

BEST ENVIRONMENTAL PRACTISE IN BALTIC CITIES AWARD 1999

Report of the Award Committee - September 1999

The Best Environmental Practise in the Baltic Cities Award is - for the first time in 1999 - given as an honorary award to one of the UBC member Cities. The intention with this award is to encourage member cities to develop their administration and services in innovative ways for the good of the whole municipality and its citizens.

Number of applications

The UBC Commission on Environment received before the deadline, 1 September 1999, applications from 15 cities representing 7 countries. The applicants were: Butzow (D), Elblag (P), Gdynia (P), Gotland (S), Kaunas (LT), Kolding (DK), Lahti (F), Norrkoping (S), Panevezys (LT), Pori (F), Rostock (D), Siauliai (LT), Sundsvall (S), Tartu (E) and Vaxjo (S).

Key guidelines for the evaluation

The three key guidelines for the evaluation have been:

Beneficialness to the whole community: The environmental practice to be awarded should be initiated by local actors, benefit as much as possible the whole local community, serve citizens as widely as possible and contribute strongly to sustainability.

Innovativeness: The practice to be awarded should include innovative elements: new solutions, new approaches, or innovative adaptation of imported solutions and/or models.

Consideration of local circumstances: The quality of the practice shall be evaluated in relation to the local and national circumstances of each applicant. The economic and overall situation of the applying city is to be considered, as well as the general level of environmental practice in the country of each applicant.

Members of the Award Committee

The members of the Award Committee were nominated by the Executive Board of the Union of the Baltic Cities. The members of the Award Committee:

Mikko Jokinen, Head of the Environmental Office, Turku (F) (Chairman)

Carl Nielsen, Director of the Technical Department, Aarhus (DK)

Guldbrand Skjonberg, Manager of the Board, Nacka (S)

Pawel Zaboklicki, UBC Secretary General, Gdansk (P)

and the secretary of the Committee:

Risto Veivo, UBC Environmental Co-ordinator, Turku (F)

Evaluation of the Applications - Comments of the Award Committee

General comments

The 15 applications cover a wide range of different projects concerning environmental practise and methodology:

- from specific projects like Clean Beaches in Gdynia to participatory processes like the Agenda 21 process in Butzow or in Kaunas,
- from smaller projects with only local environmental impact like the Drauguste Avenue greenery reconstruction in Siauliai to broad-scaled projects with both local and global environmental perspectives like the Fossil Fuel Free Vaxjo,
- from projects dealing with specific local environmental threats like the contamination by heavy metals and other dangerous chemical elements in Panevezys to projects like the biggest windfarm in Finland (Pori) dealing with general global environmental threats like the emission of greenhouse gases.

The difference of practice and methodology reflected by the projects implies, that the evaluation of the applications in relation to the key guidelines has been based on subjective considerations of the award committee. These considerations are in short:

Beneficialness to the whole community: Processes with a broad target group - like Agenda 21 public participation processes or educational programmes directed at the whole community - are considered (at least) as beneficial to the (whole) community as specific environmental improvements - like energy savings, air quality improvements, etc. The number of people or groups affected by the process of the project is considered.

Innovativeness: Both technological solutions and participation processes are considered innovative if they include new ways of dealing with environmental challenges. Special interest has been devoted to the democratic dimension and the “bottom-up” perspective.

Consideration of local circumstances: The necessity to build up the Agenda 21 process in such a way that in principle all parts of the municipality are included into it, and that the municipality would use its own potential as much as possible, has been taken into consideration. It has also been taken into account, that participatory processes in eastern countries will have importance both in relation to the specific project and more generally in establishing traditions for such processes.

Specific comments

- Many cities have in their application described interesting projects showing *new and different ways to implement Agenda 21* in local societies/municipalities depending on local circumstances. (Butzow, Elblag, Kaunas, Kolding, Lahti, Norrkoping and Tartu).
- A large group of applications deals with projects showing *specific environmental improvements differing in scale and complexity* depending to a large degree on local problems (Butzow, Elblag, Gdynia, Kolding, Pori, Siauliai, Sundsvall and Vaxjo),
- Some of the projects and processes described have as an important element methods for a systematic approach to deal with local environmental challenges (Panevezys, Rostock, Sundsvall, Tartu and Vaxjo),
- The “bottom-up” approach by using a systematic way of ensuring *local participation and influence* on defining and implementing environmental initiatives is in a number of projects/processes a key factor (Butzow, Elblag, Kolding, Lahti, Norrkoping, Sundsvall and Tartu).

Conclusion of the Award Committee

The Award committee has unanimously agreed, that the application from the **City of Tartu**, Estonia concerning the project “**TARTU AGENDA 21**” shall be awarded with the Best Environmental Practise in Baltic Cities Award 1999

The reasons why the Award Committee has chosen Tartu are:

- The participation in the Agenda 21 process in Tartu has been broad. All parts of the municipality and also many other stakeholders have participated: Social and physical planning departments, economic sub-divisions as well as non-governmental organisations and the private sector. The schools and teachers have been active and ordinary citizens have participated.
- In the process also the regional, national and international Agenda 21 process has been involved. A lot of information has been reported and an environmental information system that makes information available for public participation has been created.
- The inter-sectorial process with a broad participation that has been implemented during the work is important. There are a lot of cornerstones for the future in terms of high awareness and skills. The political, organisational and civic platform has been develop for bringing about a sustainable future.

Besides the winning project the Award Committee wants to comment favourably on the following projects (in alphabetic order):

Elblag

for its well-targeted practical Local Agenda 21 activities, which are excellent examples of implementing bottom-up approaches.

Sundsvall

for its innovative and quite unique approach to include (municipal) employees in the sustainable development process by making improvements at their own working-places.

Vaxjo

for excellently demonstrating in practise how renewable energy can be used and how solving environmental problems - in this case the emission of carbon dioxide - often require a wide range of initiatives.

Stockholm, 23 September 1999