

## CITYWATER – Benchmarking water protection in cities

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### Report on Action B.2 Workshop

*«Water Protection: the Possibilities of Municipalities and Citizens»*

*Citywater workshop for Estonian municipalities, Tallinn University, May 22, 2014*

#### BACKGROUND

The overall objective of the CITYWATER project is to implement and facilitate environmentally relevant and cost-beneficiary voluntary water protection measures in cities and municipalities in the Baltic Sea Region in order to improve the state of coastal waters. The project further aims at changing working procedures by increasing environmental communication and knowledge in cities and municipalities in the Baltic Sea Region in order to ensure continuous work for water quality improvement of local waters. The objective of Action B.2 is to improve partners' and stakeholders' knowledge on how to communicate their message within their organizations and among the general public, as well as how to involve and motivate people with varying backgrounds to protect the Baltic Sea.

The project application states that the aim of the first workshop is to gather information about the current situation of environmental communication carried out by the public sector organizations. The idea is also to find out bottlenecks of communication and the civil servants' wishes for future activities. The purpose is also to disseminate information about the project and involve people and invite them to participate in the project activities.

#### WORKSHOP

The seminar was hosted by Tallinn University Institute of Communication on May 22nd 2014. The purpose of the workshop was to introduce the Citywater project aims, results and activities to representatives of municipalities and in the discussion session gather information about their previous communication experiences and collect input for the final work package outcome, the formulation of the Baltic Sea Challenge communication plan.

The workshop was targeted to environmental specialists working in municipalities. The invitation was sent out to all Estonian coastal municipalities who had previously also been invited to participate in the survey conducted by Tallinn University as part of the Citywater project. The number of participants was 15, 9 of whom were from different Estonian municipalities.

The day included a series of presentations and a discussion session. The workshop was opened by **Kaja Tampere**, Professor of Communication Management at Tallinn University, who briefly introduced the environmental communication related activities of Tallinn University and talked about the power of communication to bring forth the desired changes.



The overall aims and activities of the Citywater project were introduced by **Karolin Kairo-Gasman** from Tallinn City Government. She also presented the possibilities within the Baltic Sea Challenge program and invited municipalities to join.

The following presenter was **Arko Olesk** from Tallinn University Institute of Communication. He introduced the first results from the two surveys that were conducted by Tallinn University within the Citywater project: first the survey of the citizens of the three Baltic states, then a survey of the Estonian coastal municipalities.

The citizen survey featured a number of questions about the awareness and attitudes towards water protection on the local level. The results showed that local municipality is an important actor for people in matters of water protection: for example, when they notice a pollution source they are most likely to notify the municipality about it and a vast majority thinks that municipality should value water protection as highly as issues like social services or education. However, they are not very aware of the activities that the municipalities have done and more than 90 per cent have not taken part in any water protection related activity in their home region.

The survey of Estonian municipalities had just finished a few days before the workshop and a similar survey in Latvia and Lithuania was about to begin soon, so the presented results were very initial. The presentation focused on what the municipalities perceive as biggest problems and priorities. The results also showed that municipalities consider households as a potentially major pollution source. The answers highlighted two major obstacles of water protection activities: lack of resources (money) and lack of awareness or support. In the future, most of the municipalities would like to pay more attention to awareness campaigns for the citizens.

The survey also focused on the question of cost-benefit analysis (CBA) as a beneficial tool for initiating and planning municipality water protection activities. The results show that in Estonia the municipalities have so far very little used CBA but most find that availability of such a tool would make them pay more attention to water protection activities.

In the discussion following this presentation the representatives of municipalities reflected on the results, proposing explanations for some of the data of the citizen's survey. For example, they argued that the higher awareness of municipality water protection activities in Estonia compared to Latvia and Lithuania might be due to more projects involving renovation and building of drinking water pipelines and waste water treatment plants.

After a small coffee break all participants gathered to a round table for the **workshop** part of the day. The workshop, led by **Kaja Tampere**, **Esta Kaal** and **Arko Olesk** from Tallinn University, sought to hear experiences with communicating water protection projects to identify main obstacles and best practices. Most of the discussion was centred around how is best to engage and inform citizens, and the practical difficulties connected to that. The participants highlighted the problems in current practices, including the way informing citizens is currently done. The participants argued that a short notice in a local or municipality paper about upcoming public discussions or changes in regulations is



not able to engage people in matters that concern their home area. Also, a change in behaviour is hard to achieve as can be seen in the case of garbage and recycling, especially in rural areas. As better practices, the workshop proposed more personal ways of informing people such as collective events, directly posting more explanatory informational sheets and engaging local leaders in the awareness campaigns.

Another highlighted problem was the lack of an integrated approach on environmental matters. The specialists pointed out that information relevant on the municipal level is scattered on various national databases and websites. This also leads to the situation where citizens are getting environmental information about different topics from several sources whereas the message should be more coherent to allow for environmentally friendly behaviour in general and not just concerning one topic.

The second half of the day was dedicated to issues related to cost-benefit analysis and aimed to show best practices in this field that the local municipalities could adopt in making their own decisions in environmental matters. First, **Mart Reimann** from Tallinn University presented some ways in which CBA has been used in Estonia. He introduced methods that involve calculating the costs and benefits of an environmental decision via the value of property or calculating the monetary value of ecosystem services. Based on actual cases he concluded that these methods are a valuable tool for local municipalities. A lively discussion followed his talk about how these methods could be applied in the everyday decision making process in the municipalities.

Finally, **Eliisa Punttila**, the Citywater project expert from City of Helsinki Environment Centre introduced the work done on CBA within the Citywater project. Her presentation detailed the necessary steps for implementing the analysis and gave an overview of some of the projects under analysis within the Citywater project. She concluded that most of the studied measures seem to be cost-effective, however, more analysis is needed for more accurate results.

In conclusion, the workshop successfully fulfilled its aims: it introduced the Baltic Sea Challenge program, the results of the Citywater project surveys and various relevant concepts of cost-benefit analysis. The following lively discussions showed that these issues were of great interest to all participants and we can expect them to be more aware and active incorporating these ideas into their work. The discussion session gave us valuable input about the current practices of municipal water protection activities, the existing barriers and desired lines of action. This information will be incorporated into the main Citywater Action B.2 outcome, the water protection communication strategy for municipalities.

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