

The Best Environmental Practice in Baltic Cities Award 2007

Fossil fuel free Växjö wins

The winner of The Best Environmental Practice in Baltic Cities Award 2007 has been announced. The award committee received altogether eight applications from the member cities. This time the highest scores were given to the city of Växjö, Sweden, for sustainable energy management. The winner and two other nominated cities were announced in the IX UBC General Conference in Pärnu, Estonia, on 27th September.

The award committee, who made the final decision, consisted of the two co-chairmen of UBC Environmental Commission Mikko Jokinen and Guldbrand Skjönberg, Head of Technical Unit Carl Nielsen from the city of Århus and Head of Environmental Protection Division Marija Stanikuniene from the previous winner city, Kaunas.

“The competition between the candidates was hard. The Växjö nomination fulfils the award criteria – innovativeness, relevancy and quality – with high scores. We are delighted that a western member city has finally been selected as a winner”, says Guldbrand Skjönberg.

Best practice in category 1 and the overall winner: Sustainable Energy Management Växjö

Fossil Fuel Free Växjö is a climate strategy, including goals and actions for Växjö to become a fossil fuel free city. Already in 1996 the politicians of Växjö unanimously made this decision. As a measurable goal, it was said that the CO₂ emissions shall be reduced by 50 percent per capita by 2010 compared to 1993. There is also a goal of a 70 percent reduction by 2025. So far (2005) a reduction of 24 percent have been accomplished.

The strategy contains actions within heating, transport, energy efficiency and changed behaviour. Actions have been performed/will continue to be performed in large and small scale. Many different stakeholders are involved in the work – the city administration, energy companies, housing companies, transport companies, NGO's, university and private persons.

Best practice in category 2: Use of Sustainable Economic Instruments/Incentives Gdynia

Since 1996, the inhabitants of Gdynia have been granted subsidies for more ecological choices. Since the beginning of 2007, the Bank Ochrony Środowiska SA – BOS SA (Environmental Protection Bank) has provided subsidies for ecological investments in cooperation with the city. One may receive a subsidy and /or loan for the following purposes: heating system modernisation including installation of unconventional energy sources for example heat pumps, solar collectors, etc; removal of asbestos from roofing and facades of residential buildings; removal of a septic tank; connecting a property to the municipal sanitary sewage system or for the purchase and installation of a biological treatment plant next to one's home. The loan offered by BOS SA Bank is complementary to the subsidy provided by the city and is given on preferential terms fixed annual interest rate of 3,5 percent.

Best practice in category 3: Communicating/Reporting the State of Environment Kristiansand

The Eco Lighthouse EMS was invented in the Municipality of Kristiansand in 1996 as a part of the Municipality Sustainability Development Focus. The Eco Lighthouse was part of the municipality administration until The Eco Lighthouse Foundation was established in 2004/2005. The goal is to give both private and public enterprises – mostly SMEs – a possibility to have more sustainable management with substantial results. Increase environmental effectiveness and environmental focus will allow enterprises to take more social responsibility and to provide examples within each sector towards a more sustainable future. Today, over 1350 enterprises all over Norway have gone through the certification process. There are over 1100 valid certificates and many municipalities and counties are using the Eco-Lighthouse as a tool and indicator within their sustainability action planning. The actual certified enterprises can present very positive results both economically and environmentally.