



CITYWATER – Benchmarking water protection in cities

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Report on Kick-off meeting January, 31, 2013, Helsinki

The kick-off meeting of the Citywater project was hosted by the Coordinating Beneficiary City of Helsinki 31st January 2013. The purpose of the meeting was to gather all project personnel together and present as well as discuss the central themes of the project. The meeting was also attended by civil servants contributing to the project and guest lecturers from other organizations.

The meeting was opened by Project Coordinator Satu Viitasalo-Frösén and Head of Environmental Counselling Johanna Joutsiniemi who wished all the participants welcome to the City of Helsinki Environment Centre and the new office building in Viikki. Viitasalo-Frösén continued the introductory part of the meeting by presenting the background of the project and the importance of water protection work in the Baltic Sea region. The aims, partners and actions of the Citywater project were also presented shortly.



Baltic Sea Challenge Coordinator Salla-Maria Alanen from Centum Balticum presented the background and aims of the Baltic Sea Challenge. She emphasized the importance of cooperation and support within the challenge network that includes over 190 organizations ranging from public sector actors to companies and educational institutions. The key stages in the Baltic Sea Challenge are commitment to the challenge, making an action plan and finally implementing the plan according to the needs and capabilities of the organization and its operations.

The morning session continued with a presentation by Professor Kaja Tampere, from the Institute of Communication at Tallinn University, on the topic of environmental communication in Baltic countries. The presentation raised questions about how to formulate messages about environmental concerns and how to build trust through communication. Tampere highlighted also cultural differences between Baltic and Nordic countries and explained how the differences affect people's view on environmental issues. A discussion concerning citizen involvement followed the presentation



and the importance of involvement as a tool for creating trust and transparency was mentioned. The question about how to communicate research was also discussed and Tampere reminded that it is important to know what motivates the public in order to reach them and meet their expectations.

After Tampere's thought-provoking presentation, the focus of the meeting shifted towards concrete water protection solutions. Landscape Architect Jukka Jormola from the Finnish Environment Institute gave a presentation on urban storm waters and pointed out the responsibilities and benefits of efficient storm water handling in cities. Jormola also gave several examples on constructions that can be utilized in storm water management. The examples included green roofs, rain gardens and different types of retention solutions that had been implemented in various locations like industrial sites and residential areas among others. After the presentation safety and costs related to wetlands were discussed and it was concluded that wetlands are usually not a safety concern due to constructional details. Jormola explained that maintenance costs associated with wetlands are usually not much higher than for other types of green areas and that the construction costs are actually lower than for regular parks.



Wetlands were the topic of the following presentation that was given by Outi Salminen, Research Associate and Coordinator of the Life + funded project Urban Oases. Salminen started with a short presentation of the project, its aims and main activities and focused then on a case study in Nummela located in the municipality of Vihti. Salminen showed the characteristics and problems of the study area and explained the process of restoration and constructing wetlands. A less successful example of a wetland solution was also demonstrated highlighting the importance of safety and functionality considerations. Monitoring the impacts of storm water handling solutions was also discussed and questions concerning wetland solutions were reflected on further during the lunch.

After enjoying lunch at restaurant Viikin kartano the participants had the possibility to familiarize themselves with the Viikki Environment House, the most energy efficient office building in Finland. A guided tour was held by Head of Environmental Counselling Johanna Joutsiniemi, who presented the technical solutions implemented in the building.

The afternoon session started with a presentation about cost-benefit analysis held by Professor Markku Ollikainen from the Department of Economics and Management at University of Helsinki. Ollikainen explained the basic features of costs-benefit analysis and the process of using the method in decisions making. Different types of analysis methods were presented together with thoughts on how costs benefit analysis can be applied to voluntary actions by e.g. local actors. Differences in nutrient loads and target levels between Baltic Sea countries showed that nutrient levels vary a great deal across the countries. The costs associated with reducing loads also showed significant variation. Ollikainen highlighted that the benefits of nutrient reductions can be expressed both in terms of environmental effects and as monetary valuation of how much citizens are willing to pay for the reduction.



The kick off meeting ended with a more practical take on project implementation. Citywater project monitor Camilla Strandberg-Panelius from Astrale presented the Life+ financing program and highlighted important rules for reporting and implementation of project activities. The participants were offered an opportunity to ask questions about Life+ regulation and the discussion revolved mainly around technical details. Preliminary plans for the first monitoring of the project were also made.

Following the Life+ program presentation the partners of the project were presented. As the time of the kick-off meeting was running out, it was decided that the discussion was to be continued at the kick-off dinner at restaurant Helmi. The dinner was a great success and enabled partners to continue discussing the project activities and the roles of the different partner organizations. Discussions over the dinner also gave ideas for internal project communication as well as additional connections between partners and activities. Overall the dinner was a successful ending on a fruitful kick-off meeting.