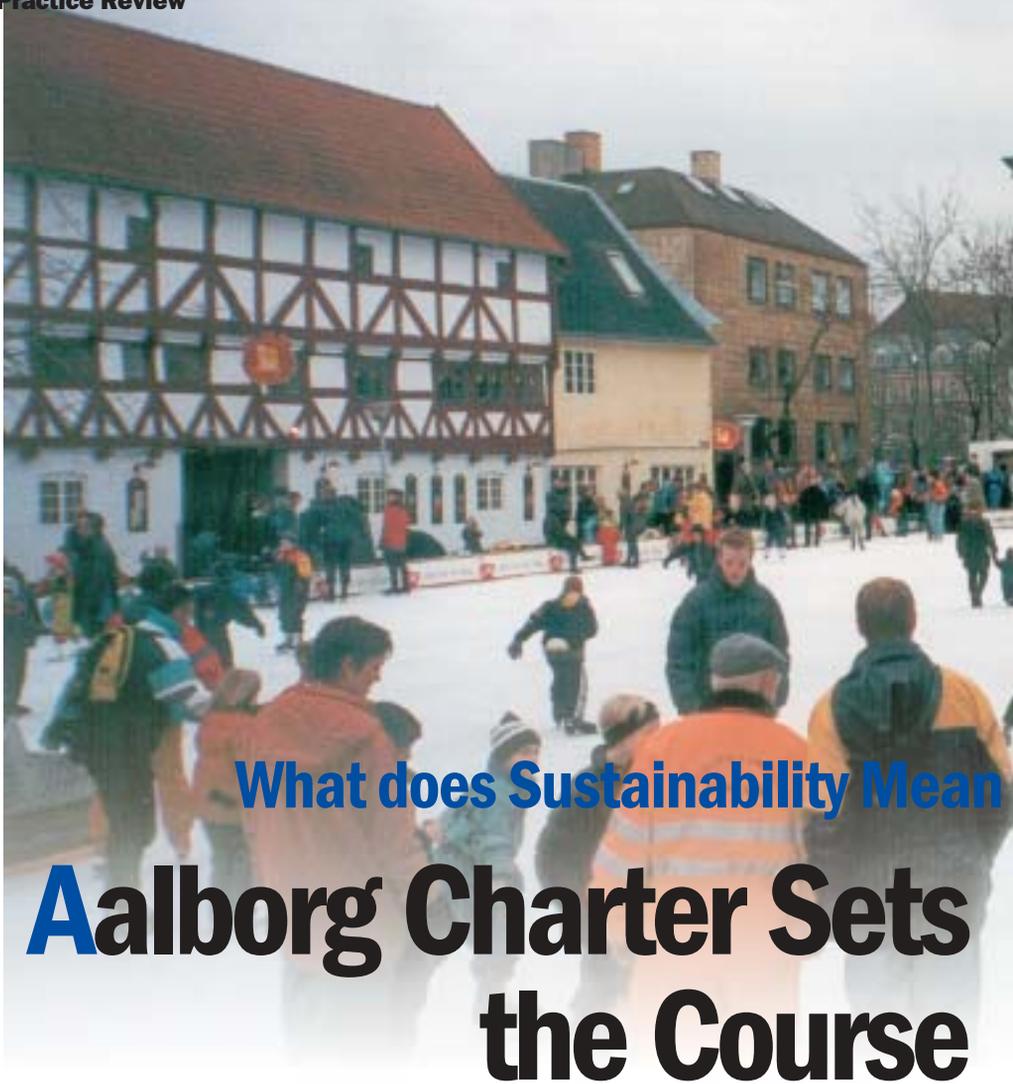
Aalborg has a tradition of pursuing international contacts very actively: It used to have its own offices both in Brussels and in Riga. The Sustainable Cities Conference was one of the outcomes of this dynamic networking.

In 1995, Aalborg started a co-operation project with both the EU and the Cities of Kaliningrad and Bremerhaven in order to establish the Environmental Centre for Administration and Technology (ECAT-Kaliningrad). This four-year project combined Russian and western know-how in a team of experts who looked for solutions to the environmental problems in and around the City of Kaliningrad.

“Exchange of experience is very important. Many cities have different starting points, but – across nations – similar problems can arise,” Kjaer concludes. ■



**“Environmental issues do not present great political difficulties: the question concerns the pace in which these issues can be handled”, says Kaj Kjaer, the former mayor of Aalborg.**



## What does Sustainability Mean Aalborg Charter Sets the Course

**Sustainable development means the kind of development which ensures future generations the same possibilities that we have now. This is how sustainability is most often defined. How can this principle be applied, however, into municipal practices? The Aalborg Charter is one of the most famous policy statements for local sustainable development worldwide.**

The history of the Aalborg Charter dates back to the *First European Conference on Sustainable Cities & Towns*, which took place in Aalborg, Denmark in 1994. The participants of this conference discussed and adopted the *Charter of European Cities and*

*Towns Towards Sustainability*, briefly referred to as the Aalborg Charter.

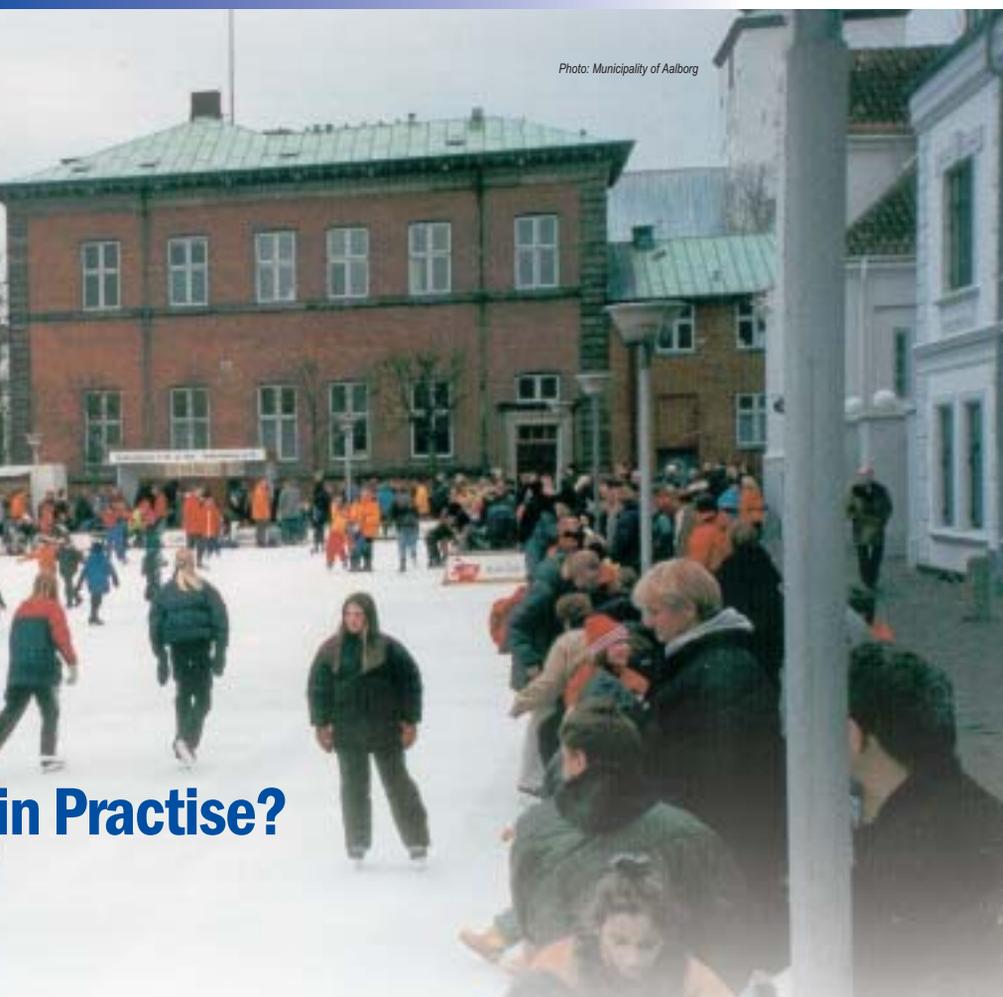
Initially, 80 European local authorities signed up for the Charter. To date, the number of signatories has increased to 1300 local authorities from 38 European countries. Each year, about 150 new local and regional authorities sign the Charter as an expression of their commitment to its principles. The Charter has been translated into almost every European language.

### More than Environmental Protection

The Charter has three parts, of which the first one provides a policy framework for municipalities. Most importantly, the Charter calls attention to the integration of economic, social and environmental issues. The main principles are social justice and economic as well as environmental sustainability.

Though all three aspects are significant, the Charter emphasises environmental balance as a framework for the existence of all other systems. The main issues for local authorities – in terms of the environment – are sustainable land-use, urban transport, responsibility for global climate and preven-

Photo: Municipality of Aalborg



## in Practise?

tion of the further toxification of ecosystems.

According to the Charter, sustainability is neither a vision nor an unchanging state but rather a creative, local, balance-seeking process extending into all areas of local decision-making. Municipalities therefore need to work with all sectors of the community: citizens, businesses and interest groups. All citizens must have access to information and should be able to participate in making decisions.

### European-wide Networking

The second part of the Charter gave birth to the *European Sustainable Cities & Towns Campaign*. All signatories to the Charter automatically become participants of this Campaign, in which various partners and city networks join their efforts towards developing sustainable urban policies. It also maintains a website ([www.sustainable-cities.org](http://www.sustainable-cities.org)), which acts as a valuable source of general information and case examples of urban sustainability. Currently, the Campaign represents the largest European initiative for local sustainable development and Local Agenda 21.

In the third part of the Charter, the signatory municipalities agree

to initiate the Local Agenda 21 process according to the principles outlined in its first part. In many municipalities, the signing of the Charter and approval of it by the Council has been an effective way to set off the LA21 process. It sets off a good spark for local discussion: "The exercise of reading it, arguing about it and altering it will further the understanding and commitment of many important people," Donella H. Meadows, one of the authors of the "Limits to Growth" report for the Club of Rome, already stated in 1995. ■



### Stages of the LA21 process according to the Aalborg Charter

include for example:

- the systematic identification, by means of extensive public consultation, of problems and their causes;
- the creation of a vision for a sustainable community through a participatory process involving all sectors of the community;
- the establishment of a long-term local action plan towards sustainability which includes measurable targets.



Photo: Pertti Nisonen

**Kaarin Taipale, Chair of ICLEI Executive Committee, calls Local Agenda 21 a good thinking exercise.**

## Sustainability has a packaging problem

*"The value of networking is in learning from others – not everybody has to learn everything by himself. It's great how there are always pioneers with the courage to take things forward", says Kaarin Taipale, the Chair of the Executive Committee of ICLEI, the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives.*

*"There is still big confusion between ecology and sustainable development – as if they meant the same thing. But this is not correct. Sustainability means that extremely difficult process of integrating social, economic and environmental issues into one holistic approach," Taipale explains. She wonders why this message is so difficult to get across: "Sustainability has a packaging problem: we would need better marketing. It really is simply a question of a better, safer future for everybody, that's all."*

*Taipale calls Local Agenda 21 a good "thinking exercise". LA21 should be based on the priorities of each municipality, and for this reason the results vary from one place to another. The main thing is to include all stakeholders. "It is the inheritance from Rio to think that this is our common society. Changes will not take place without broad participation."*

*ICLEI's mission is to build a world-wide movement of local governments in order to achieve tangible improvements in global sustainable development. "Localisation is the constructive counter force to globalisation. It's getting more and more important in all parts of the world, and we want to foster this development," Taipale declares. ■*



## Scientific Research of Success Factors

# Commitment More Important than Money

**Having money and nothing more does not get a Local Agenda 21 process very far. Political commitment and enthusiastic staff – not to mention both local and international partners – are more likely to give a boost to the Agenda 21 work of your city. These are some of the results from a recent scientific study of cities in the Baltic Sea region.**

Success Factors for Local Agenda 21 in the Baltic Sea Region is a study made at the Public Administration department of Åbo Academi University in Turku, Finland. The research is based on the experiences of 16 municipalities from six countries: Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden. The aim was to identify institutional aspects, which would explain the success achieved in LA21 processes.

### LA21 in Baltic Sea Region

Local Agenda 21 work is quite widely spread in the Baltic Sea region. The Nordic countries and Germany have already started earlier, during the first half of the 1990's, whereas the countries in the southeastern parts of the region were awakened to action around the end of the 1990s. Out of all the countries of the Baltic Sea region, Sweden in particular has been a pioneer; in 1997, all the Swedish municipalities had already initiated Local Agenda 21 processes.

Due to the loose definition of the concept, the outcomes of LA21 processes look more or less different from city-to-city and from country-to-country. In some cities, Local Agenda 21 has become the main document for strategic development, and in some other cities the activity is concentrated in public awareness raising in regard to waste management. The longer the process continues, the more fields are usually included within it.

### Institutional Success Factors

Some important aspects, however, are always present. These should not be forgotten when planning any kind of process, LA21 or other. Even though the work of individual people is crucial, these individuals create institutional structures to support and carry on the process. Even the best process can fail if the organisation running it is inappropriate.

In the search for the causes of favourable results, the research has focused on the following institutional aspects: commitment, resources and partnerships. These have been identified as important components of the LA21 processes.

- *The commitment of both politicians and the administration is a precondition fulfilled in all the best cases of Local Agenda 21 activity. It represents a signal demonstrating definite efforts to include this work as part of the entire administrative system.*

In the Baltic-Polish cases, the actors themselves considered political commitment to have a stronger and more important impact on their LA21 process than the commitment of administration. In the Nordic cases both these aspects were considered equally important.

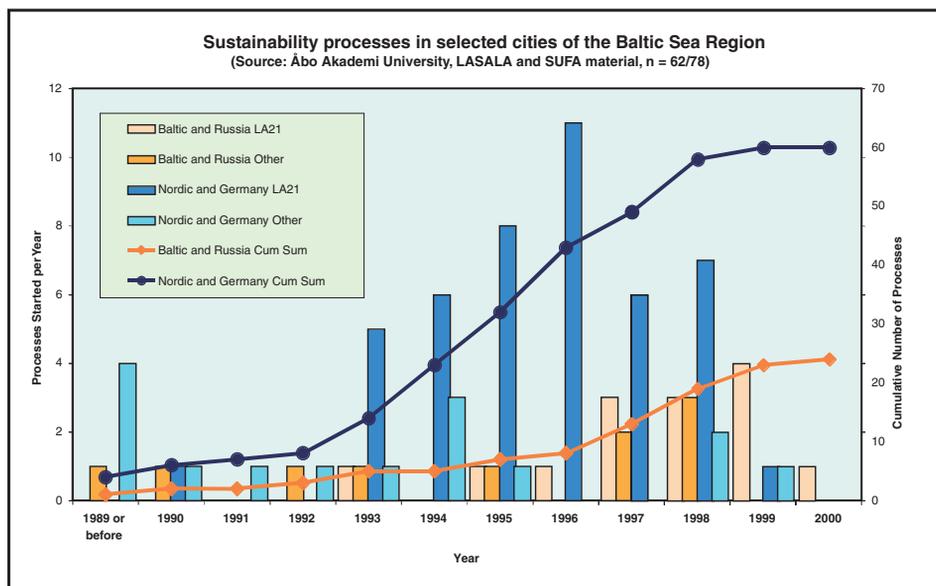
- *Personnel is at least as valuable to the process as funding, and activities should not be dependent on one person only. Networks or working groups consisting of several people from various sectors represent the most efficient method.*

Compared to commitment, resources – such as personnel or funding – were not seen as equally important factors for success. In most of the Nordic cases, the local authority supports the LA21 process with

*Local Agenda 21 event in Kaunas, Lithuania. In many cities, public events play an important role in the Local Agenda 21 process. Public involvement builds trust between the authorities and citizens.*



# for Local Agenda 21



full-time personnel. In the Baltic-Polish cases only a few have full-time personnel actually working with LA21.

- **Partnerships on all levels – local, national and international – are a precious source for know-how, resources and influence.**

All Local Agenda 21 cases in the Nordic countries emphasise *local* partnerships as important for their work and success, whereas the Baltic-Polish cases stress more *international* partnerships. This difference can be explained by the late start of Polish-Baltic LA21 cases, which has thereby triggered experience exchange with those municipalities who have started their LA21 processes earlier.

## Other Influential Factors

During the research process, some other aspects were also found to have a notable impact on the success of LA21. These were personal motivation, an intelligent Local Agenda 21 action plan and an integrated approach. In order to include these factors in the process, the institutional factors described above have to exist. There has to be a structural framework (commitment, resources, partnership, etc.) before these factors can become relevant.

- *Awareness of Local Agenda 21 is spread through personal contacts. Motivated personnel inspire others to join the work.*

- *Intelligent LA21 action plan is a strong and concrete plan of what is possible to achieve. There are targets based on sev-*

*eral degrees of scale: from easy to more difficult. There are also tasks for several actors: more people are reached. Financial support secures the LA21 process in the future and makes the action plan look more reliable.*

- *An integrated approach means the involvement of different municipal departments and local interests in Local Agenda 21. Involvement takes time and it does not necessarily exist from the very beginning of the process.*

## Let all flowers bloom

There have been remarkable changes over the last ten years in the Baltic Sea Region. The differences amongst the countries are not as large as they used to be. The overall integration of the region is increasing.

However, the ability as well as the competence of applying new innovations such as the Local Agenda 21 vary considerably from one municipality to another. Most important is to start the process of reaching sustainable development; you do this as you see best fit for your city and according to your particular circumstances – in other words, let all flowers bloom! ■



*The Åland LA 21 Team*

## Efficient Networking

**Åland Islands Agenda 21** is a network of 18 organisations

*Innovative solutions have created an active and efficient network for Local Agenda 21 activities in the Åland Islands. The Åland Islands, with a population of 26 000, comprise 16 municipalities.*

*The network consists of all the municipalities plus the county government and local NGO “Nature and Environment”. This NGO is given the responsibility and funding to run an Agenda 21 office, which serves all the members.*

*The Agenda 21 Office was founded in 1995 in a flexible and cost-efficient way. Instead of hiring one full-time co-ordinator, two persons were employed part-time to share the tasks. This resulted in more ideas and synergy being contributed to the work. Later a third part-time member of staff was employed. Having the office run by an NGO allows for rapid reaction time with minimal bureaucracy, and the office is not seen as part of “authority”.*

*The tasks of the office are to co-ordinate the Local Agenda 21 work in the municipalities. The office concentrates especially in raising*

*awareness: it attempts to reach out to people by organising magnetic campaigns with the local media. For example, during a Baltic Sea campaign it was calculated*

*how much algae was generated by emissions of nitrogen. For 1 kg of algae:*

- you can drive a car for 30 km without a catalyst;
  - you can mow the lawn for 20 minutes;
  - you can eat 300 g of trout.
- These amounts of algae were exhibited in various places.*



# Is Your City Facing These Challenges?

In different cities Local Agenda 21 work can concentrate on different aspects of sustainability. Couple of good examples from different cities are introduced in this page. Some of these examples are directly connected to the Local Agenda 21 processes of the cities and some are not. However, they all contribute to the goal of sustainable development and could very well form part of Local Agenda 21 - maybe even in your city...



Photo: Harri Tahvainen / Gonila

## Want to keep young people in the city?

The City of Bützow, a small town in Northern Germany, wants to keep its young people. This is not an easy task, as the town is dealing with considerable economic and social challenges. Young people tend to leave in search of better future.

However, the leaders of Bützow were not reconciled with this problem. A couple of

years ago, they started to use Local Agenda 21 as a tool for integrating youth into the local community. Within Bützow Agenda 21, young people participate in all decision-making that affects them in the city. The results have been quite good, even if the problem has not been completely overcome.

## Environmental policy of harbours

One ship running its heavy engines in the harbour causes emissions equal to emissions of 100 heavy trucks. And ships do keep the engines running to produce electricity. Could this electricity possibly not be offered from the harbour? Certain problems also exist with regard to waste and waste water management.

The City of Lübeck has come to the con-

clusion that these issues can best be solved in co-operation between cities, ports, shipping companies and other partners. The city is now leading a large UBC co-operation project on harbour policies - Agenda 21 for harbours. German Environment Ministry is funding the activity and results are expected within three years. Interested port cities may still join the process.



Photo: Mauri Rautkari / Kuvaario

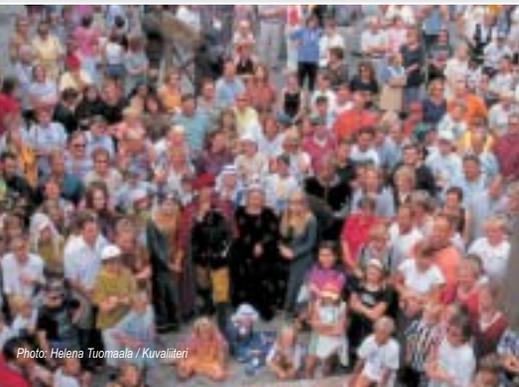


Photo: Helena Tuomaala / Kuvallieri

## Talk with citizens?

For the good management of a city, it is invaluable to have an understanding of the points of view of the citizens. And once given the chance, the citizens do like to get involved. In the City of Nacka, Sweden, new communication technology has been used for this purpose. On its website, the city has the "Nacka-Dialogue" service, by means of which the citizens can exchange points of view with politicians and officials.

The dialogue is facilitated in such a manner that discussion is dealing with acute issues such as new plans and services. The leaders of Nacka say that "Nacka-Dialogen" is an excellent feedback and participation tool. It is available in Swedish at <http://www.nacka.se/>.

## Where to invest first?

Environmental infrastructure investments can be costly. It is indeed useful to have solid information on the current state of the affairs before deciding where to put the scarce resources. For example, the cities of Klaipėda and Panevėžys in Lithuania used the UBC's Municipal Environmental Auditing (MEA) process to determine the priorities.

The leaders of these cities say that MEA was useful indeed. They currently have solid information of their cities' environmental performance and proposals for improvements as made by external experts. As the whole UBC MEA is based on city co-operation, these experts came as a contribution from their Nordic partner cities. ■



Photo: Tomi Lepointe / Kuvaario

# Union of the Baltic Cities

## Serving the Cities in Agenda 21

**Network is a “net” that “works”. In the work of the Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC) practical co-operation has always been essential. Best solutions are best learnt from others!**

The UBC is one of the European city networks promoting sustainable development. The UBC Agenda 21 Action Program 2002-2003 outlines our strategies in this field. The program contains several projects, workshops, training, publications, etc. You are cordially welcome to participate.

The heart of our network are active people from active cities. In practice these people meet and work together at the UBC Commission on Environment and

UBC Agenda 21 Working Group. Chairpersons of these bodies are Mr. Mikko Jokinen, Environmental Director from Turku and Mr. Guldbrand Skjönberg, Manager to the Boards from Nacka.

### We are here for you!

We are a team of four persons at the Commission on Environment Secretariat working for the UBC. Some people say we never stop working. Our task is to help you in getting the most out of your involvement in the UBC Agenda 21 and environmental co-operation. We are here for you!



*Team members of the UBC Environmental Secretariat from left to right: Risto Veivo, Tea Nömmann, Sanna Salminen and Sari Bowie.*

### Looking forward to your e-mail...

**Co-chairman Mikko Jokinen**  
Environmental Director, City of Turku  
mikko.jokinen@turku.fi

**Co-chairman Guldbrand Skjönberg**  
Manager to the Boards, City of Nacka  
guldbrand.skjonberg@nacka.se

**UBC Environmental Co-ordinator  
Risto Veivo**  
risto.veivo@netti.fi

**Team members at the Secretariat**  
ubcenv@netti.fi, and ubc@turku.fi

...and see also the UBC website at [www.ubc.net](http://www.ubc.net) for more information!

The heart of our network are active people from active cities.



*Contacts with colleagues are a crucial part of networking. Participants of a UBC meeting enjoying an excursion.*

### Examples of UBC Agenda 21 Activity

- Municipal Environmental Auditing (MEA)
- Harbours' Agenda 21
- SUFA Project: Success Factors in Local Environmental Policy...
- Best City Practices
- Supported by the European Commission, Nordic Council of Ministers, Ministries of the Environment,...
- Contributing to the European Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign, Baltic 21, and HELCOM

### Local Agenda 21 Good Practice Review

Editorial team: Sanna Ahvenharju (editor), Sari Bowie (lay-out), Risto Veivo

Proofreading: Paul W. Harrison, TESL (interEnglish/ Finland)

Lay-out design: Advertising Agency Briiffi, Printed by: Euraprint

Published by: Union of the Baltic Cities Commission on Environment

Special thanks to: Barbara Anton, Jan Peter Bergkvist, Björn Grönholm, Marie-Louise Henriksson, Marko Joas, Tea Nömmann, Magda Marchlewicz, Erik Möller, Laimonis Osis

© Union of the Baltic Cities, Commission on Environment. December 2001.

ISBN 951-97743-6-X

Printed on 100% recycled paper.

UBC Commission on Environment Secretariat  
Linnankatu 41

FIN - 20100 Turku, Finland

Tel: +358 22 62 31 72 or +358 22 62 32 01

Fax: +358 22 53 86 13

Cover photos: "Schoolgirls in Tallinn", Hänninen, Gorilla; "Spring flowers", Pauli Nieminen, Kuvaario; "Helsinki Cathedral stairs", Kimmo von Lüders, Kuvaario; "Flags from Baltic Sea Region", Petri Kuokka, Gorilla; "Berl-Metro", Lehtikuva/Action Press, Tom



**MARKET PRESSURE** is the driving force of sustainability

... page 6



Photo: Lauri Dammert / Kuvaario

# GOOD PRACTICE REVIEW

LOCAL  
AGENDA  
21



MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT



The Local Agenda 21 Good Practice Review is the third publication of the Success Factors in Local Environmental Policy for Local Agenda 21 and EU Enlargement in the Baltic Sea Region Project (SUFA Project, 2000 – 2001), which is a common project of the Union of the Baltic Cities, International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives and Åbo Akademi University. In addition to the project partners, the project is co-funded by the European Commission DG Environment, Finnish Ministry of the Environment, Nordic Council of Ministers, and the City of Turku.

The European Commission is not liable for any use that may be made of the information contained in this publication.