

1. Implementing Local Agenda 21 in the Baltic Sea Region

The case of Turku and Southwest Finland

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1.1 INTRODUCTION – THE AGENDA 21 PROCESS

1.1.1 The importance of the local level in environmental protection

‘Because so many of the problems and solutions being addressed by Agenda 21 have their roots in local activities, the participation and co operation of local authorities will be a determining factor in fulfilling its objectives. Local authorities construct, operate and maintain economic, social and environmental infrastructure, oversee planning processes, establish local environmental policies and regulations, and assist in implementing natio-

nal and sub-national environmental policies. As the level of governance closest to the people, they play a vital role in educating, mobilizing and responding to the public to promote sustainable development.’ (Agenda 21 1992: Chapter 28.1)

Environmental problems have been brought into public focus and thus onto the political agenda through locally based environmental disasters. However, it took close to three decades before the importance of the local level in combating environmental problems was recognised, especially ‘modern’ problems with ‘new politics of pollution’ as formulated by Albert Weale (1992). The institutionalisation phase of environmental policies

Turku/Åbo

Turku/Åbo is located on the shore of the Baltic Sea in Southwest Finland. Surrounding Turku there are approx. 50 municipalities. They are all very small, each with no more than a few hundred inhabitants. Only the city of Turku is larger, with 169,000 inhabitants and an area of 306 km². The entire area of Southwest Finland is 407 km² and has a population of 220,000.

The region includes a part of the coast of the Baltic Sea, with the beautiful Aboensic archipelago. Turku is a very old cultural centre in Finland, in fact it is its oldest city. Its economic life is mostly centred around service and trade. The three universities and the archiepiscopal site are also important.

Local environmental work in Turku – Agenda 21

Sustainability in an area has to be maintained through constant application of sound management principles. The work carried out in the City of Turku identifies and demonstrates these principles and how they are used. Agenda 21 is of specific relevance since it is specifically written to establish and maintain sustainable development with a focus on the local, urban level. Åbo/Turku is particularly well suited for demonstrating a Local Agenda 21. The city has not only its own experience but also has experience from the entire region through its coordinating role in several Baltic wide programmes on the Local Agenda 21. Turku/Åbo has also, as chairing city of the Union of Baltic Cities (UBC) commission on the environment, developed the Municipal Environmental Audit scheme

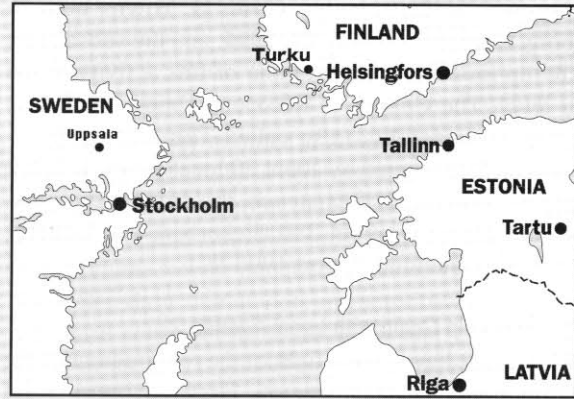


Figure 1.1 Turku/Åbo is situated in the Southwest Finland.

of the UBC. This is used in Åbo as well as in other cities.

The Local Agenda 21 work has been, and continues to be, carried out in many forms in the Turku region since it formally began in February 1997 when a large conference in Lieto reviewed the tasks and 18 municipalities signed the appropriate Agenda 21 documents. The work concentrates on four main topics: transport, water, environmental education and environmental information. In all four sectors the municipalities have tried to find approaches that agree with the size of the municipalities. One good example of this is waste water treatment in rural areas where a common waste water pipe network is missing. The municipalities have agreed on common principles and practices to improve the situation in the region.

in all Western societies remained at the national level for the first two or three decades (Jänicke 1997, Lundqvist 1999). Today, the local level is considered as important as the international level for the general improvement of the state of the environment. The leading idea is naturally to 'Think globally, act locally', as local decisions have global impacts (O'Riordan 1996).

This shared responsibility has led local communities to enhance co-operation within and across the borders of the nation-states. Co-operation between municipalities within one country has been common for several decades at least in the Nordic context. Inter-municipal cross-border co-operation, for example twin city activities, have constituted more of a symbolic action than actual projects for several decades. Today, the reality is totally different. Cross-border co-operation, for example, in environmental protection at the local level, is an everyday activity within the framework of the Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC) and the European Sustainable Cities Campaign, to mention some examples.

The major goal defined in these 'new, ecologically modernised' environmental policies is *sustainable development*. The World Commission on the Environment and Development brought this terminology to considerable political and public attention (WCED 1987). This process of dealing with the concept of sustainable development continued at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), held in Rio

de Janeiro, 1992. One important key element in the general guidelines drawn up for the implementation of sustainable development was the Agenda 21 Action Programme adopted by the conference. The Agenda 21 Action Programme was the new tool for *local level responsibility and action* for achieving sustainable development.

1.1.2 The Sustainable Development Process: What happened after Rio?

Since the introduction of the Agenda 21 Action Programme, several national governments, local authorities and Intergovernmental Organisations (IGO's) and Non Governmental Organisations (NGO's) have been promoting Local Agenda 21 (LA21) projects within their local communities. According to a world-wide survey made in the spring of 1997 by the ICLEI (The International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives), more than 1,800 local governments in 64 countries had some kind of LA21 activity. The number of local initiatives was expected to reach 2,000 by the end of 1997. The LA21 activity level is especially high in Europe, and the growth rate of its activity is also at its highest in Europe. Within Europe, the level of activity is high in the Nordic countries and the Netherlands, but Germany and the UK are also manifesting considerable activity. One reason why Europe is leading in LA21 activities is perhaps the existence of numerous local-level organisations promoting co-ope-

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ration and environmental initiatives. The European Conference on Sustainable Cities & Towns held in Aalborg, Denmark on May 27, 1994, and the subsequent follow-up process, is an example of this activity at the local level. The Charter of European Cities and Towns Towards Sustainability (also called The Aalborg Charter) was initially signed by about 80 local authorities, but during its four years of existence, the number of signatories has grown to about 380 (Eckerberg and Lafferty 1997; ICLEI Biennial Report 1996-97).

1.1.3 The Main Goals with Local Agenda 21

LA21 projects have, in the light of the requirement of the Rio Conference, two main targets. Firstly, to improve the state of the local environment so that the general objectives of the Agenda 21 Action Plan from Rio can be fulfilled. And secondly, to enhance co-operation and participation between local authorities, organisations, businesses and further, to improve the civil participation of local residents (ordinary people), especially women and young people (Agenda 21: Ch. 28).

Everybody should be involved in the work for the environment, as every effort is valuable. The aim is that each local authority should enter into a dialogue with its citizens, local organisations and private enterprises and adopt "a local Agenda 21" with the purpose of securing a (more) sustainable development in their own community. In order to reach this goal, the co-operation between different authorities and organisations must be intensified on all levels, including local, regional, national and international levels.

From the Agenda 21 document we can measure two different effects that should result from Local Agenda 21 activities. The first was the effect of LA21 on decisions concerning the local environment, and the second the effects of LA21 on participation of citizens within the

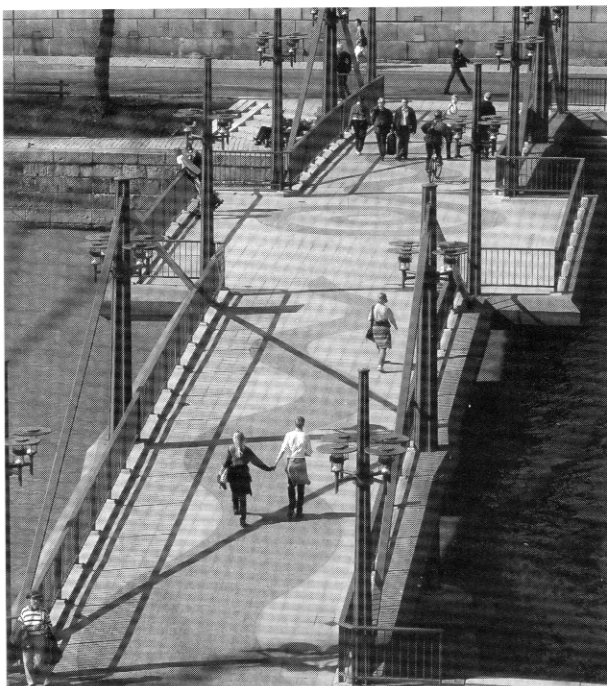


Figure 1.2 A pedestrian bridge crossing the Aura river in Turku. The platform is a natural meeting point, just as Agenda 21.

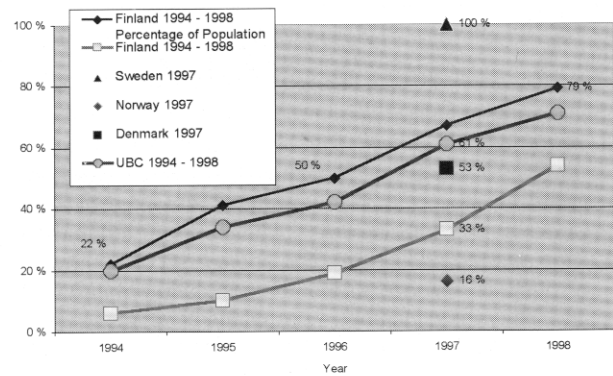


Figure 1.3 LA21 activities in the Nordic Countries and in 81 UBC Member Cities (Sources: Kuntaliitto 1998, Joas 1999, Grönholm and Joas 1999, *LA21 situation in Finland 1994-1998 and in Scandinavia 1997*).

local decision-making processes. These two effects or overall goals should be the leading principles for all Local Agenda 21 work. Seen from this point of view, LA21 projects and activities could, if they were properly planned, be a very important and useful tool for developing local governments and the local and regional municipalities with an environmental focus.

1.1.4 The situation in the Baltic Sea Region

The situation of LA21 projects and activities in the Baltic Sea Region varies a lot. Differences between countries are huge in terms of the number of LA21 projects, when they began and what they are doing. Many different studies show that the first activities were in Sweden, Denmark and Germany, and after that in other countries around the Baltic Sea.

The situation in Finland and in Scandinavia can be studied in the Figure above where we can see the development over time in Finland and the situation in Sweden, Denmark, and Norway in 1997. The Figure shows that all municipalities in Sweden had some kind of LA21 activity, while the situation was more modest in the other countries. In Finland, for example, many projects began in 1997-1998.

Another comparative study was done in the autumn of 1998 by Åbo Akademi University. This study looked at the members of the Union of the Baltic Sea Cities. The Union of the Baltic Sea Cities (UBC) had in the autumn of 1998 81 member cities or municipalities. Of these 81 cities or municipalities, almost 73% or 43 of the UBC member cities were involved in an LA21 project. One city had another kind of project similar to a LA21 project. Eight cities (14%) were planning to start an LA21 project in the near future. The first LA21 project was started in 1992. UBC member cities that were not planning to start an LA21 project are in a clear minority; only seven cities indicated this in their answers and only 4 to 5 new projects were being planned for the years 1998-2000 in the cities that answered the survey. This probably was an indication that few new LA21 projects would start in the near future. As can be seen from the figure 1.2 the most active year for starting new projects was 1997, when 11 new projects were initiated.

Those most active in starting LA21 projects seem to be the North Baltic cities (in Sweden, Finland and Norway). Figures from our study thus confirm the

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assertion that LA21 activities are most profoundly driven in the Nordic countries. In cities belonging to the South Baltic group, the LA21 activity level is rather high, as only 17% of the member cities are not involved in any form of local level sustainability process. Most of these projects have already resulted in a Local Agenda 21 Action Plan. The activity level is considerably lower in the East Baltic member cities as only one out of four cities that answered our questionnaire have started an LA21 project. There is, however, a strong will to start such projects as close to half of the cities belonging to this group say that they are planning to start an LA21 project.

If the member cities' involvement is analysed according to size, the most active seem to be the medium-sized cities as almost 95% of them are involved in LA21 activities. Small towns and large cities seem to be about equally active, but the smaller cities seem to be a bit further along in their LA21 processes (see Table 1.1). This can be explained by the fact that the member cities in the Nordic countries are on the average smaller than cities in the other regions of the research study.

1.1.5 What kind of activity do we find in LA21 projects ?

The activities within an LA21 project can take very different forms. The kind of concrete activities in different LA21 projects depends on a number of factors. There are typically many factors that can affect the kind of activity a local administration decides to arrange, but some factors are worth mentioning:

- The *size of the municipality* and usually also the *of the local environmental administration*. Bigger municipalities usually have more resources in terms of money, time and human resources than smaller municipalities have
- *Who participates or who is involved* in the project activities. Does the LA21 project involve only persons and institutions from the municipal administration or does the project also involve a broader public, civic organisations, interest organisations, business, companies and private persons?
- The impact of *local and national cultures and traditions* will of course also influence the process and the kind of activities that are undertaken within the LA21 project. It is important to remember that the Agenda 21 document does not

propose just one model for organising and implementing LA21 activities. From the perspective of Agenda 21, it is important that projects make sense with regard to local circumstances.

If we simplify in order to describe a typical an LA21 project and especially to describe the types of activities, there are many different activities to choose from, as mentioned above. Statistics and research results of studies from both the Nordic countries and elsewhere around the Baltic Sea show that models and activities are not similar but share some common trends. Usually the initiation phase of an LA21 project begins with recruiting actors from different sectors of society. This is often followed by the arrangement of lectures, forum-meetings, discussion-groups, etc. After the initiation phase the activities usually take on different forms depending on the situation of the LA21 project and the factors described above. Some examples of typical activities are:

- Lectures about environmental matters
- Co-operation with local businesses
- Co-operation with local schools and day-care institutions
- Co-operation with local civic organisations
- Education of the administrative personnel of the city
- Production and distribution of a local LA21 newspaper or information leaflet/letter
- Enhancing the participation of ordinary citizens; arranging LA21 forums
- Environmental surveys among citizens
- Arranging campaign-days or something similar
- Beginning usually small local projects that aim to change e.g. consumption habits

If we once again rely on statistics and research results from studies around the Baltic Sea, it is apparent that many LA21 projects are regionally organised. A number of municipalities have planned and built up LA21 activities together. The reason for this model is perhaps that by planning a project and activities together, there are more ideas and perhaps also better opportunities for finding resources for the LA21 project, in terms of money and persons.

Table 1.1 LA21 activities and LA21 plans according to location and size of the city.

ACTIVE LA21 PROJECTS AND PLANS (OF ALL VALID ANSWERS):	ALL (NO./ %)	By LOCATION			By CITY SIZE		
		NORTH BALTIC	EAST BALTIC	SOUTH BALTIC	SMALL TOWNS	TOWNS	CITIES
ACTIVE LA21 OR SIMILAR PROJECT	44/ 75%	26/ 100%	4/ 27%	14/ 78%	14/ 78%	17/ 94%	13/ 72%
PLANNING LA21 PROJECT	8/ 14%	-	7/ 47%	1/ 6%	2/ 11%	1/ 6%	2/ 11%
NO LA21 PROJECT	7/ 12%	-	4/ 27%	3/ 17%	2/ 11%	-	3/ 17%
LA21 ACTION PLAN	33/ 56%	20/ 77%	3/ 20%	10/ 56%	11/ 61%	14/ 77%	8/ 44%
OTHER SUST. DEV. PLAN	7/ 12%	4/ 15%	3/ 20%	-	1/ 6%	3/ 18%	3/ 17%
NO LA21 ACTION PLAN / MISSING	19/ 32%	2/ 8%	9/ 60%	8/ 44%	6/ 33%	1/ 6%	7/ 39%
N	59/81	26	15	18	18	18	18

1.2 AGENDA 21 IN SOUTHWEST FINLAND

1.2.1 How municipal co-operation began

Southwest Finland's Agenda 21 project represents an integrated effort on the part of the municipalities to work together for sustainable development. The impetus for this mutual collaboration project was an Agenda 21 seminar, held in the municipality of Lieto in February of 1997. This meeting was not a mere 'village meeting'. Almost 170 participants from the various areas of Southwest Finland participated. The occasion ended ceremoniously with the signing of a declaration of Southwest Finland's Agenda 21 by twenty-one municipal managers. The municipalities (and cities) involved in the project and the activities are: Askainen, Kaarina, Laitila, Lemu, Lieto, Masku, Mietoinen, Mynämäki, Naantali, Nousiainen, Paimio, Parainen, Piikkiö, Pyhäranta, Pöytyä, Raisio, Rusko, Turku, Usikaupunki, Vahto, and Velkua.

The region of Southwest Finland has a long tradition of inter-municipal co-operation, so it seemed natural for these municipalities to cooperate on sustainable development. As the problems of sustainable development do not recognise municipal or other geographical boundaries, cooperation is especially appropriate. In addition, collaboration and cooperation was attractive to the municipalities in that it allowed the effective use of existing resources.

1.2.2 The organisation

The organisation coordinating the Southwest Finland Agenda 21 project consists of a steering committee with 31 representatives from different municipalities (usually mayors) and regional organisations. This steering group meets about 3 - 4 times per year, to evaluate the activities and decide on up-coming activities and economic matters. During the initiation phase (1997 - 1998), the project decided to focus on four main topic areas: water protection, increasing environmental awareness, improving environmental information and finally traffic and community planning. Planning groups were built up around these topics. The co-ordination of the project was supervised by the Southwest Finland Agenda Office, with an office in the city of Turku. The main task for the initiation phase was to plan and build up a Local Agenda 21 Action plan with concrete goals and activities. During the initiation phase approx. 100 people were heavily involved in planning and different activities or events.

Today the Southwest Finland Agenda 21 project has moved to phase two during which all the goals of the Local Agenda 21 Action plan should be carried out. The project has transformed into an on-going process. The organisation has also changed. The Agenda office is still in the city of Turku, where three full-time and one part-time employee work with different tasks. There are now seven smaller but more active working groups instead of the original four planning groups. These working groups each have one or two specific tasks to plan to work with and develop. The number of active participants has increased to more than 150 people and the responsible co-ordinators are satisfied with the increasing number of active actors (both in terms of people and organisations).



Figure 1.4 A local Agenda 21 group in Uppsala, Sweden, during a planning meeting. (Photo: Inga-May Lehman Nädin.)

The working groups are responsible to the steering group, which is the body that makes all necessary decisions. The steering group is on the other hand responsible to the twenty-one municipalities currently involved in the activities of the Southwest Finland Agenda 21. The municipalities in which the activities take place also cover most of the costs. The principle for the funding of an activity is that every municipality participates in the same way. Financial participation is tied to the number of inhabitants in a municipality. Today the financial participation or aid is 2 Finnish marks (about 0.33 EURO) per inhabitant / municipality. Additional funding from the Regional Environmental Council and the Finnish Ministry of Environment has been received for specific aspects of the activity.

1.2.3 The activity

The main principles for the activity are to involve more and more municipalities from the region into the process and at the same time continue to develop the process and involve new sectors. The stated goal is to have an on-going process in the region, in all municipalities. As the model for the process is of a network of municipalities there is a need to keep the activity very concrete and clear as well as to focus on activity that all municipalities can use or participate in. The activities are of two main types, informative activity and focused concrete projects.

The form of the organisation naturally influences the activity. Today, all municipalities are involved in the activity to a greater or lesser extent. According to the co-ordinators, there are many positive aspects to a regional LA21 activity that involves several municipalities. One of the positive aspects is that the different municipalities help and support each other in the work. The co-ordinators think that they can avoid a lot of problems and mistakes by working together with many municipalities. There is also a clear belief that without a regional LA21 initiative a lot of municipalities would have stayed entirely out of the process. The "group pressure" made some of the municipalities participate.

The every-day activity in the Southwest Finland Agenda 21 Office is similar to other ordinary project work. The work includes co-ordinating workgroups, starting new projects, arranging events, courses or lessons and finally, supporting municipalities in their environmental work. Most of the activities take place during the day-

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time (office hours), as a result of former experiences where there were a decrease in activity levels during the evenings. This means that those who work actively are mainly people who are involved due to their profession, e.g. administrative personnel from municipalities, representatives from companies and civic organisations and teachers from schools.

The Southwest Finland Agenda process is active mainly at the local and the regional level. Thus far, there has been no international interaction. The city of Turku is a member of the Union of the Baltic Cities Network and within this network, some activities and co-operation projects have been arranged. In any case, according to the co-ordinators, the most important task for the process is to be active on the local level where results are easily achieved and change is easily seen.

1.3 CASE 1: CREATING AN INFORMATION CAMPAIGN

An information campaign is a typical type of activity for an LA21 project, because of the goals of the Agenda 21 document. Improving awareness and knowledge about environmental matters is one of the most important steps in the process towards sustainable development. One of the problems with discussing environmental matters is that only a minority of the total population is involved in the environmental process. One of the goals of sustainable development is therefore to involve the majority in this process in some way. Not an easy task at all!

When organizing an information campaign, care must be taken in planning the campaign and in choosing the tools or channels to be used to achieve the stated goals. Our so-called "info-society" does not lack information, so it is a challenge to plan and carry out an effective information campaign in which one really reaches the target groups. In discussing information about the environment and LA21 activities as well as almost any other issue, it is important to have the opportunity to repeat and update the information or message easily and without huge costs or problems.

In view of the above, it is interesting to see how the Agenda 21 process in Southwest Finland has planned and carried out their Information campaign. What are the main principles and are there any good ideas?

1.3.1 The intention of the Info-campaign

The intention of the Info-campaign for the Agenda 21 process in Southwest Finland is to inform and involve the greater public in the process of sustainable development. The role of the Info-campaign, in other words, is to reach those who are usually not involved or directly interested in environmental matters, to serve as a wake-up call for ordinary people. This wake-up call should provide ordinary citizens with information about the nature of the problems and action to be taken in order to avoid the problems. The intention is that the Info-campaign should be so concrete and close to ordinary people that everyone can easily learn and use the available information. The golden rule for the Info-campaign is that

information leads to awareness and awareness leads to changes in attitudes and habits. A regional survey about attitudes, priority awareness, and consumption patterns has been arranged in order to inform those working with the campaign about the current situation of the inhabitants in the region. This is seen as a very important and useful way of gathering information that is necessary for the development of the LA21 process and especially the Info-campaign.

The intention with the Info-campaign was to reach as many as possible, with a special focus on various target groups in the region. Therefore the Agenda 21 process in Southwest Finland has decided to use a variety of information channels or tools for the campaign. The channels or tools for the campaign are chosen carefully in order to most effectively reach the intended target groups. In this case, the most effective and utilised information channels are local newspapers and local radio stations. Other information channels used are so called info-points, including locally produced leaflets and newsletters, meetings and courses to name just a few. Thus far, internet has not been seen as a very effective information tool for local and regional information.

We will now take a closer look at three different activities in the Info-campaign including a short presentation on a traditional way of informing a broad public, an example of reaching companies or business, and finally an example of an internal information campaign for the people and institutions within the municipality responsible for buying products.

1.3.2 Reaching a broad public

Info-points are a traditional and often used method of informing the public. A total of 36 Info-points have been built, one in almost every municipality involved in the Agenda 21 process in Southwest Finland. The information at these info points covers a variety of topics, e.g. current information about water, waste, and energy issues, and are changed three to four times a year. Local libraries provides the Info-points with relevant and in some cases even new literature on the various topics. The info-points consist primarily of material and information from activities in the Southwest Finland LA21 process supplemented by other environmentally relevant information. It has been considered important to have information that is new and of interest to the audience. All libraries with an Info-point also have a contact person responsible for the information and the material. The contact persons co-operate with the Southwest Finland Agenda 21 office.

Local radio as an information channel has been an effective way of reaching the public. At this time, a total of three radio-stations co-operate with the Southwest Finland Agenda 21 office and the Agenda 21 process. The method used has been to broadcast short messages with good environmental ideas, so called "Eco-ideas". A new Eco-idea is chosen every week. In other words, the message is changed often and in that way, keeps the audience alert. By offering a new good idea every week, the audience is also taught to wait for a new idea. Local radio has also participated in and been a good tool for distributing general information about events, meetings, etc.

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Local newspapers are the third channel for reaching a broad public. The newspapers used by the Southwest Finland Agenda 21 office are newspapers that are distributed throughout the region. A total of eleven newspapers are involved in this LA21 work at this time. The papers used are so called commercial papers that are intended to attract an audience looking for short stories or information packages.

Newspapers are distributed to all homes and a majority of workplaces but newspapers alone do not meet the need for information. Therefore a decision has been made to use several channels in order to maximise the distribution of information. Working with this kind of information activity is not easy and it is difficult to determine the results.

1.3.3 Reaching companies and business

The following case is an example of an activity intended to reach a more focused target-group, business and especially companies. The activity is designed to reach companies and involve them in the LA21 process by introducing an Eco-prize for the best ecologically sound product or service in the region. The intention with this prize is to make good environmental products or services known on one hand and to encourage companies to take environmental issues more and more into consideration. This prize has existed since 1998. Two companies have been awarded the local Eco-prize for their products. The first prize, in 1998, was given to a company which produces peeled potatoes and other vegetables using huge peeling-machines that can peel millions of kilos. The ecological and unique aspect of this company was that they produced and are using a composting-machine for the waste products from the peeling process. Every year the peeling process generates an enormous amount of waste and normally, this type of waste would go to the landfill site. By composting the waste, the company is taking environmental issues into consideration in an exemplary way. Other enterprises using the peeled products from this company, e.g., shops and kitchens, are satisfied with the environmental work the company has done and they can also use it in the marketing of their products.

The prize for 1999 went to a company making ecologically produced clay-boards used as flooring material in houses. Both products are produced or manufactured by local producers or companies. As companies are usually in a need of good publicity, the Eco-prize can be a welcome source of publicity. There is always a need for positive examples that show people that there is a process taking place and that companies and enterprises are also involved in finding and producing products that are more sound for the environment.

Work with the Eco-prize is interesting but at the same time quite difficult. The principles for the prize and the competition as a whole must be clear and the prize itself has to be made known. According to the co-ordinators in the Agenda 21 office, the biggest job so far has been to make the prize known and attractive to companies. A lot of work has been done to decide about the principles for the prize, what the rules are, what kind of information needs to be put together about the prize, the timetable and who will be on the jury making decisions about the winner of the Eco-prize. It will probably take a couple of

years more for the prize to become well-known regionally. The co-ordinators in the Agenda 21 office have actually been surprised by the initial problems. On the other hand, the Eco-prize has led to a surprisingly amount of positive publicity according to the companies of the winning products in 1998 and 1999. The prize itself consists of a diploma and the publicity that comes with the prize.

In a way, the entire process will begin again this year because this year the prize will be given to the best environmental service in the region. This is a new prize category for those involved and which means that a new group of companies must be approached with information about the prize. There is a lot of work to be done, but those working with the prize already have some experience in the area. By making another category of enterprise eligible for the Eco-prize, many more companies can participate and even more will be aware of the prize and the ideas and principles behind the prize: concern for the environment and principles of sustainable development.

1.3.4 Reaching selected municipal bodies and sectors

The following case is an example of a project which aims to involve institutions and people within the municipality who are responsible for buying (purchasing) material and products for municipal activity in different sectors. The intention with this sub-project is to inform different municipal bodies about current possibilities for buying environmentally friendly products for municipal activities and services. The goal for this sub-project is to involve municipal sectors other than the environmental sector in the Local Agenda 21 process, and make them aware of the need for common concern for environmental problems as well as point out already existing possibilities and solutions. The goal is to show the institutions and people what they can do for the environment in their everyday work routines. In detail, this sub-project seeks to inform and educate the people responsible for buying (purchasing) about opportunities for buying environmentally friendly products, including the range of products, as well as suggesting other ways of taking the environment into consideration in the purchase of products.

This sub-project has focused on a small number of products in order to give a clear picture of the situation and the alternative products. The groups of products include:

- A. Provisions, food-products and similar raw materials for municipal kitchens (schools, day-care institutions, service houses etc.)
- B. Cleaning products and hygienic equipment for hospitals
- C. Building materials for the restoration or renovation of municipal buildings and real estate
- D. Electrical equipment, including computers, printers, etc., for use within the municipality

This sub-project uses an electronic database which the partners involved in the Southwest Finland Agenda 21 process can have access to. The database consists of a list of environmentally friendly products that are alternatives to traditional products within the chosen groups of products. The database also contains of infor-

mation about the different environmentally friendly products and in what way they are more environmentally friendly than other products. The database (including the product-list) is constructed and updated by Efectia Ltd., a commercial company owned by the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities. Similar databases (models and functions) can be found in Austria, Denmark, Great Britain and Sweden. The initiative for this service comes from the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) who started a project called Municipal Green Purchasers' Network. The advantages with this service is that there are no limits for the number of users and that access to the database is unrestricted.

The problem is that this service is rather expensive and time-consuming. Southwest Finland Agenda 21 solves this problem by sharing the costs between a large number of municipalities.

1.4 CASE 2: AGENDA 21 IN THE SCHOOLS

1.4.1 Involving the whole school

Agenda 21 in Schools is a sub-project aimed at involving schools in the region in the Local Agenda 21 process and sustainable development. The target groups are schools on all levels as well as kindergartens (day-care institutions). At the beginning of year 2000, about ten schools were involved in this sub-project. The objective is to involve as many schools as possible in the process and reach a level where the schools work with environmental issues in some way.

This leading principle of the sub-project is to involve the whole institution (the school or kindergarten) in the process, not only those already interested or active. To involve the whole school or kindergarten means involving:

- all the students
- the teachers
- the administrative staff
- the kitchen staff
- the cleaning staff and
- the parents.

Such involvement is also the intended for the sub-project of Southwest Finland Agenda 21. When a school decides to start an LA21 process together with the Southwest Finland Agenda 21 office, the first step is to form so called "Eco-groups". These Eco-groups will have different tasks and responsibilities. The programme for the schools is divided into two parts. The first part is concerned with lessons and teaching topics and the second part with areas and activities in the school. The objective for the programme is to show all those involved the range of activities that in one way or another influence the environment and what can be done to have a more environmentally sound school.

1.4.2 The steps - Agenda 21 projects in schools

The first part, influencing the curriculum, is difficult because school-teaching programmes are usually planned well in advance. On the other hand, there are usually opportunities for including new material in several school



Figure 1.5 A school eco-group inspects the composting arrangement. (Photo: Lars Rydén.)

topics. The intention has been to use this opportunity for the introduction of environmentally related information and topics. This task requires co-operation between the "school Eco-group" and the school's.

The second part seeks to encourage students to start small projects or activities together with teachers, administrative staff, school kitchen staff, cleaning staff and parents. The focus for these small projects will be to examine the school and try to improve possible environmental incongruities. In this way, not only the students, but the others involved as well, will learn more about their immediate environment, the school, and find new alternatives for the school and which perhaps may also be applied elsewhere. The following are possible tasks or assignments for school Eco-groups' small projects:

1. Look at different parts of the school area and the school building.
 - What can be improved on the playground and in other areas around the school?
 - What can be improved in the classrooms?
2. Look at the energy consumption in the school.
 - Examine whether the heating of the school and the classrooms is appropriate or if the heating could be reduced or re-arranged in some way.
 - Examine whether the use of electricity is appropriate in the school. Is it possible to save electricity in the school or not?
3. Discover whether purchases by the school take environmental aspects into consideration.
 - What kind of raw materials or food products does the school kitchen purchase?
 - What kind of cleaning equipment and chemicals are used in the school?
 - What other kinds of materials are used for school activities?
4. Look at the school waste management.
 - How is the waste from the school kitchen managed?
 - How is the waste from the classrooms managed?
 - How is the waste from other parts of the school managed?
 - What happens with the waste after it leaves the school?

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The list of topics for the "Eco-groups" can be very long and can come from a variety of perspectives. What a specific school decides to do is totally up to them.

1.4.3 The role of the municipality

The role for the co-ordinators of the Southwest Finland Agenda 21 office is to support the schools in their planning and perhaps, when needed, to give new ideas to the "Eco-groups". Twice a year, the co-ordinators of the Southwest Finland Agenda 21 office arrange education or tutoring for school and day care teachers. The intention is to inspire the teachers and the schools to incorporate the ideas of sustainable development in one way or another. The Southwest Finland Agenda 21 process has introduced a Local Agenda 21 pennant for schools that are active in the process. A prerequisite for receiving the pennant is that a school presents a programme in which the whole school is working towards sustainable development and making a permanent commitment to do so. The Southwest Finland Agenda 21 office have right to check on the activity in the schools and if the conditions so demand, take the LA21 pennant away from the school.

The Southwest Finland Agenda 21 office has provided schools which decided to participate in the LA21 process with general information about Agenda 21 and how an LA 21 activity can or should be started and carried out. Further, the office has provided the schools with study material, books, leaflets and reports of experiences from other schools.

The work with schools is a different kind of work than the previous LA21 examples or activities. The approach to the target group must be focused on small and very concrete tasks. The work must also be planned and built up in a way that makes it possible to repeat or to develop it independent of a specific group of students. In other words, the projects must be rather short term as the students are only present for a few years. Another aspect noticed in the schools active in the Southwest Finland Agenda 21 process is that the activity (the projects, the lessons, etc.) must be *really* interesting and involve practical experience if at all possible. This is probably due to the huge range of information, programmes and activities available in our "info-society".



Figure 1.6 The central market square in Turku.

One final observation is that school projects with LA21 are in general rather easy to start and implement. Children and students are usually easy to motivate and activate. A more difficult task can or is making the process permanent when teachers and students are changing continually. The cost of LA21 work in schools does not need to be very high. A lot can be done within the ordinary study programme.

A final aspect to remember is that when children are involved in a process, the process will NOT stay within the walls of the school. It is on the contrary most probable that the projects or processes will extend into the community with the children, into the homes, and will sooner or later come into contact with the parents! This is an interested effect or diffusion of the principles of LA21, but it can also cause some minor problems if parents and children cannot agree on whether or not the principles are possible to adopt at home.

1.5 CASE 3: WASTEWATER TREATMENT IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

1.5.1 Adding to municipal services

The AHA 21 project is a sub-project of the Southwest Finland Agenda 21 process, with the intention of improving wastewater treatment in the countryside. The name AHA 21 refers to the Finnish words for Agenda 21 work in the countryside. The AHA 21 project is the result of a survey concerning the wastewater situation in 18 municipalities involved in the Southwest Finland Agenda 21 process. The results of the survey showed that the wastewater situation in the countryside was surprisingly bad. A total of 63% of the houses (properties) had a poor wastewater system. A small number of the houses had no wastewater system at all. Only a minority of the houses had an appropriate wastewater system. The awareness of the poor situation led to a decision to do something in order to improve the situation. Controlling wastewater systems and giving permits to houses for them is actually a duty of the municipality. The reason why the situation was as bad as the survey showed is probably the result of many different factors. First, old buildings with old systems were built using other regulations and second, the work burden for municipal employees has increased drastically during the last few years.

The goal for the AHA 21 project is to work as a complementary service to the ordinary municipal work for households in the region. The intention of this service is to inform the owners of private houses (properties) about proper wastewater system design and about existing market alternatives in terms of technical equipment, tools, and systems. Hopefully, an ecological improvement or effect will be a decrease in the amount of nutrients in the groundwater, lakes and the Baltic Sea. The current high level of nutrients is a big problem especially in the archipelago of south-west Finland.

The AHA 21 project is focused on improving the situation among already existing private houses. These houses are not currently bound by new legislation and regulations as are new buildings, private and otherwise.

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To build a new house today involves a long and thorough control and permissions' procedure, so there is little need for such a service for new houses and properties. The need for change and assistance is therefore directed towards the old, already existing, private houses.

1.5.2 Assigning municipal expert groups

The project started in the fall of 1999. It is now in its first phase (1999 – 2001), during which the activity is focused on four municipalities, Turku, Parainen, Uusikaupunki and Lieto. The quantitative goal is to start an improvement process with 40 private houses or properties altogether, 10 houses or properties per municipality. The number of cases is rather small due to the time consuming nature of the procedure. Thus far only one person, a project co-ordinator, is employed with the sub-project. If the first phase is successfully carried out, there will be a second phase with either new cases in these four municipalities or in other municipalities.

An group of experts has been appointed to assist the project co-ordinator with the work. The main need for assistance so far has been to evaluate and decide which alternative wastewater system and equipment is best suited to the different needs (house or property). The group of experts will evaluate and recommend a solution, including a system and suitable equipment, for every single case. This is necessary because each case is individual and therefore requires its own solution.

1.5.3 The steps in the project

The project procedure is divided into 12 steps. These steps are also an indication of the kind of activity this project is actually engaged in and what the project co-ordinator really works with. The steps in chronological order are:

1. To find out and update the relevant prevailing legislation and local regulations that influence decisions concerning wastewater treatment for private houses or properties.
2. To build up a database detailing the legislation and regulations as well as existing systems and equipment. Thus far, the information in this database is available in a folder that can be either bought or borrowed from the Southwest Finland Agenda 21 office. This database is also available on the Internet (so far only in Finnish).
3. To arrange an information campaign primarily in the four municipalities involved but also elsewhere, e.g., at fairs.
4. To recruit interested cases, house or property-owners, from the chosen municipalities. A total number of 40 cases.
5. To initiate discussions with the house or property owners. To start the "field-study" and to evaluate the existing problems and need for improvements.
6. To come to an agreement with the house or property owners on the initiation of an improvement or service process.
7. To evaluate the existing systems and equipment and try to find the best solution for each case (the house or property), depending on the wishes and economic situation of the owner. To make an improvement or service plan.
8. To participate and assist in the buying of material and necessary equipment. The AHA 21 sub-project has the ability to offer the house or property owner a discount on some products that exist in the database or folder.
9. To assist and supervise the work done by the required professional staff.
10. To arrange a final control of the work and the improvements.
11. To take water samples for measurements of possible wastewater leakage and environmental contamination.
12. To evaluate the process, the chosen solutions, and to present the case process as an example for other, similar cases.

1.5.4 Evaluation of the project

A closer look at the project procedure shows that the role of the AHA 21 project and especially the project co-ordinator is to assist and help owners of private houses start an environmental improvement in their wastewater treatment or process.

This sub-project requires a lot of resources but not necessarily a lot of money. As the process is different for every case (the houses or properties) involved, the process is rather long and time-consuming. Much time is needed in order to get all the parts functioning well and the job well done. The expenses for this kind of sub-project are not extremely high. The salary of the co-ordinator constitutes a major part of the expenses. Further funding is needed to cover expenses for water samples, travelling and some materials. The work is, as already mentioned, time consuming and needs therefore a staff member to work with the different cases. On the other hand, the work within this sub-project is extremely concrete and the results are easy to see. The results can, however, be multifaceted or of different characters. One result is increased awareness of the problems of and possible solutions for wastewater management (in the municipalities involved). A second result is improvement within the buildings themselves. A third result is ecological in character. The standard of the watercourses will improve due to a reduction in wastewater discharge from households. The final result and the greatest impact will be realised in the future, when there will hopefully be a strong trend or movement of people to voluntarily begin improvements of their wastewater systems.

The information gained from every single case is valuable for the continuing development of similar processes, and which can be applied to future work with private houses and properties. The knowledge gained from the experiences in the Finnish countryside may also be applicable elsewhere. So far the reactions and the feedback have been extremely good. The interest in being involved in this sub-project has been far greater than the capacity to accept cases. The limits of the project and the co-ordinator have already been reached and are not possible to exceed.